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 Mexico, Malnutrition

The Growth of Mexico

Mexico is a country located in North America between Belize, the United States, and Guatemala (“Food Security”). These countries border Mexico and many of their citizens come to Mexico for food, jobs, and other resources. Despite the opportunities that are found in Mexico, there also exist many issues within its education system, overpopulation, and government representation that bring about a malnourished society. This paper provides methods for Mexico to fix its malnutrition issue such as implementing food fridges, widening the spectrum of government assistance and how they provide that assistance, and providing an education in making a sustainable greenhouse.

Mexico has a population of 129,875,529 people (“Food Security”). In Mexico, a typical family size is almost 4 people per household (“Average Household”). 50% of these households have internet, 41.8% have 2 bedrooms and only 27.1% have 3-bedrooms (“Mexico: Economy”). Even then, many families still struggle. One family, living in the community of El Refugio, Mexico, is unable to access education, health care, government social programs, and government food baskets because the 2 parents were unable to register their 7 children as Mexican citizens even though they were born in Mexico (“Education”). This family has been living like this for 40 years, in poverty with poor well-being and a slim chance of any future opportunity to present itself (“Education”). Citizens struggle to achieve their basic needs despite the country being 81.6% urban and 18.7% rural (“Mexico-Rural”). Furthermore, 54.9% of the land is currently cultivated, the major crops being sugarcane, maize, milk, oranges, sorghum, tomatoes, poultry, wheat, green chilies/peppers, and eggs (“Food Security”). These farmed foods would typically be Mexicans day-to-day meals and do not consist of a proper nutritional diet. A proper nutritional diet includes a variety of proteins and is low in added sugars, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol (CDC).

Many families are suffering from poor nutrition in similar ways. Many of these families are not able to eat the crops which leads to their day to day meals including eating salty foods and tortillas among other things (“Mexican”). However, eating too much can be harmful because if one eats too much salty food one can end up with high blood pressure (Harvard). And if too many tortillas are eaten one can also end up with diseases like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease (Contributors). Many families in Mexico make about 141.70 MXN (7.11 USD) a day (Capitalist) and 65% of people have salaries between 12,400 to 23,200 MXN a month (730-1,367 USD) (Average Salary in Mexico: Inform). This is not an ideal salary considering 1 pound of chicken breast in Mexico City is 68 MXN – this is about half of their daily money and almost a 10th of their salary (“Price”). In addition to that, the monthly rent in a “normal area” is 16,489 MXN which is most of their salaries already (“Price”). As a result, many families are unable to get a proper meal in order to properly nourish themselves.

In Mexico, there have been organizations to try to help with malnutrition. One program that has provided direct monetary support to specific families, basic nutrition packages for those 5 and under and for pregnant women, and scholarships for schooling (given based on health and nutrition ed sessions and kids in school) (“Mexico Tackles”). In addition, there has been a program facilitating the journey to self-reliance by working with elected officials (“Mexico” *The Hunger*). Both of these projects have worked and were very beneficial to many people. However, these programs could be improved by expanding their audience beyond just pregnant women or kids and expanding their partners to reach more parts of the world. The U.S. has also done something to address this challenge. In the U.S., Electronic Benefit Transfer cards are used in grocery stores (“NJ SNAP”) and there is a law that focuses on prenatal

vitamins, breastfeeding support, and distributing vitamin A to children (“Update”). With this in mind, the question is then raised to the government as to why this is not implemented in Mexico.

Unfortunately, Mexico has a higher percentage of a malnourished population than any other Latin American country (“Country”). Trends have little to no advancement in lowering the rates of malnutrition (“Country”). A large contribution to this trend is poverty and junk food (“Report”). Many people do not have enough money to have a full proper meal and as a result, they go for junk food, which is not as healthy. The challenge of malnutrition is significantly higher in rural areas than in urban areas (“Food Security”). Malnutrition affects men, children, and women in a variety of different ways. Males do not have the privilege of having organizations look out for them, as they are seen as the primary providers for families and get overlooked. Children have to rely on their parents since they can not help themselves. Women are often more vulnerable to malnutrition compared to males as they have smaller bodies and require less energy; however, they need to eat more nutrients than males since they require the same amount of said nutrients to perform different tasks than the average male (“Gender Inequality”). Malnutrition also affects marginalized populations because it increases the risk of illness and infections which cause longer recovery times and medical care goes up – losing wages from missing work (“Malnutrition’s Impact”). This can affect the environment because more people get sick more frequently (“Malnutrition’s Impact”) and since many people suffer from malnutrition they suffer from higher risks of being malnourished (Prepared).

One solution to malnutrition is to supply food fridges around the community. Citizens would be inserting community fridges in different areas of Mexico. Therefore, people can put different foods in there that they may have an excess of or are not using so it can be put to good use by others who cannot afford it. This solution would work well in urban areas since their population is overcrowded and underserved. The fridges allow people to take what they need and give back things they are not using or have an excess of. Non-profit organizations with the support of the government can lead this project. This project could be funded by many organizations starting with the World Bank as they already have multiple projects on topics such as nutrition, food security, and civic engagement among other topics (“Projects”). Similarly to the World Bank, the Gates Foundation has projects to help with global health and opportunity as well as other projects that correlate with their mission to give people the opportunity to have a healthy life (“About | Bill”). In addition, this solution could also be funded by the Food Tank organization which provides a network and funding for solutions to problems like hunger and poverty (“About Food Tank”). Each of the listed organizations has a primary goal of supporting underprivileged communities based on their food insecurities. By providing food fridges, the number of people suffering from nutritional imbalance would decrease along with the lack of food in overcrowded urban locations within Mexico. Not only this but should they provide a more balanced diet, the health outcome of the society will improve since there are fewer health risks to be exposed to. However, for this project to become and remain successful the help of the government is needed to protect the space of the fridge and the community to help restock it in any way possible.

Another solution to this problem is to expand government assistance from Mexico. Expanding government assistance to pay for food instead of only reducing prices can help citizens buy their food so they can get financially secure and eventually no longer need the assistance (*Major Food*). It would be a temporary solution to solve a larger issue within the community. The Mexican government may partially raise taxes to compensate for the lost funds but with enough people getting back enough strength to go to work and put this money back into the taxes, this may not be needed. Some examples of assistance would include providing food stamps, EBT cards, or other forms of monetary assistance. Once the people have recuperated their financial well-being and strength they may be more inclined to help another person in need as they are no longer a part of the assistance program. Naturally, the government would have a selection process to predetermine who is eligible and from this, they can set aside allocated money specifically for this cause.

Shifting the focus to the rural areas, if people are educated on how to build and maintain a greenhouse they can become self-reliant. People can learn how to construct a greenhouse and properly maintain it so that they can grow food and become self-sufficient for life. With the introduction costs being the main factor in commencing the idea the greenhouses eventually became self-sufficient. However, a requirement would be that someone take the food before it begins to rot or expire. As food begins to decay it could lead to unwanted animals getting in and ruining all the crops. To block out the wild animals a protective barrier can be built and proper farming techniques would be implemented to ensure safe produce. This would decrease the cost of purchasing groceries as people can now focus solely on buying their meats to balance their diet. This project can also be led by non-profit organizations with the support of the government and again maintained by the community. It can be maintained by alternating days or even weeks within the greenhouse to ensure the entire community contributes their part. Some nonprofit organizations that would be willing to assist include the World Food Bank, the Clinton Foundation, and the Hunger Project. The Clinton Foundation offers agricultural training so people can learn more about farming while bringing the community together at the same time which is a part of their main focus, to help “increase the output and quality of crops” (“Foundation Programs”). Also, the goal of the Hunger Project is to ensure self-reliance in the categories of sustainable development, food security, and government cooperation as well as other categories furthering agricultural training (“Mexico” *The Hunger*). This project would unite the community while also teaching them how to be self-reliant. However, besides the funding for this project to be successful, the government would have to protect the space as well as the community members to be active in sustaining and maintaining this greenhouse.

In abridgment, Mexico has a significant problem with malnutrition. Adding to the issue is the overpopulation of the country, lack of government support, and the lack of education. The problem of malnutrition can be addressed by widening who gets government assistance and how that assistance is provided, having food fridges, and training citizens to make sustainable greenhouses. By addressing these points, the overall issue of malnutrition can be improved, thus bettering the quality of life in Mexico.

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