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Haiti, Factor 11: Malnutrition

### **Treating Malnutrition In Haiti By Using Resources**

In most cases, people live their lives learning that hard work leads to success. People often believe that being very successful is similar to earning a lot of money. Well, imagine working long hours in the hot sun while doing physical labor in a place where money seems to not exist. In this particular place, survival consists of only one dollar each day meaning that even when working it seems that nothing is earned. Many people often think this lifestyle is impossible; however, in Haiti that is the only option that the citizens have and quite frankly it is not ideal. Haiti is known as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere by having more than 80 percent of its inhabitants living below the poverty line (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 1). No matter how many hours a Haitian works, their success may never be counted by the money that they make due to many different aspects.

Haiti lifestyle is much different than the American lifestyle. Nearly 10 million people live in 27,000 square kilometers of land which is the equivalent to 10,714 square miles (*"Haiti"* para. 5 & 27). According to the web source, *"Rural Life in Haiti"*, this means that "six to ten people generally live in one household" (para. 4). This makes Haiti the second most densely populated country that lies within the Western Hemisphere (*"Rural Poverty Portal"* para. 1). Since approximately 52 percent of the population is urban while the other 48 percent is rural, people can conclude that the population is almost evenly distributed from place to place (*"Haiti"* para. 35). Even if the homes are located within the city or country, they tend to be generally the same. The homes are either made up of thatch and woven leaves or concrete blocks (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 3). Families are often seen outdoors cooking their meals over fires, so if the weather does not cooperate the citizens go without a meal (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 3). Having meals in this environment is difficult since there are limited amounts of basic resources that Haitians have access to (*"Rural Poverty Portal"* para. 4). Not only are there limits when it comes to cooking meals, but resources are also limited in other ways. The education of youth is limited because not everyone has access to schools especially when 650 students try to attend one school (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 6). With school enrollment being so high, there is little access to textbooks or writing materials for each of the students (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 6). Because of this, even though school is offered until ninth grade, the majority of students leave school after third grade (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 6). This may be due to the fact that transportation to attend school has its limits. People have access to only a few motorized vehicles, so in most cases Haitians walk everywhere or even ride donkeys (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 4). Life in Haiti is far different than the life in America and the fact that most people only have three outfits to wear day by day may shock numerous people (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 3). Learning that in order to complete the washing of laundry they have to use a small bucket with hardly any water may come as even more of a surprise (*"Rural Life In Haiti"* para. 3). The reason that it is this way is because the amount of money that people receive each year averages to approximately five hundred dollars (*"Culture of Haiti"* para 20). This means that Haitians are not able to afford washing machines, ovens and stoves, or even a consistent amount of food. As Americans, these basic essentials are often taken for granted.

The majority of the issues that preside in Haiti are still the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy that struck on October 25 of 2012. This natural disaster began as a normal beach wave and rapidly grew to become a Category 2 hurricane (Sharp para. 3-4). The winds of this storm ranged from 74 to 80 miles per hour (Sharp para. 5). This caused many homes to collapse or be washed out by waves leaving 17,000 people homeless (Pearlman para. 3). Hurricane Sandy was also held responsible for the death of 50 or more people (*"Haiti: Hundreds"* para. 1). A few days after the hurricane passed, the homeless count reached

roughly 400,000 people with 27,000 homes being destroyed (Pearlman para. 2-3). Since the hospitals were not reachable due to debris on the roads, people relied on the care packages and relief supplies that were donated by fellow countries in order to remain healthy (“*Haiti: Hundreds*” para. 11). The worst part about this storm was that Haiti had not yet recovered from the last major storm that had hit the area. This left people in fear that the lack of agricultural crops would result in a famine (Pearlman para. 7-8). According to the web source “Rural Poverty Portal,” “Haiti is vulnerable to hurricanes and flooding” (para. 7). Two years later, the Haitians still struggle to receive the proper amount of food and have not yet built their agriculture program back up.

Without a strong agricultural system, Haiti is referred to as “food insecure.” In Daniel Trenton’s words this means, “Too many tables are bare” (para. 23). Without food, Haitians suffer from many things that the body is not used to. One of the main suffrages of today is known as malnutrition. Malnutrition is an imbalance in the amount of nutrients and other elements that the body needs in order to survive (DeVault para. 2). This is the result of a poor diet and affects people in a negative way (“*Malnutrition*” para. 1). Malnutrition is known for upsetting the body’s ability to grow (DeVault para. 1). When the body does not properly develop, neither does the brain, leaving people more susceptible to behavioral diseases such as anxiety or depression (DeVault para. 2). Daniel Trenton also states that signs of malnutrition consist of a person’s hair turning an orange color with their stomachs inflating to the size of their head, which causes them to look several years younger than their actual age (para. 2). This is a result of starvation which is a condition that leads the body to turn to its tissues as a source of energy due to the lack of food consumption (“*Malnutrition*” para. 1). Malnutrition weakens the immune system which makes people more vulnerable to other diseases (“*Malnutrition in Haiti: International*” para. 2-4). Most of the diseases within Haiti are very dangerous which is why nutrition is key to keeping the immune system healthy.

Malnutrition is seen quite often in a place like Haiti. Daniel Trenton states “Hunger is not new in Haiti” (para. 11). There is a relation between the country’s low amount of wealth and the amount of available food. Poverty is the root cause of malnutrition due to the lack of access to resources and food (“*Malnutrition in Haiti: International*” para. 1). Some days 67 percent of the population go without food (Trenton para. 6). This is because some people only have enough money for a meal once every two days (Trenton para. 7). Trenton adds to this by stating, “Some people eat by miracle!” (para. 27). In most cases people are only able to eat what they grow themselves (“*Rural Life In Haiti*” para. 4). Also, since there is no access to refrigeration, Haitians eat mainly rice and beans since these products can be stored in any climate (“*Rural Life In Haiti*” para. 4). When storms hit, the crops lack which leads to rampant food shortages (“*Rural Life In Haiti*” para. 4). Because of the food shortages, one out of ten children die before the age of five (“*Malnutrition in Haiti*” para. 1). The children that live beyond the age of five, and are considered malnourished, struggle with their everyday living. One of their struggles includes school life. In the article written by Daniel Trenton, a school teacher mentions that students are too hungry to even learn in a classroom which leads them to entering the work field in order to raise money for their own food (para. 28). Roughly twenty-two percent of children age five to fourteen are involved with regular jobs, meaning they do not attend school (“*Haiti*” para. 56). Even though youth are involved in the work field, they are not making enough money to consistently feed themselves leading to continued malnutrition. Malnutrition in Haiti is treatable within hospitals; however, parents cannot afford the fees let alone the transportation to the facilities (Trenton para. 49). If a child is lucky enough to visit the hospital, they may not receive the proper care due to the fact that hospitals are poorly funded and not all workers are certified (“*Culture of Haiti*” para. 64). Malnutrition is a serious issue in Haiti because it weakens people and can even cause death.

Not only does poverty lead to malnutrition, but also not having a strong agriculture field causes issues as well. Thirty percent of the land is considered appropriate for farming, but over forty percent is actually farmed (“*Culture of Haiti*” para. 20). This means that Haitians farm land that is not properly suited for farming which causes them to receive crops that are not at their highest potential. Because Haitians do not

farm suitable land, the online web source known as “Rural Poverty Portal” states, “80 percent of farms fail to produce enough to feed household members causing them to result to non-farm activities for more income” (para. 11). Some farmers even result to sharecropping with other farmers since there is not much land to farm (“*Rural Poverty Portal*” para. 8). The land type is not the only factor that affects farming either. The inconsistent climates make farming very difficult (Trenton para. 8). Some days Haiti receives too much rain or some days they do not receive enough causing frequent droughts (Trenton para. 8-9). When a drought is in effect, there seems to be no source of underground water which makes it difficult for the farm crops to grow (“*Rural Life In Haiti*” para. 2). *Rural Poverty Portal* mentions that farmers lack the knowledge to be successful (para. 10). Without the knowledge, Haiti results to importing 60 percent of its food while it exports 80 percent of their rice so they can gain money and attempt to feed their people (“*Rural Poverty Portal*” para. 2). Overall, two out of every five people rely on their own farm crops for survival (Haiti para. 79). It is known that Haiti does not produce enough of anything to feed its people (“*Rural Poverty Portal*” para. 2). Even with the numerous crops they grow and activities they participate in, Haitians still struggle to raise enough money for their household (“*Rural Poverty In Haiti*” para. 5). The Haiti farm life is not ideal or consistent which leads to people lacking food and becoming malnourished very easily.

Finding ways to assist Haiti’s malnutrition issues seems quite difficult. Daniel Trenton states, “You can’t address the hunger situation in one year or even two years because it is that bad” (para. 5). Despite the billions of dollars from around the world that was pledged towards the rebuilding efforts, the country’s food problems show how vulnerable people still are (Trenton para. 5). It seems that the Haitian people are oblivious to the malnutrition issue because they do not know any better. For example, a grandmother had stated, “This child isn’t malnourished because I feed him” even though that three year old child was too frail to even stand (Trenton para. 33). When noticing that people are oblivious, the answer seems to be obvious: education. If the Haitians are provided with education about the nutritional needs, or sanitation and health in general, they would pay closer attention and try harder to improve their eating habits (“*Malnutrition in Haiti: International*” para. 2-5). Then again, the web source “Countries and Their Cultures” states, “Nutritional deficits are caused not by inadequate knowledge but by poverty” (para. 16). This point goes to show that even with education, there is not much more the Haitian people can do to gain food beyond what they already do. There is only so much a person can do to aid this country due to limiting factors and things that are not within control such as the overall current poverty, natural disasters, and the limited resources. To the Haitian people, it seems that nothing is being done because the money and food that were supposed to be delivered from support organizations to the citizens has not been seen (Trenton para. 41-44). An idea, that derived from the Singing Rooster organization, has helped the Haiti lifestyle in a more hands on way by using the farmer to table model (“*Rural Life In Haiti*” para. 10). This model portrays a company who returns 100 percent of the coffee profits they earn back to the farmers in Haiti in order to assist them financially and promote the growth of agriculture (“*Rural Life In Haiti*” para. 10). This example of help has positively affected Haiti in few areas, but definitely not the entire country.

In Haiti, some people have recognized these issues and have taken their own steps towards betterment. In order to aid the economy and all other issues, Haiti has called for a 10 billion dollar quest to “Build it Back Better” (Padgett para. 3). This quest relies on foreign donor countries with the United States happening to be one of the most frequent (Padgett para. 3). This program is beginning with the basic reformations such as building back the homes before they go in depth to decentralize the economy (Padgett para. 3). This sort of program is one that is housed and implemented in Haiti. Another program that has been created by Haitians is known as the Cooperation for Foreign Development Aid, CAED for short (Padgett para. 4). The United States has been named a partner for this operation (Padgett para. 4). With this partnership, the United States has donated 38.6 million dollars for large projects such as the building of a hydro powered dam along the Artibonite River (“*US \$38.6 Million*” para. 3). According to the CAED, their next step is to reorientate the economy by investing in the private sector and creating job opportunities (“*US \$38.6 Million*” para. 6). These two major organizations have a lot in common when it

comes to rebuilding their country, and there are other organizations that follow their footsteps as well. With these organizations turning their focus to the economy, soon the agricultural field will also build its support and strength which is important in the issue of malnutrition. As it was shown, the United States already has a partnership with Haiti, but there is still much more that Americans can do to benefit a transforming country.

What exactly can the people of America do that will specifically target the malnutrition issue among the Haitian people? A way for Americans to invest their time into Haiti and know they are making a difference would be through using organizations that are designed for treating hunger issues. The best type of organizations to go through have relations in America and Haiti at the same time (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 3). This ensures that every donation is actually being sent to the people since there is the worry that Haitians may not actually receive the aid (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 3). An example of a program derived from a female who grew up in Iowa, named Kayla Grooters. She operates a sponsorship program for the people of Haiti (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 8). She began her interest in this area through performing several mission trips to the country then eventually became more involved in trying to better the environment by moving to Haiti (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 8). Through her sponsorship program, Kayla posts images of Haitians in need on Facebook and asks people to sponsor them (Grooters para 2). Sponsoring a person consists of donating 35 dollars each month (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 8). With that 35 dollars, the Haitian is guaranteed rice, beans, and a vitamin mixture every day (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 8). Kayla Grooters plans on reaching out to 300 people by the use of her program (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para. 3). She is successful in her program due to the amount of publicity Facebook has allowed her (Grooters: "*Malnutrition*" para 2). This is one small example of the many opportunities that are available to help Haiti.

Social media today is a great way to spread the word about what citizens can do to help, but a person needs to be willing to take the initiative. Kayla Grooters' example shows people that through organizations, a Haitian's life may be changed. More examples of this can be found through vast resources, many online. Organizations such as Partners and Health, Action Against Hunger, Abbott Fund, and many more perform in the same mannerism by accepting donations. These donations are then utilized to fight hunger in different ways. Some organizations prefer to use the money to educate society about the issues while some organizations tackle the issue hands on in the agricultural field. Some organizations such as Mission of Hope Haiti, Meals of Hope, or Kids Around the World specialize in packaging meals, that include vitamins, to deliver to Haiti. All of these organizations have a common goal: fight against world hunger and more specifically: lower the malnutrition rate. These organizations are successful because they see the issues, advertise for the cause, and know exactly what they can do, that lies within their boundaries, to help the Haitians. Since the cost of traveling to Haiti makes giving hands on aid more difficult, people should utilize their resources online to make a difference. Along with utilizing online resources, Americans should continue to educate and recruit their peers. This way the population of the people giving assistance will grow more rapidly. It is easier for an organization to make a difference with an entire army behind them verses one individual. For example, when Hurricane Sandy first hit in 2012, 43 percent of tweets worldwide, on Twitter, were about the incident ("*Social Media Aid*" para. 4). About one week later this statistic grew to 82 percent ("*Social Media Aid*" para. 4). Not only does this prove how quickly word spreads, but it also proves the concern people have. The majority of the tweets included wishes to aid Haiti with money, so the Red Cross opened a text message donation in which 189,024 people participated ("*Social Media Aid*" para. 6). After one week of tweets alone, 8 million dollars were obtained through different organizations to aid Haiti ("*Social Media Aid*" para. 9). When it comes down to it, technology is becoming an important way of life that makes tasks easier, so why not utilize its abilities? Education and action is all it takes to help end the malnutrition issue within Haiti. Whether it is donating money to an organization or hosting a meal packing clinic, the feeling people get when they know they saved a person from dying of malnutrition is indescribable.

Malnutrition within Haiti has reached a dangerous level. With Hurricane Sandy occurring in 2012, the country lost most of its agricultural crops. Farming has never been easy in Haiti due to the inconsistent weather patterns. This makes the journey to recovery more difficult. Since the agriculture field is not very strong, Haitians suffer from eating issues such as malnutrition. Malnutrition is an imbalance in the amount of nutrients a person consumes. Since some Haitians only eat one meal every other day, the term "malnutrition" describes their situation almost perfectly. Even though hospitals are available for this, it is not guaranteed that the care is at its highest potential. It is recommended for Americans wanting to help to approach this through online resources. These resources give people many options including donating money or participating in meal packing programs. Both of these forms affect the Haitians directly and help lower the malnutrition rate within the country. Since most people live their lives learning that hard work is equivalent to success and that success is measured by the amount of money they possess, don't you think Americans could spare a portion of their success to benefit a country whose success goes unnoticed? This is a perfect example of "paying it forward." Paying it forward starts with a person completing an extraordinary action that impacts the life of another person which then leads the recipient of the kind act to do the same. The goal in this cycle is to encourage others to pass it on, and if done properly the cycle will never end. When it comes to assisting Haiti, be the person to begin the cycle because so many people can be affected by one small act.

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