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Ghana, Poverty
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Ghana: Improving Food Security and Poverty in Ghana

Have you ever been so hungry you say, “I’m starving to death,”? As an American living without food insecurity issues, you can likely satisfy your hunger quickly, but most people in Ghana cannot do that. Ghana is a West African country located along the Gulf of Guinea, just north of the Equator (“Ghana” par. 2). Ghana was founded on March 6, 1957, and became the first sub-Saharan African colony to gain independence (“Introduction” par. 1). Ghana’s capital city is Accra (“Introduction” par. 1). It is Ghana’s largest city and can be found around the Gulf of Guinea (“Introduction” par.5). Ghana is approximately the same size as the state of Michigan (“Land and Climate” par. 1). Despite being one of the leading countries in cocoa exports, Ghana still battles high poverty rates (“Economy” par. 1). When people do not have money, they cannot afford to purchase food. Therefore, poverty is causing food insecurity in Ghana. After lots of research, I have found some solutions for this problem. Ghana has been struggling with poverty for years; however, I believe they can change their food security issues by building schools to educate kids so they can obtain good-paying jobs to make money and afford food.

To understand Ghana’s poverty problems and the effects on the country's population, it is important to understand the country and its families themselves. Around 35 million people live in Ghana (“Population” par. 1). Of the 35 million citizens, approximately 24% have food insecurity, even though their government is trying to rectify that situation (“Ghana” par. 1). The population in urban areas accounts for 59% of the population and the other 41% live in rural areas (“Population” par. 2). Urban households in Ghana have a much lower poverty rate than rural households. Not only does location separate citizens, there are 75 ethnic groups within Ghana, each with its own language (“Population” par. 1). Ghana has a presidential republic government which is a type of democracy (“Government” par. 1). Ghana has three climate zones: the southern forest belt (warm and humid), the coastal belt (warm and dry), and the northern grasslands (hot and dry) (“Land and Climate” par. 1). About 55% of those zones are currently cultivated and the forest zone covers about 35% of the remaining land (“Land and Climate” par. 1). Within their cultivated land, cacao (from which cocoa is made) is the most important cash crop grown; however, crops such as rice, cassava, peanuts, corn, shea nuts, and bananas are also produced (“Economy” par. 1). The average farm size is less than 1.6 hectares, approximately the same size as three football fields (“Land and Climate” par. 1). The average Ghanaian woman gives birth to three or four children (“Family” par. 2). Large families require large amounts of food to sustain good health. Agriculture employs about 45% of the labor force and the minimum wage for a job is GHS 18.15 or \$1.18 United States Dollars (“Economy” par. 1). According to CultureGrams in the section “Diet”, the Ghanaian diet consists primarily of yams, cassava, millet, maize, beans, plantains, rice, and soups (par. 1). Almost

all of Ghana's dishes have numerous health benefits. In some parts of Ghana, families eat two or three daily meals with tuo zaafi, a thick porridge of corn or millet ("Diet" par. 1). Ghanaian families can get these foods from local markets if they have the resources to purchase them. Although the government is working to increase the quality and availability of medical care for people in Ghana, medical facilities are limited ("Health" par. 1). Malaria and other tropical diseases and the lack of clean water or a modern sewer system are serious health threats and they are the leading cause of death among Ghanaian children under the age of five ("Health" par. 1). Despite the majority of schooling being free, some children are still unable to attend because of school fees ("Education" par. 2). Approximately 80% of Ghanaian children attend primary school ("Education" par. 2). Compared to other low-income African countries, Ghana has an advanced infrastructure ("Economy" par. 1). If families can afford school fees, there are roads for students to use to get there and buildings to hold school in. Ghana's poverty issues are tied to the dynamics of families, income, and opportunities within the country.

Ghana has food security issues, but the Global Challenge is helping make an impact against it. The Global Challenge was created by the World Food Prize, and its goal is to improve food security in low-income countries. The foundation provides a focus topic for a country connected to food insecurity. The goal is to develop a solution for that specific focus topic. My assigned topic is poverty. Poverty is when you lack the financial resources needed to afford basic life necessities. Since almost a quarter of the population of Ghana is in poverty, there is a lot of food insecurity ("Ghana" par. 1). This happens because families that lack money cannot afford things like food. Even if they can buy food every so often, they cannot have a stable diet and stable food security. Ghana has made tremendous progress in reducing poverty in recent decades but it remains a problem ("Economy" par. 2). Although Ghana's poverty has been on a downward trend, it has risen since the COVID-19 pandemic ("Overview" par. 4). Poverty affects different parts of the country differently like genders, demographic groups, rural and urban areas, and environments. Inequalities in the gender pay gap continue to be very high leading to women having less money and a higher chance of being in poverty ("Ghana" par. 2). According to "Turning the Tide on Environmental Poverty in Ghana", poverty can also affect the environment by leading to pollution, flooding, poor waste management, environmental depletion, inadequate and low-quality housing, slum development, and an unhealthy environment in Ghana. Even though urban households in Ghana have lower poverty rates than rural households, the environmental issues worsen in urban areas ("Population" par. 2).

Given the significant poverty in Ghana, the government has been implementing various solutions to attempt to address the issue ("Economy" par. 2). According to the World Bank of Ghana, "To tackle these challenges, Ghana implemented ... policy adjustments." These new policies include an emphasis on rural development, expansion of employment opportunities for the urban poor, and better access of both rural and urban poor to basic public services such as housing, transportation, water supply, sewerage, and family planning services to try to lower poverty ("Overview" par. 3). These adjustments meet the needs of all of the country's population and work to help reduce poverty. Even though there are improvements, poverty in Ghana is still a major problem ("Economy" par. 2). Despite these policies

working, it is not a perfect solution. There is a high cost associated with the policy improvements and it requires taxes and other finances to work ("Overview" par. 3). These policies have been in place since the late 1990s and continue to be used today ("Economy" par.2). In addition to the old policies, the government has added new policies and modified some of the old ones. As a result of poverty being higher in rural areas, the government is working extra hard to make policy adjustments in rural places ("Overview" par. 3).

Countries around Ghana also struggle with poverty issues and are working to implement solutions. Côte d'Ivoire is to the west of Ghana and 40% of its population lives below the poverty line ("Economy" par. 2). Another neighboring country, Togo, has a large amount of poverty, and Burkina Faso, which is north of Ghana, is one of the poorest countries in the world ("Economy" par. 1). One of the solutions that these countries' governments focus on is education. Properly educated citizens are more likely to get a job and escape poverty. Adjacent governments are building schools all over their countries. They have been able to build the schools through partnerships and donations. Outside organizations are also trying to find solutions to Ghana's poverty. Heifer International is an organization that helps people in low-income countries like Ghana ("Our Work" par. 1). They send poor families in these countries resources like chickens to help them ("Our Work" par. 1). Families can make money by selling the chickens' eggs and this increased income source can get them on their feet. Heifer International funds this through donations which can change people's lives ("Take Action" par. 2). They do this because "Heifer International supports smallholder farmers to sustainably address hunger and poverty in their communities" (Heifer par. 1). Although they do not do much work in Ghana, these solutions would be very feasible to implement in Ghana.

To help fix Ghana's poverty issues, I recommend the solution of building more schools. If kids are educated, then they can grow up and get good jobs. This is very important because getting a job can help provide a stable income to help escape poverty. With this solution, Ghana can achieve the goal of reducing food insecurity by lowering the poverty rate. Since fewer people will be in poverty, more people should be able to buy food and have better food security. The schooling could also focus on agriculture since almost half the population's labor force is associated with farming ("Economy" par. 1). This would further increase the students' opportunity for employment, since Ghana is a farming nation. Agricultural classes could include courses in improving farming techniques, crop disease prevention, increasing crop yield, and many more. These classes could help the country become more self-sufficient and have long-term success in lowering food insecurity. I think this is a good solution, but it does have its limitations. Building schools will be very costly and getting staff will be challenging. Nevertheless, I have found a way around these problems. We can create a website for people to donate money for school construction projects. The funds can also be used to pay teacher salaries. To recruit teachers and staff members for the new schools, we can reach out to recently qualified graduates and offer them teaching positions in a country that could significantly benefit from eager, new educators. When developing these schools, consideration should be given to the fact that many rural Ghanaian children have household responsibilities at a young age. This might affect their ability to attend school. This problem can be

resolved by sending letters to the children's parents explaining to them how important it is for their children to receive a proper education and possibly adjusting the school day hours to accommodate chores.

To implement the food insecurity solution through education, we must have help from other people invested in solving this important issue. People are required to manage and lead this project. Ideally, different international development organizations and communities would join the cause. The international development organizations would have to help manage the website and the money donated. The communities could help build the schools and identify what areas need them the most. Some government policies would also have to be in place for this to be successful. The most important one would be free education. If school tuition and/or fees are in place, parents will not send their children to school since they cannot afford it. Luckily, most schools in Ghana are free of cost, and the government does not charge fees on the children ("Education" par. 2). Ghana also has resources that can help achieve the goal of increased schools and education. For example, Ghana has many natural resources like timber and oil that can be used to help build these new schools and maintain them ("Economy" par. 1). Ghana's government could also pay local workforces to help with the construction of the schools. This solution is feasible and sustainable because the schools will be around for a very long time and the new facilities may entice teachers and staff.

To sum up everything that has been stated, Ghana has poverty and food insecurity problems that can be remedied by building schools to educate kids so they can obtain jobs and afford food. This has all been possible through the Global Challenge, which is trying to make an impact on food security all over the world and in places like Ghana. Ghana has a rich family and country culture, and it is truly sad to see so much poverty impacting a quarter of the population. Solutions for poverty have been tried before in countries around Ghana and even in Ghana. Even though solutions have been tried, I truly believe that the best recommendation for an effective remedy for poverty is building schools and educating the children. Education provides more opportunities for higher-paying jobs. Next time you are hungry remember that people in Ghana are truly struggling to afford their next meal and dealing with food insecurity and poverty issues. It is on us to make a difference in improving their situation.

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