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Honduras, hunger

Honduras: Efforts To End Hunger

Growing up, young children should be focused on learning to ride a bike or learning how to swim. Unfortunately, many children in Honduras have many bigger concerns to focus on. Unlike most young kids in the US, who are fighting over what fast food restaurant they want to eat at, the kids in Honduras are worried about where their next meal is coming from. That is, if they are lucky enough to receive a meal that day. Poor families in Honduras have almost no access to education beyond the 6th grade. With limited education, it makes it very tough to get a good paying job to provide for a family. “More than sixty-six percent of the population in Honduras lives in poverty. In rural areas, it is even worse, with about one in five Hondurans living on less than one dollar and ninety cents per day.” (World Bank, 2018) “With the average household being 4.4 people per household,” (Esri, 2018) you can imagine how hard it would be to provide for a family with that type of income.

Honduras has a population of over nine million people, and hunger proves to be a severe issue. Over 1.5 million Hondurans will face hunger at some point each year. “Honduras is the second poorest country in Latin America and one of the poorest countries in the world.” (Merchant, 2019). Along with high rates of poverty come many issues, hunger being one of the biggest. “Poverty is the main cause of food insecurities in Honduras. A lack of food causes undernutrition in children and can increase the spread of disease. Nearly one in four children are stunted or chronically malnourished. In children under five years old in Honduras, stunting levels are at twenty-three percent.” (Merchant, 2019) “Access to healthcare for families in Honduras is determined by poverty level, socioeconomic status and whether or not they live in rural or urban environment. In rural environments, healthcare is much harder to access, so healthcare is mainly available to developed cities.” (Merchant, 2019) With the majority of the poverty stricken population living in rural areas, healthcare availability is almost non-existent to the poor people of Honduras.

“Agriculture is the primary sector of the economy in Honduras, accounting for about 14% of GDP (gross domestic product) and 34% of employment. Farming methods are inefficient and crop yield qualities are low. The principal export crops are bananas and coffee and the major subsistence crops are corn, beans, and rice.” (“Honduras-Agriculture”, n.d.). The climate and weather in Honduras has a great impact on the lack of food. “Honduras has experienced extreme droughts, during which many crops are lost and no longer a reliable source of nourishment. Many Hondurans rely heavily on crops as their main source of nutrition and income.” (Merchant, 2019). Hondurans also do not have access to the irrigation systems that we have in the US and rely only on Mother Nature to have their crops thrive. When Mother Nature is not cooperating, that leaves many Hondurans without food sources or income. Because agriculture is the primary

sector of the economy, and Honduras lacks proper farming methods, this leads to the main contributing factor to the problem of hunger and malnutrition among the Honduras people.

Many of the everyday things that Americans take for granted, such as clean water and working toilets, Hondurans are living without. For example, “only about fifty percent of Hondurans have access to hygienic toilets,” (“Across the Globe”, 2019) compared to the ninety percent of Americans that use a hygienic toilet everyday without thinking twice about how truly lucky they are. To add to that, “only about one in five people in Honduras have access to safe water.” (“Across the Globe”, 2019). “Rural communities face the most challenges, as many people obtain their water from small springs that are unprotected, contaminated and often without water during the dry season.” (“Honduras's Water Crisis”, 2019) The lack of clean water makes it almost impossible to maintain a healthy diet. Could you imagine giving your child a cup of dirty water knowing that they will be sick after drinking it? Unfortunately, this is a worry many Hondurans face every single day. Clean drinking water is a necessity that many Hondurans go without. Access to water is an issue that affects the daily lives of Honduran citizens. The problem of water quality leads to devastating consequences in the form of water-borne diseases and other health complications brought on by just the lack of safe drinking water.

One of the major things Honduras needs help with is getting clean drinking water. Once the Hondurans have clean water that is not making them sick, they can start to worry about some of the other struggles they are experiencing. There is currently an organization known as the Bucket Ministry which is comprised of a passionate group of ordinary people working in Honduras to try and give the people of Honduras the gift of clean, safe drinking water. This organization is able to provide clean drinking water by attaching a water filter on any bucket or other water receptacle and it flows freely for up to 1 MILLION GALLONS! If cared for properly, this filter will produce 20+ years of clean, safe drinking water. Each filter costs \$50, which makes this a very economical resource. This is just one example of how non-profit organizations are able to contribute in the aid of others in Honduras. Just think if every family or every community was able to get one filter. That would help give that family and community clean drinking water for 20 years. Although we have organizations like the Bucket Ministry in place, we still need more help to alleviate the millions of people going without proper nutrition (“Bucket Ministry”, 2019).

Having an adequate source of food and water in Honduras for many families continues to be a struggle. With Honduras already being the second poorest country in Latin America, the government is doing just about everything they can to help in relieving hunger in their own people. This leads me to believe that ending hunger is ultimately up to the people. We must intervene to try and make a common need met for these families.

There are currently some programs that are in place to assist with the hunger need in Honduras. One of these main programs is the World Food Program. Their goal is to decrease the number of people going hungry in the country. They are collaborating with the government to provide one daily nutritious meal to school children. They are also working with the children between 6 and 23 months of age and breastfeeding and pregnant women and girls from selected rural

communities to provide them specialized nutritious foods. There are also some less popular organizations involved with trying to relieve hunger in Honduras. Although there are programs in place, it is obviously not enough. Honduras continues to be one of the poorest countries in the world with the main component being poverty and hunger amongst the population. More needs to be done.

With the US being one of the richest countries in the world, and many Americans labeled as “wasteful” when it comes to many of the basic needs we take for granted, this is where we can help a less fortunate country such as Honduras. For many US consumers, the thought of buying food that is expired (or nearly so) is incomprehensible. (Schepp , 2016). “One-third of all the food on the planet is wasted.” (“Key Facts”, 2019) It is very common in the US to just throw out food that is soon to be expired. If we were to form a program that takes non-perishable food items from businesses that are going to just throw it away, ship it to Honduras, and form a type of food bank in rural areas of Honduras, hunger would be reduced in these parts of their country.

American supermarkets throw away 43 billion pounds of food every year, according to a recent study by the Natural Resources Defense Council (Gunders, 2012). Unfortunately, most grocery stores choose the landfill over food banks for the products they can’t sell. There are no federal laws for how food donations should be stored and transported or what condition the products should be in. With no guidelines, grocery stores worry that food donations could land them in legal trouble if anyone became sick from their contributions. There is a law to put their worries to rest. The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects businesses and individuals from liability when making good-faith food donations.

In 1966 President Bill Clinton put the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act into effect and made it possible for people to donate food without the worry of being in legal trouble. This law makes it possible for food to be donated that may not be “readily marketable due to appearance, age, freshness, grade, size, surplus or other conditions (“Legal Liabilities”, 2018). In France, a law passed, in 2016, that requires supermarkets to donate unsold food to charities and food banks and prohibits retailers from pouring bleach on items tossed in the garbage, a tactic used to keep away foragers. The senator who introduced the legislation is looking to establish a similar ban across the entire European Union. (Schepp, 2016).

We have many non-profit organizations in the US that could help reduce hunger rates in Honduras by simply volunteering. We also have many clubs and organizations within our school systems, churches and communities that we can incorporate into lending a hand. With a non-profit organization focused mainly on shipping non-perishable food from American supermarkets that are about to expire to rural area of Honduras, hunger could be greatly reduced. This process of donation would also help the US landfills by reducing the 43 billion pounds of waste that is thrown into it from just food from supermarkets. This would not only help Honduras, but would also help the United States.

Shipping costs are going to be an issue and the shipping costs would have to be acquired by companies and organizations willing to donate. In many cases, companies that are donating the food would need to pay for the food to be taken to a landfill. Although the cost of taking the food to the landfill is going to be less than sending it to Honduras, between the companies and nonprofit organizations, the cost of shipping could be acquired.

Once the food arrives in Honduras, volunteers would need to set up a type of food bank where the food is pre-packaged for an individual family. There would be an assigned area for the residents to pick up the package of food that is close in proximity to the living quarters, since transportation is another issue for Hondurans living in rural areas. I am confident this plan will work because it is already incorporated in the US. Trader Joe's executive Doug Rauch opened an "expired" food market in Boston in 2015. This food market is known as the Daily Table. This supermarket offers huge discounts on pantry staples and fresh food. Daily Table is able to sell food at a very reduced rate with the help of donations and by purchasing food that other supermarkets are not willing to buy. After opening last summer, consumers were eager to buy a variety of foods that they would otherwise not be able to buy due to low income (Nickisch, 2015).

Although this method of support is not going to fix the problem of poverty and hunger in Honduras, it is definitely going to help. The more people that get involved and recognize the problems in less fortunate countries such as Honduras, and see how "over-fortunate" we are as Americans, the more we can help reduce hunger to people in Honduras. A father and a mother should never have to watch their child cry in pain because the child is hungry. A child should never have to worry about where their next meal is coming from or when they will be fed next. Americans should not be throwing away billions of pounds of food when there are people living in poverty, where our waste could mean the life or death of a family member. We need to prioritize and get involved. Small acts of kindness and the willingness to lend a hand, can mean the world to someone less fortunate than ourselves.

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