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Haiti, Food Security and Violence

**Haiti: Getting food to those in need**

Haiti has been struggling since 1843, since then nothing has gotten any better. ¨*Once they became independent from France Haiti's development has been menaced by interference of foreign powers, domestic political malfeasance, natural disasters, social instability, and epidemics.*¨ (cfr.org) Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. (cfr.org .n.d Diana Roy *and* Rocio Cara Labrador) Haiti is becoming more dangerous by the day. In 2021 there were 148,000 tourists compared to 2018 when there were 1.3 million tourists. (cfr.org n.d.Diana Roy *and* Rocio Cara Labrador ) Something needs to be done.

Housing in Haiti is not ideal considering the circumstances. They are living in two-room dwellings with mud walls. The floors are made from grass and palm leaves. The windows are paneless and have wooden shutters. These homes have very little furniture and the kitchen is located outside of the living quarters. In the city areas the houses are the exact same. The houses in the countryside and the cities of Haiti are almost identical to each other. Larger families do struggle to live in these houses considering their size. (britanica.com n.d.)

An average size family in Haiti is about 4-5 people. (lovetoknow.com 9/21/2021 by Michele Meleen) Both men and women work but their jobs are distinctly different. Men are the head of the house, they are responsible for making money to support the family. Women are the decision makers, especially for the kids. Important decisions that need to be made are also discussed with elders. Haitian women usually work at home, taking care of the children, cooking, cleaning and keeping everything under control. A regular meal is rice, beans and some type of meat. Haitian children are considered a gift from god. Most children don't get a good education due to lack of facilities and staff. Children are expected to respect their elders and protect their family structure and privacy. They are also taught to be obedient to community members. All these families are struggling to find food and are starting to leave Haiti. (lovetoknow.com 9/21/2021 by Michele Meleen)

Haiti is facing violence and a lack of government. People are quickly starting to leave because armed gangs are attacking and have no remorse. The gangs started in the rural areas and have now made their way up to the capital which led the prime minister to resign. These gangs looted the Haitian people and left them to struggle, have a hard time taking care of themselves; let alone their families. These gangs also led a mass prison break. People are struggling to stay safe and find food to keep them nourished. This hunger crisis has many reasons including armed gang violence, along with economic shocks, low agricultural yields, below-average rainfall, the still lingering impacts of the earthquake in August 2021, along with floods and less access to humanitarian aid. This increase in violence not only messes up the circulation of goods and restricts access to markets but also inflates the prices of essential food items in an already fragile context. Delays in the rainy season and rainfall deficits have really impacted the outcome of the spring season, representing half of the national agricultural production. Heavy rains and severe flooding in mid-November 2023 damaged crops, homes and infrastructure. (reliefweb.int 3/25/24 news and press release) The gang violence in Haiti is actively growing. A powerful gang leader in Haiti issued a threatening message aimed at political leaders who would participate in a transition council, as fires broke out amid a fresh surge of violence in the Caribbean nation's capital. (reuters.com) A fire broke out at the main penitentiary, emptied of prisoners by armed men. (reuters.com)

This impacts food security greatly. According to Loveachild.com, kids are eating from garbage dumps, cookies made from dirt, and salt water to ease their hunger. There are people that have been helping to give food to the Haitian people. Feed My Starving Children has played a large role in helping to get food to these people and many others. They have said that getting food from point A to point B has become risky and even impossible. Feed My Starving Children provides ways to donate and donating $88 can feed a child for an entire year. One of the biggest issues this organization has faced is when FMSC food is needed the most in many regions in Haiti, their partners find themselves not being able to easily transport food from the port to their warehouse. The cost of customs clearance and transportation is also extremely high for most of their partners. (fmsc.com) They are also brainstorming ideas for easier transportation of food.

In all reality, Haiti is just becoming too dangerous for tourists and these groups to come help them safely. Kids need access to food more than the adults because they are still growing. In 2019 the child mortality rate from starvation was 21.1% (globalhungerindex.org) and it has only grown since then. A good way to solve this issue would be to freeze dry food and air drop it by helicopter to avoid the gangs. Freeze drying things like yogurt melts, lil ́ crunchies, different flavors of puffs and many more. Each of the things listed above have 20-35 calories per serving, protein and fat. Along with the preserved foods, airdropping baby food tubs are also an option. They have 90 calories per tub along with 1g of protein, 20g of carbohydrates, 20% potassium and 45% Vitamin C. Even freeze-drying chicken and goat meat can be an option, considering that it is regularly eaten in Haiti. Fruits are also a good way of getting important nutrients. Haiti's climate allows them to grow mangoes, avocados, pineapples, coconuts, and guava. Freeze drying that can give them a good way to access the vitamins they need. Freeze dried food has a shelf life of up to 20-30 years depending on the temperature, humidity, and exposure to light and air. (freezedriedusa.com) Overall it's a great way to keep common foods fresh and ready to eat whenever.

Airdropping this food can be an issue because of the gang violence unpredictability. The safest place in Haiti is Cap-Haitien. It has private security and a low crime rate. It is on the outside of the country while most of the gang violence is located in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. An international airport is located there making it easy to land and unload the freeze dried food. Once the food is in Cap-Haitien, it has to get transported to the dangerous parts of Haiti where people are struggling most. The gangs hold 80% control of Port-Au-Prince. (apnews.com) Bringing and unloading the food at night seems the most effective. It would be harder to see the cars, vans, and trucks delivering the food. Dropping the food off at a more unknown location where gang violence is low, preferably somewhere on the south coast. The south coast is a safe option for airdrop and food delivery. From there an undercover messenger could go into the struggling parts of Haiti and let them know where the food is located, having families come and get it. Getting it there safely is gonna be kinda an issue. There are other ways this cna be done as well. The most attacked place is Cite´ Soleil so steering clear from and around that area is almost mandatory if it wants to happen safely. In reality there will be gangs everywhere no matter what so it has to be done quickly and smoothly.

Haiti is struggling. Their government is weak and nobody can or wants to step up. Something needs to be done. Being able to get them the food they need and keeping it fresh and accessible is very important. This is one option out of many that can be done. Gangs make it extremely difficult to help these people safely. Being able to work as a team and figure it out together is what matters. Nobody wants to feel the pain and hunger that they are feeling. Gradually helping them as time goes on while doing it safely is our best option. One problem at a time.

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