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Zimbabwe: A Country in Need

Always remember that the future comes one day at a time.
-Dean Acheson

“All in all, in Zimbabwe it is a disaster far worse than anything anyone expected...”
- Evan Davis, BBC television's Newsnight economics correspondent

In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't.
-Blaise Pascal

Zimbabwe, in Southeast Africa, is a country of poor and starving people. Almost the majority of the population is under-nourished, starving, are unemployed and poor. Zimbabwe has a population of 12.5 million, 47% of whom are undernourished. 17% of children under 5 years of age are underweight. Their diet consists of meat including beef and some chicken. Maize, a staple meal, greens, beans, and on special occasions they will celebrate with the killing and consuming of a goat or a cow. The consumption of food is falling due to falling incomes and people not being able to buy food. Because of malnutrition it would make sense for there to be many doctors in Zimbabwe. That is not true. Doctors are moving to different countries to make more money. The doctors don't make a healthy living because the sick can not pay for medical help. Infant mortality is up to 12.3%. (CIA) The health system collapsed in Nov. of 2008. (Mbaya) Three out of the four major hospitals in Zimbabwe closed down due to lack of money and being unable to get medications and drugs. One in seven people in Zimbabwe are living with HIV/AIDS and are unable to pay for immunizations. Zimbabwe has the lowest life expectancy on Earth; 44 years for men, 43 years for women. This is down 60% from 1990.

On July, 2010 the Inclusive Government of Zimbabwe, the United Nations, and the Zimbabwe Food and Nutrition Council (FNC) launched new data on the nutritional status of Zimbabwe's children, revealing that more than one third of Zimbabwe's children under the age of five are chronically malnourished. Speaking as he officially launched the results, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai said that the country's current food production remains too low to meet national requirements. Years of persistent droughts and the recent downturn of the Zimbabwe economy have adversely affected food availability in many homes. He also spoke about the need to maintain low levels of severe malnutrition highlighted by the report. “As government, we have agreed to make nutrition a priority at the national and sub-national level because it is central for human, social and economic development. Persistent and deteriorating chronic malnutrition means Zimbabwe is unlikely to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goal number one- to have poverty and hunger.” In response to the survey results, UNICEF Representative in Zimbabwe Dr. Peter Salama said the report further demonstrated that age of greatest vulnerability to malnutrition and infection is from the pre-natal period to 24 months. He identified this period as a “critical window of opportunity.” “The data emerging from the survey provides irrefutable evidence of the magnitude of the problem of malnutrition in Zimbabwe,” said Dr. Salama. “These levels of malnutrition are unacceptably high. They represent not only a challenge to reaching our development goals, but will also constrain economic growth.” (Calling for Action)

Education in Zimbabwe is one of the best in Africa. 92% are literate. The wealthier children go to independent schools while the others go to government ran schools. They go to those schools for thirteen years before they are able to go to a University. Most children are too poor to go to a University which is

one reason why the country is so poor. Because they are unable to get a higher education, they are unable to get high paying jobs. It has been proven that students are unable to concentrate in school when they are hungry. (Food Crisis) A year ago, the Government of Zimbabwe initiated the Education Transition Fund (ETF), which was designed to mobilize resources and ensure equitable access to quality education. This fund was set up to respond to acute shortages of teachers and learning materials, including textbooks and basic supplies. In the past, there had been an average of one textbook per ten students. A study done in 2008 showed that almost half of the students who complete primary school do not go on to a secondary school. "We have prioritized education in our budgets," said Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai as he presided over the launch of the program. "With the support from our donors, we are beginning to see tangible results in restoring the basic social services in Zimbabwe." UNICEF, or the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, also does many things to help Zimbabwe. UNICEF and its partners, along with the Government of Zimbabwe, distributed textbooks to over 5,575 primary schools throughout the country. This started September 14, 2010. "Within a few weeks, every child in primary school will have a set of core textbooks," added UNICEF Representative in Zimbabwe Dr. Peter Salama. "We believe that this will make Zimbabwe the only country in sub-Saharan Africa with a 1:1 ratio of textbooks to pupils in all core subjects." Under this program, over 13 million textbooks are being printed in four core subjects; math, english, environmental studies, and a local language. Distributing the books will take up to three months and will require over 500 truckloads of materials. There are 22 distribution hubs across Zimbabwe; this is where the products are delivered to and then given to each school. The next step for the ETF is to provide teacher's guides and textbooks for marginalized indigenous languages including Venda, Shangani, Tonga, and Nambiya, as well as the development of textbooks in Braille. The hope of ETF and UNICEF is that more children will have a better education and development. (UNICEF Textbooks)

Another reason why Zimbabwe is so poor is their poor agriculture. Traditionally there were large-scale farms, which produced tobacco and grain, and small-scale farms, which produced food crops like maize. The governments resent land reforms dismantled the existing system of land distribution. This transition has been slow and painful. (Poverty in Zimbabwe)

Zimbabwe is the world's most infected country of HIV/AIDS. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus and causes AIDS. AIDS stand for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Ultimately this disease progressively reduces the effectiveness of the immune system and leaves the person susceptible to infections and tumors. HIV/AIDS can be transmitted through contact of a mucous membrane, blood, semen, breast milk, and sex. If a mother has AIDS the baby may get infected through pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, or exposure to a bodily fluid. One in every four adults in Zimbabwe have HIV/AIDS. In urban areas 40% of the population is infected, and in the Army 80% of the population is infected. These people have a life expectancy of 38 years. The main reason why Zimbabwe has so many people infected with HIV/AIDS is, once again, health. Zimbabwe has a health budget of 5.50 Euros per person. With this budget it is almost impossible to fund immunizations, medicines, or drugs. (HIV)

Cholera is another major disease in Zimbabwe. Cholera is an infection of the small intestines and can be transmitted through contaminated drinking water or food. In 2008 a Zimbabwean cholera outbreak overtook the country. It spread to Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, and also Zambia. By January, 2010 there had been 98,741 reported cases and 4,293 deaths; making it the deadliest African cholera outbreak in the last 15 years. The Zimbabwean government declared this a national emergency and requested international aid. (Aid Int.) In response to this, UNICEF airlifted critical emergency supplies to Zimbabwe and landed in Harare on December 22nd, 2008. The cargo- which included intravenous (IV) fluids, drip equipment, essential drugs, midwifery and obstetric kits- will boost the United Nations Children's Fund cholera response and aid government to deliver some essential health services to expecting mothers. "This is a strategic measure to address a desperate situation," said UNICEF Acting Representative in Zimbabwe, Roeland Monasch. "We are already supplying 70 percent of the country's

essential drugs, and these airlifted supplies will further boost UNICEF's lifesaving support." The supplies are the first line of treatment in any management of cholera. The situation is worsened by a health crisis characterized by the closure of major hospitals, lack of critical drugs and equipment, and nurses and doctors not being able to come to work. The Government of Netherlands is "deeply concerned by the entrenched humanitarian crisis that has led to tremendous suffering for the people of Zimbabwe," said Joseph Weterings, the Dutch ambassador in Zimbabwe. The Netherlands has allowed an additional \$11.7 million in humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe. This comes in addition to the \$15 million already made available to Zimbabwe this year. One more plane load arrived later that day and supplies were distributed through the over 40 cholera treatment centers across Zimbabwe and the remaining functional health facilities. (Aid, Int.)

There are many organizations giving aid to Zimbabwe. Some of the most well known ones are Barnabas Aid, the World Food Program, Pump Aid, UNICEF, and World Vision. Barnabas Aid is Christian oriented organization that gives aid in the form of food. Barnabas buys large quantities of food, so the cost of a monthly parcel of food is only 15 euros. One of these parcels can be shared between an extended family of 9 or 10, making the cost of a parcel 5 pence.(Barnabas Aid) The World Food Program aides countries during and after a disaster. In every country they have one Head Office. In Zimbabwe the Head Office is in Harare. In Zimbabwe they focus on a three-tier strategy to prioritize food assistance . 1) Promote access, awareness, and treatment of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. 2) Provide support to families in poverty, food insecure households through Social-based Safety-Net-Activities, including institutional feeding, school feeding, and assistance to vulnerable populations. 3) Aid seasonally shock-affected food insecure households by providing relief through Emergency Vulnerable Group Feedings. (WFP) World Vision is a sponsorship program that anyone can donate \$30 a month and help one child in need. Zimbabwe is one of the many countries World Vision helps. (World Vision)

Water scarcity in Zimbabwe is another reason why Zimbabwe is in need. Pump Aid is one of the greatest organizations I have found and would like to elaborate on it. Pump Aid was founded in Zimbabwe in 1999. They also work in Malawi and Liberia and plan on expanding to 5 other African countries. The program provides rural communities with access to clean water and improve sanitation provisions, they also provide maintenance workshops so all community members are trained to maintain the water pumps and toilet, along with health and hygiene education. The Elephant Pump is a pump that can lift water from 50m below ground and can produce one liter of water every second. It is based by the Chinese rope design using locally available materials. Wells are dug by hand and never by machinery because it would deprive someone of a job and increase costs. The well works by a handle that as it is turned, water is drawn up by plastic washers attached to a rope. The Elephant Pump is encased in concrete to prevent contamination and to ensure clean water. Each Pump costs only \$2,000. An Elephant Pump can also be installed at a school. This will provide clean water for about 500 children and up to a dozen near-by families. This is also done to encourage children to come to school. (Elephant Pump)

The Elephant Toilet is the other project Pump Aid works on. Over half the population in Zimbabwe does not have access to sanitation facilities. Without access they are forced to go to the toilet in unsafe, unclean places without privacy. This is not only uncomfortable and undignified but causes disease and infects, or contaminates, water supplies. This can cause diarrhoeal diseases, the number two cause of child mortality. To help with the problem, Pump Aid has developed the Elephant Toilet. This is also low cost, and a design that communities will benefit from for many years. To make this a pit 3 meters deep is dug out and lined with stones. A concrete slab is then laid over the pit. The slab has two 'elephant ears' to stand on, a hole opening over the pit for solid matter, and an 'elephant trunk' that channels away urine into a compost pit. By keeping the urine out of the pit, the faeces will decompose more easily as urine kills its useful bacteria. Walls are built around the pit with an internal chimney running up the sides. All the construction uses sun dried bricks instead of wood. This helps prevent decomposition and deforestation. A thatched roof then covers the facilities to complete the private disclosure. For soap, a Seso bush that has antiseptic

qualities, is planted outside. It is watered by the stream of waste water from hand washing. When the pit is full (which they say will take a couple years) the concrete slab is removed to a new pit and a fruit tree will be planted in the old one. This fruit is open for community intake or may be sold for a much-needed income. This has been awarded the St. Andrews Prize for Environment 2008 for best design. (Elephant Toilet)

These are just a few of the many organizations helping Zimbabwe as well as many other disaster areas in the world. I think another way to address the food shortage is to have more organizations bring seeds, water, and proper materials to plant a small garden or crop plot. To address the water shortage, I think we need to continue with the Elephant Pump. I did not know the Elephant Pump or Elephant Toilet existed. I think if more people knew about this, they may give to it. Something the my town does is "Trick- or- Treat for UNICEF." I think this is a wonderful program. Even though a town my raise only one hundred dollars, it is still a major help in the development in a country. I think a research agencies need to determines what kind of soil Zimbabwe has and if any kind of a genetically altered seed could grow more effectively in Zimbabwe. I also would like to see schools and churches do a food drive or penny drive to donate to an organization that would directly help Zimbabwe. They could also raise money to sponsor a child from Zimbabwe that is starving. As Bertolt Brecht would say "because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are."

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