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“Understanding Trends in Global Nutrition: The Paradox of Hunger and Obesity.” Haiti: Undernourished and Impoverished

Haiti is an incredibly impoverished country. The general population is undernourished and has inadequate health care. Many countries have helped Haiti financially and some continue to provide assistance today. I do not believe that enough is being done, however. I feel that much more assistance could be provided in the forms of food, health care, and general financial assistance. Sixty-three percent of Haiti's population is undernourished and only twenty-five percent of the population has clean drinking water. One of the main causes of hunger and malnutrition is when people live in poverty and are not able to have access to any reasonable amount of food to feed their families and themselves. In Haiti there is a lack of good farming land due to deforestation. After nearly all of their trees were felled, the protection of the topsoil disappeared. This caused the majority of good soil to erode to nothing more than rocky limestone. What good farmland is left is used primarily for sugarcane. What farmland that remains after using it to produce sugarcane as an export, is used to produce food. The problem is that there is not nearly enough land to produce enough food to feed the population of 7.2 million people. Approximately sixty-five to seventy-five percent of the population is unemployed. Almost eighty percent of the population is illiterate, which is probably due to a lack of money to send the children to school and also the difficulty of learning when undernourished. It has been proven that being hungry makes it harder for children to learn and retain information. Around eighty percent of Haitians live below the poverty level. The minimum wage, if a Haitian is lucky enough to get minimum wage, is comparable to \$1.50 per day in the United States dollar. The exchange rate between our money and theirs is \$1 is equal to 12 gourdes. Lack of nutrition is also a main cause of many diseases and makes a person more susceptible to various sicknesses. Haiti is not privileged enough to have adequate health care, and most health care is not affordable for the low income families which inhabit Haiti. The average Haitian child is six inches shorter and fifty pounds lighter than an American child is of the same age. After these children have become adults they remain weak and unable to fight disease easily.

A typical family is a hard thing to describe because it can vary so much. So the closest definition of a typical Haitian family is a mother, a father, and probably around five kids. The family that I have chosen lives in the overcrowded mountain valleys. Their one room hut, with a thatched roof, walls made from sticks covered in dried mud, and a packed dirt floor, is kept clean, even though it is crowded. They live on an acre and a half of land, the average farms in Haiti being a little less than two acres. They grow sugarcane so that they can export it and earn a small amount of income. In order to keep their crops from sliding down the steep hill that they live on, they anchor the crops down using ropes.

The mother stays at home to take care of the children and work on their farm. Out of the five children, statistics state that only one is probably enrolled school. Only twenty percent of Haitian children are enrolled in a school, which is a large factor contributing to the low rate of literacy. Part of the reason that only one in five children are enrolled in school is due to the fact of the lack of money. Another reason is that children are needed to stay around the house and help the family out. If a child is able to attend school, you will find them wearing their uniforms proudly. A Haitian child knows that school is a great privilege and therefore would never skip school. The remaining children would stay at home where they would assist in the many chores on the farm and around the house. The average Haitian family makes the equivalent of \$350 U.S.

dollars. After you calculate the cost of living their income is comparable to a little less than \$700.

The family has a very poor diet. This family is very lucky to have clean drinking water even though they have to walk a good distance to retrieve it. Over sixty-five percent of the population does not have access to safe drinking water. This family has drinking water but does not have an ample amount of food. Breakfast is usually a cup of coffee and, if they have bread or the supplies to make bread, a slice of bread with their coffee. They usually eat one small meal a day, partaking in the lowest amount of calories in the Americas. Their diets are rich in starches. A typical meal consists of rice and beans. They rarely eat meat because it is a commodity they cannot afford. If rice is not in season, their one meager meal will usually be porridge made of corn or sorghum. To satisfy hunger pains some people chew on green mangos or the stalks of sugarcane. This lack of nutrition and protein leads to the occurrence of many chronic and fatal diseases. According to the statistics, this family will lose one of their children before they turn five years old because only four out of five children live past the age of five years. After a person gets sick, they would have to be extremely lucky to be able to get a hospital bed as there is one hospital bed for each 10,000 inhabitants, and hospitals are only located in the urban areas with only 1,000 physicians. My family would end up going to a voodoo pri they would have to be extremely lucky to be able to get a hospital bed as there is one hospital bed for each 10,000 inhabitants, and hospitals are only located in the urban areas with only 1,000 physicians. My family would end up going to a voodoo pri they would have to be extremely lucky to be able to get a hospital bed as there is one hospital bed for each 10,000 inhabitants, and hospitals are only located in the urban areas with only 1,000 physicians. My family would end up going to a voodoo pri they would have to be extr also be able to consume a slice of bread with their coffee every morning. Additional money would mean that more of their children would be able to be sent to school and educated, which would, in turn, increase the literacy rate of the country and eventually even effect the way that the government is controlled. The family would be able to afford a larger house if they had more money and also a larger farm. These things may not seem necessary but it would help them lead an even more successful life. Having health care provided in the rural areas would help save lives, and even be preventative for some sicknesses. They would need hospitals provided in the rural areas and also physicians.

Reducing the poverty level of Haiti would decrease the number of undernourished people. I believe this because the majority of the people in Haiti live in poverty and approximately the same percentage of people who live in poverty are malnourished. If assistance were to be provided to help Haitians have a higher income, they would be able to afford more food that is healthier for their diets. Many people in Haiti farm, but they are not able to produce enough of the crops that are beneficial health wise. They also produce many crops that they export and not necessarily the food that they need to stay healthy and provide for their families. Possibly if they were to switch their major crops to rice and corn instead of coffee and sugarcane they would have a better food supply. If various countries either provided financial assistance or gave Haiti food of some sort, I think that Haiti would start to prosper.

The poverty level plays a major factor for my family. They do not have the ability to produce enough of the food that is necessary for them to be healthy and well-nourished. They also do not make enough income off of their crops to provide them with sufficient nutrients. The problem of low income is partially due to the existing environmental problems, but poverty is also causing the environment to have more of a problem. The land is generally not fertile enough to produce much food, and if they keep planting crops year after year it will not help the land. Low income is definitely an economic problem. Haiti's economy cannot and will not prosper without money being invested into it and without ample income, my family will not have much money to invest in anything, including food.

The situation of poverty is extremely severe in Haiti. When at least sixty-five percent of the population is unemployed, there is definitely a severe lack of income. Most families are relying on income from their own crops, where a small number of families rely on a dependable income. With minimum wage at \$1.50 a day, not much is able to be purchased and families are stretching every penny that they possess to try to feed their families, let alone school them, clothe them, and provide medical care for them. Nutritional requirements are generally not met due to the lack of a good, reliable income. Haitian families rely on eating starches at every meal that they consume but on rare occasions they will eat meat. The environment has been degraded and biodiversity is beginning to diminish.

Women in Haiti are exceedingly disadvantaged. They have the responsibilities of taking care of the crops after they have been planted. Women are also in charge of caring for whatever livestock they own, if they own any. They are also provide food and prepare the meals. Women are also relied heavily upon for the income of the family. Women are in charge of selling crops and produce at the market which is sometimes the only income a family has. They are also expected to control all of the domestic aspects of the life of the family.

Poverty has increased lately. After various hurricanes have struck Haiti, they destroyed the Haitians houses, farmland, hospitals, stores, and various assets. Many families, including my chosen family, have been affected by this and have suffered because of it. They are now eating a smaller amount than before because less food is now available. They also have a reduced amount of clean drinking water available for them.

By improving the wealth distribution fewer families would starve. The child mortality rate would also be more likely to improve if all of the children were well nourished and did not have weakened immune systems. By increasing the wealth of Haiti, more hospitals and doctors could be provided. This could lessen the infant mortality rate which is now a little more than one in ten. More wealth could also mean that improvements may possibly be made in water quality which would also prevent more sicknesses and child and adult deaths. If wealth was increased then people might not have to rely so heavily on crops which would hopefully help prevent the depletion of the layer of topsoil that is already almost exhausted now. Women might not have to be relied so heavily upon and farmers might be able to make more money for their crops if they are better cared for and grown in a more environmental way.

There are many ways that countries from around the world and international organizations could help the inhabitants of Haiti. One way would simply be financial assistance. Perhaps the crops could be bought at a higher price than usual to help the farmers make a improved living. Money could also be donated to the government of Haiti to get a welfare program started so that fewer people would starve and more could be well fed and educated. Another way to help would be to send physicians and nurses to Haiti to help care for the numerous needs of the ailing. It would also help to have more hospitals built with better facilities for treating the sick. Maybe assistance could be provided to help educate Haitians on how to maintain the land so that the natural resources, such as the topsoil, are not depleted quickly and so they could produce a larger and better quality crop. Livestock could be sent to the Haitian farmers to help in nourishing the people of Haiti by providing their diets with protein. More schools could be provided to help educate the people of Haiti. All of these things would help Haiti's economy prosper which, in turn, would help the people of Haiti become better nourished and more healthy.

Any assistance that people could provide would help Haiti. They could become a prosperous nation if they were given the necessary knowledge for helping to make their country a better place. Malnourishment is definitely a major obstacle that the Haitians can overcome if different organizations and countries pull together and help. Aid could be provided in many

different forms, all of which would help Haitians and the economy of Haiti. If nations and international organizations were to provide financial assistance, Haiti would be able to afford more food and also a better lifestyle in general. Haiti is so impoverished right now that many families can barely afford food let alone health care, which is extremely hard to find in Haiti. Health care is another form of assistance that is needed in Haiti. It is fairly obvious that there is an extreme shortage of health care when there is only one hospital bed for every 10,000 Haitian individuals. This is an especially large problem due to the fact that many Haitians catch various sicknesses easily because they are undernourished and their immune systems cannot withstand the pressures of germs. If better health care was provided, I believe that the death rates would decrease. The current death rate for infants is eleven percent. That is more than one out of every ten infants die at or around the time of birth. One in five children will die before they even have their fifth birthday. If assistance were to be provided in the form of education, I believe that the economy could and would prosper. If more children were being educated then the literacy rate would definitely improve. I also believe that educating farmers in different and better farming techniques would improve the crops and increase the food supply, leaving fewer Haitians hungry. If assistance of any form would be provided for the Haitian inhabitants, they would be able to overcome the poverty that they are faced with at this present time and I believe that the percentage of people who are hungry and undernourished would decrease greatly. If people will just pull together and provide aid of one form or another, Haiti will begin to prosper and eventually be able to support themselves without any additional aid. They would then have a healthy and prosperous populace.

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