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Brazil, Factor 13: Demographics

Hunger is something that no person chooses to encounter. No one wakes up on a given day and consciously makes an effort to go hungry. People do not wish to fall asleep on empty stomachs trying to think of where their next meal might come from. One would think that this issue would be easily solved by advances in technology in today's developing societies, but hunger is still very much a threat to mankind. As global citizens we must take a stand and prove to those who go hungry that they have not been forgotten and show those who struggle every day to find a decent meal that they do not have to face that fight alone.

Achieving the goal of eliminating hunger is not impossible. My proposal to improve the living conditions within the country of Brazil would be a step in conquering world hunger. My proposal is centered around urban redevelopment through the creation of new, sustainable communities of low cost housing that would alleviate the worst aspects of overcrowding and poverty and would increase access to food resources. My idea could also be applied to other countries with similar problems because it is achievable and could be implemented fairly quickly. All it truly needs is people who are willing to stand behind it and back it where it needs the most support. This process would begin in the poorest areas of Brazil.

Brazil is the largest country in South America by land mass and population. That means the Brazilian government must be very cautious of rising populations and the problem of maintaining habitable space for its citizens. This leads to a discussion of the composition of the average urban Brazilian family. The average core of the urban family is comprised of four people and tends to be arranged along traditional lines. (Dessen) This includes a mother, a father, and an average of two children. The father is usually the main wage-earner. He earns a living in the public or private sector of the economy in one of the various professions or, more commonly, in manual or service industries.[1] The mother, on the other hand, is predominantly the one who oversees the household. That means she takes care of the children, gets them ready for school, buys and prepares food, and engages in household chores. One of the key factors in being able to sustain a family of average size is being able to provide food. (Dessen)

Affordable food prices are a vital necessity to the insurance of a growing population and family. The urban family within Brazil has ample access to foods from agricultural areas of the more underdeveloped parts of the country. An average family would have the mother most likely attend the farmers' markets within the centers of the cities that provide city life with a dose of rural culture. The city folk are able to then buy farm produce, including meats and vegetables. There are supermarkets that obtain similar goods but they also stock many items that are produced from Brazil's large processed foods industry. Whereas the diet of the urban Brazilian family is important, so too is how that family experiences and consumes education. This pursuit of education, however, can be crippled by early teenage pregnancy. That then creates a dilemma for many women and households between raising children or gaining an education.

Often, the mother of the household may have to work in order to aid the family in being able to sustain itself in terms of rent/mortgage, utility payments, and food costs. This is most commonly seen in the rural areas of Brazil, towards the northeast of the country, where education competes with the demands of farm

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[1]Some of the biggest service industry companies in Brazil are Odebrecht S.A, a construction company that employs 105,000 people, JBS S.A, the largest meat processing company in the world which employs 142,000 people, and Itau Unibanco Banco Multiplo S.A, a bank which employs 95,696 people. (HSG/Global Family Business Index)

labor. Urban areas, however, must contend with the problems associated with teenage pregnancy. Unfortunately, the Brazilian education system lacks programs for teenage girls who become pregnant and, therefore, the most probable outcome for them is to drop out of school, and this is greatly increased if the woman belongs to the poorer classes. (Klaveren) "In 2000, total enrollment rates in school of girls varied from over 95% of the population between ages 10-14 to nearly 50% of the 18-19-year-olds. By contrast, the enrollment rate of young mothers was 18-22% in all age groups. Controlled for other factors, a childless girl was eight times more likely to be enrolled at school than a young mother with at least one child." (Klaveren, 41) To have such a drop off from 95% down to 50% between the two age groups is unacceptable in a rapidly developing economy. To change this trend of teenage pregnancy and lack of access to education, there should be programs in place in Brazil, that help guide and educate the youth about the responsibility of having children and the importance of an education. The Brazilian government does not need to force people to avoid having children, but rather educate them and allow the people to freely and adequately choose whether or not it is right for them to have children. The choice to have children and have an education should both be provided and maintained in Brazil. No person should have to choose between one or the other.

Education can change a person's life and it can alter the dynamic of the household in a positive manner if it is embraced and cultivated. In the urban areas of Brazil, however, it used to be difficult to educate children effectively because of the rapidly growing population of the cities. The education system's infrastructure began to be called into question in the 1960s. (Dessen) The high demand for education reform was seen in the sweeping measures passed over the course of the 1990s that continue to be implemented. (Dessen) Today the education system in Brazil is modern, like that of the United States and the United Kingdom. Children in urban areas receive state funded education and most attend until the end of high school. The growing population has also allowed colleges and universities within cities to flourish, providing a newfound demographic of educated people. Just as there were education reforms in the modern era to accommodate the growing urban populations of Brazil, there was healthcare reform too.

Access to healthcare is a great factor in determining whether or not a person would want to move into the urban life of a city or stay in a small, rural town. Providing citizens with access to this service is something that Brazilians are given as a constitutional right. The healthcare system is operated by both government and private sectors, giving the healthcare system diversity and avoiding the possibility that it could be easily turned into a monopoly by a single company. Brazil's healthcare system is free of charge to all citizens. This means that, while they are run by the state governments, hospitals are mandated to be built in the cities by the federal government. An advantage to having this type of healthcare is that the overall well-being of the urban population rises because people move to areas where there are hospitals in order to receive free healthcare. While the healthcare system employs thousands of people in hospitals and other health offices, the issue of unemployment still is prevalent within the urban areas of Brazil.

Unemployment can cripple and topple even the strongest of economies. It is present throughout the urban settings of Brazil. Begging on the street is a common sight as a result of the fact that Brazil's unemployment rate rose to an all time high of 13.10% in August of 2003. (Taborda). That high percentage has since decreased to 5.30% in January of 2015, which means that, out of the 200.4 million people living in Brazil, 1.28 million are without jobs. (Taborda) Those people cannot provide for their families, which then creates more problems in terms of disease and crime rates going up. To try and halt this, the Brazilian government has increased the minimum wage to 788 BRL which comes out to be about $310 a month. This may not seem a lot to many Americans, but many urban workers must rely on that money to sustain their family's livelihood. Those living on the minimum wage in Brazil have a tough time paying for rent, utilities, and food costs all within a single month. The low end, one bedroom apartment in a city within Brazil is approximately $257 per month with utilities costing an average of $64 (including electricity, heat, water, and garbage removal). (Adamovic) In total that comes to around $322 per month on average to live in a city in Brazil. That is not including food which would run the average person

around $50-$100 a month depending on whether they eat out at restaurants or buy locally from farm markets. (Adamovic) With this increase of the minimum wage, the government then had the task of trying to provide cheap food to its consumers within the cities and found the answer in processed food.

The ability to buy processed foods within the urban settings of Brazil is fairly easy with the emergence of Brazil's large production base of processed foods. The market for processed food in Brazil has grown dramatically, rising 56.3% or by $45.4 billion since 2008. ("Brazil Country Profile") This increase is because of the low inflation rate and the social agenda of the politicians within the government. The rise in the processed food industry is good for job markets but one would think that this would lead to a rise in obesity. The obesity rate has stayed the same for quite some time at 18.3% for females and 8.7% for males. ("Brazil Country Profile") What that constant rate means is that the healthcare system has made significant changes in order to better the health of the community. The increase of profits in the food processing industry has also led to foreign investment, which makes competition from domestic companies much more fierce. This is underlined by the fact that, "over the last fifteen years, the Federal government has increased foreign investment and export incentives. State and municipal governments also continue to provide tax and other incentives for investments in their regions. Many local governments, especially those in the North and Northeast of Brazil, offer significant incentives to attract businesses to their regions. Incentives include deferment or reduction of the state based value-added tax (VAT), free land or free building leases, and exemption from municipal service tax (ISS)." (Young) This domestic competition, created by these programs, allows companies to lower prices in order to attract customers, which leads to further price-cutting. Consumers benefit from this because they will obtain the item they want for a significantly lower price than if supermarkets were to be taken over by a single company.

Monopolization would limit a Brazilian consumer's choice in what he or she could buy, a limit most consumers would not want in their country. To further the cause of healthy choices for consumers, some urban Brazilians have formed community gardens. This practice is prevalent, especially in the favelas (Brazilian slums or shanty towns) where some people are too poor to buy produce in markets. Many families grow their own food and sustain themselves on what they produce within these favelas. Joyce da Silva, one of the members of the community garden of Parque Genesiano da Luz in the city of Nova Iguaçu states that she does not "…even buy outside, because now we know that conventional products have a lot of poison. And I don't want to eat that anymore." (Frayssinet) Many of the poor people living in the favelas are now completely dedicated to growing organic produce and raising animals within their community gardens. This is a sustainable, healthy, and relatively inexpensive option, although it requires dedication, time, and land. These gardens are critical in providing food for the poor urban population. Rural agriculture can only provide the urban areas with a certain amount of fresh food at low prices, leading urban dwellers to start providing for themselves. These community gardens allow the urban areas to grow, but they are intertwined with suitable production habits. The poorer people of the urban settings had to find a solution to food supply problems because of the constant increase in urbanization. 81% of the Brazilian population lived in an urban area in 2000, while that figure was 84% in 2010. ("United Nations Human Settlements Programme") That may seem like a small jump but it represents millions of people migrating from rural areas to the tantalizing urban metropolises.

The migration that these people are experiencing can be thought of as a form of internal displacement. This internal displacement can be caused by three scenarios which are: political and criminal violence, development and resource-related interventions, and natural disasters. (Muggah) All three of these scenarios are cases in which a Brazilian family is trying to escape or get away from something. Tracking this migration of people from rural to urban settings is difficult because of the lack of documented evidence. "One of the only comprehensive assessments of migration patterns in the country was generated by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)" in 2011. (Muggah) The report tracked the migration flows of people but not what triggered those flows. It is safe to say that the main trend of

population flow seems to be from the northeast to the southeast. (Muggah) The primary motive for such moves is economic because the southeastern cities of Brazil offer a wide range of labor opportunities. But "the impulse to move was also shaped by harsh environmental conditions in northern and northeast states as well as increasing concerns with deteriorating security." (Muggah) Thus, urban areas of the southeast are filled with overwhelming numbers of Brazilians seeking a better future for themselves and their families.

As appealing as Brazil's cities may be for poor migrants, they present the modern urban family with barriers. One of the major barriers that a typical family must face is the lack of land available for agricultural productivity. The close proximity of buildings makes it hard to find a plot of land suitable for farming within the constraints of the city. Poor residents of cities need to be able to produce the majority of their own food so that they are less reliant on the rural areas of Brazil to provide them with organically grown produce. The dense population of urban areas is difficult to overcome but, with proper planning and guidelines for citizens, the growth of agricultural activity within urban areas can greatly increase. Within an urban setting, obtaining food can be fairly easy. Making sure that food is good for one and adequate for one's diet is a different topic. There is processed food in abundance within the borders of Brazil, as indicated above, but just because there is an abundance of something does not mean that it is necessarily good for anyone. Processed food does not provide proper nutrition and thus presents another aspect of food insecurity. Brazil's port cities allow the country to import large amounts of food, which creates diversity in the food markets. Therefore, each Brazilian has a choice of whether to eat processed food, farmed food, or other locally grown produce from the community gardens. But that choice has not been readily made available to many urban Brazilians. A solution to this would be the creation of more community gardens. The community gardens could be facilitated and introduced by the federal and local governments with other international or local charities. The gardens would then be maintained by the local people living in and around the area where the garden was located. By building these food-producing areas, a Brazilian would be able to, "eat healthy fruits and vegetables, engage in physical activity and skill building, revitalize communities in industrial areas, and decrease violence in some neighborhoods by improving the well-being of people through strengthening social connections." ("Community Gardens") Ultimately, however, while a self-sustaining community garden program is a key component in relieving the problems of supplying healthy food to poor communities, the most important factor in helping to provide relief for poverty, as this paper will examine below, is the provision of steady jobs.

The poverty that exists in the densely over-populated favelas is beyond the point that anyone should be forced to endure. This is exacerbated by rising criminal gang activity and low sanitation and waste management in places like Rocinha, which is located outside of Rio de Janeiro. (Bruha) Brazil has a population that is urbanizing quicker than they can build cities, which has led to the overcrowding of many urban areas, with the favelas being the most well-known examples. The development of the favelas has become so dense that they had no more room to be built in left or right directions and, instead, had to be built up. The people in the favelas do not know what it is like to have clean running water and most will never experience access to electric power or sanitation that people in many countries take for granted.

What the people in the favelas do experience is poverty. Some, like Joyce da Silva from Parque Genesiano da Luz favela in the city of Nova Iguaçu, grow vegetables in community gardens which helps feed many people. (Frayssinet) But not all have access to free plots of land. Many can only manage to grow tomatoes out of flower pots on their window sills. If they are lucky enough to be able to grow their own food then that means that their family does not have to spend all of its household income on food. The families living in the favelas have a very low household income to begin with so spending ability is tight. Their money is used to buy the necessities of life. The typical family living in the over-crowded favelas has very little room. It might be able to get a two bedroom shack but most are in a one-room, multi-functioning area where the family cooks, eats, cleans, and sleeps. The effect of this is that it has

hindered the ability of the family to be able to grow in size without being crowded within their own shack. Not many people can move from a favela to a more desirable area because of the effects of poverty.

Over-population of the favelas, due to an overwhelming changing urban population, means that available land for farming is almost never an option. This then causes impoverished families to spend time or money on sourcing food when, if they had access to a small plot of land, they could farm for themselves and be somewhat self-sufficient. If farming is taken out of the equation, the family is going to try to find food, which may result in digging through trash and roaming around until they can find something of nutritional substance. This scavenging has also been done by garbage collectors, or catadores, to make a living. (ITC Communications) The "catadores play an important role in the waste management and recycling of Brazil's dumpsites. They have also set up their own associations that help them organize their work and improve their profit opportunities." (ITC Communications) The catadores represent a step in the right direction for Brazil in terms of waste management and business development, although this is not the most healthy option in terms of poverty relief.

Meanwhile, the severity of increased migration from rural to urban areas means that the urban areas must keep up with the demand for housing and healthcare. These attempts to meet demands have failed. "In Brazil, there is a deficit of 6.6 million housing units, equalling 20 million homeless people, who live in favelas, shared clandestine rooms, hovels or under bridges and viaducts, or are squatters, in some of the country's largest cities." ("Brazil 2000 Census") "An estimated 2,500 people are homeless in Rio de Janeiro. Another estimated 10,000 people sleep rough in Sao Paulo. Half of the population of Sao Paulo live in informal shelters." ("Applied Economics Research") Many who migrate from rural areas to urban settings to advance economically have tried and failed. This explains why so many people inhabit the favelas. However, the favelas are one blow from caving in. The trends of migration seem to have the same thing in common: a rise in migration from rural to urban settings. This factor is measured by the census that the government takes every ten years and information about where one lives is also used when one votes (which is mandatory by law in Brazil). Measurements show the increase in urban population. The situation of the typical urban family is worsening with every single person who migrates into the city. This is due to the fact that every person is competing for a job so, if five new people come into the city and apply for the job that one person would have had last week because they were not there, then the more people who migrate, the more problems are caused for the typical urban family.

There are also many attendant problems associated with overcrowding and poverty. Crime rates can also increase as a result of social disorder and desperation for income. For example, in order to make extra money here and there, to support themselves and their families, some women resort to prostitution. Brazil is one of the biggest sexual prostitution hubs in the world. Much of this trade is coerced. The age of consent in Brazil is 18; however, UN investigators estimate that "2 million young people under the age of 18 have been trafficked into prostitution." (Lederer) That means that women are degraded to being like meat for sale on the corners of streets in cities like Rio and Sao Paulo. But this trend of poverty and a need for money does not seem to have an end in sight. In Sao Paulo the crime rate is 14.2 per 100,000 people and does not seem to be improving. In Rio the crime rate is "24.3 homicides for every 100,000 inhabitants in 2011, while the homicide rate for the Northern Region of the city was 47.9 and the homicide rate for the Southern Region, where rich people are concentrated, was 2.4." (Bruha)

The favelas are the most prominent example in Brazil of urban populations increasing to the point where urbanization can no longer keep up with migrating people's demanding needs. Growing populations should be a good thing in many cases, but if you do not have anywhere to put this growing population, then it becomes something you are battling in many different aspects. Water scarcity would also be something to watch out for in the coming decades in Brazil. They have systems in place now to treat polluted water and turn it back into drinking water. (*The World Bank*) But if the population keeps on

increasing, that means that more water will be used which means resources and storage of water must be available. In a similar vein, more people means more energy consumption, so companies should start to look for more sustainable ways of obtaining this resource through such projects as wind farms, hydroelectric dams, and the production of more sugar-based ethanol (which they are currently using to fuel cars in Brazil) (Teather). They can filter water and get the impurities out of it but pollution caused by refuse is going to be hard to solve in the coming decades. Humans typically dispose of waste rather than recycle it and, if the population continues to rise, then that means more and more trash will be produced and must be taken care of efficiently and greenly. The typical urban family must be ready to try new ways of using energy in order to conserve and reduce the overall consumption of the city. It will not be easy to cut back for the typical family in the favela but building towns that require less energy would essentially force people to make the change. This cut back would have to be done in order for the well-being of the city to remain intact and not dissolve under the environmental pressures of the on-going challenge of the increasing number of people in the urban settings of Brazil.

We, as global citizens, have a choice about whether or not to help struggling countries regain a foothold in the world's economy. My idea is in sight of helping struggling countries like Brazil which is suffering through the problems highlighted above. The solution that I am proposing is a different method of urbanization. This would combat the ongoing, growing and changing population of Brazil. Loosely speaking, this pertains to the overpopulation of the urban areas in which over 84% of the current population dwells. ("United Nations Human Settlements Programme") These areas are becoming overcrowded and unsanitary, and will be unlivable if overcrowding does not slow down. That is why a concept known as New Towns should be applied. Through this proposed scheme, the government will fund the construction of cities that are planned out in detail beforehand to be self-sustaining.

A lower scale, initial version of this plan, that could be applied immediately, would be the transformation of the Olympic Village that will be used in the 2016 Olympic Games. The Olympic Village would be used as a prototype in order to see how these New Towns could be created. The prototype could be funded by a crowdsourcing website in order to raise funds for apartment furnishings and tools/seeds for the community gardens. Another benefit of this prototype, coming out of a transformation of the Olympic Village, would be that Brazil could use its many famous athletes as spokespeople for the New Town concept. Pele, Kaka, or David Luiz to name just a few of the Brazilian national soccer players from past and present, could add publicity for the funding of the project.

In order for these New Towns to be self-sustaining, it is necessary to create jobs for the population. These new jobs would be created through the construction of the New Towns from eligible workers within the favelas. This would give the people and workers from the favelas pride in the community that they helped build. The government would have to entice industries to set up manufacturing or distribution centers in these new cities in order to provide jobs for the new residents. The government could offer tax breaks if companies were to move out to these New Towns and provide free land on which to construct their buildings. The government could also offer a welfare-for-work program which would consist of offering welfare for workers if they were to be given work within those industries. It would be no easy task to get the major industries behind this concept but, if they saw a financial benefit in it, then they would take the opportunity and move into these new cities. The financial benefit behind the move would have to outweigh the current cost or situation they are in at their current locations. As stated above, It would all hinge on the ability of the government to give them something in return for relocating.

Once the job sector is taken care of, then the local government would have to focus on sustainable agriculture. What this would mean is that farms would be placed around and even within the city in order to provide the urban area with a large percentage of the food that they need. A concept developed in Glasgow, Scotland, has a system in place to feed homeless people and provide them with work. (*Socialbite.co.uk*) With decent sanitation, proper waste management, a clean water supply, and stable

electric supply, there would be a decrease in the pressure put on the healthcare system. This initiative would also provide jobs for people within the favelas and in service industries that would cater to the overall infrastructure of the New Towns. This would also decrease the dependence that many of the large urban centers have on their rural counterparts. When the jobs and food sources are set up, people will be occupied, which should result in a drop of the crime rate. The average household income would be far greater in these newly reconstructed favelas because they would not have to pay for bananas that have been shipped all the way from the Amazon if they are growing a few blocks away. All of this is a calculated gamble that is worth taking to improve the lives of people who deserve more in life than an overcrowded room with people who are looking around and wondering where their next meal might come from.

Building these New Towns in Brazil would open many new doors to economic and political success for the country. It would decrease the migration of people from rural areas to the overpopulated and impoverished favelas. By increasing industry and employment, millions of poor urban workers would now have jobs in different sectors of industry like waste management, or healthcare, or sanitation. When employment goes up so too does the amount of taxes the Brazilian government can collect from people. The creation of these New Towns would help increase the global image of Brazil as a strong, industrially sound, giant of South America. When the world sees that industries are flourishing, global investment in Brazil would increase due to the New Town's ability to handle new and improved economic growth, unlike that of the favelas that had a poor and stagnated economy. Finally, it would give Brazil more tax money to invest back into the country to promote even more growth and industry within its borders.

This concept has been tried before in the United Kingdom. The "economic and political context of post World War Two made it possible for 32 new towns to be built over six decades, offering homes to over 2 million British...achievements which served as a model to other countries in delivering large scale housing." (Ehwi) Brazil can model the New Town idea after this scheme which greatly helped the housing industry of the U.K. The U.K. was dealing with a similar problem to Brazil's, although its population was growing in the post-war period, without an adequate modern infrastructure in its older cities to fulfill the new population's needs. Once the U.K. established these New Towns, the population had places to live and the living conditions in and around the major cultural hubs of the U.K. were able to have more people involved in urban life but not be overcrowded in a densely populated city.

Improving the living conditions of the crowded cities and the favelas would greatly help increase the quantity of food and income available to the typical urban family. Fewer people equals more food and more food equals cheaper food prices and cheaper food prices equals more income. If the Brazilian government were able to slow the migration of people, then it would save the environments in urban areas. Decreasing the number of people in the favelas alone would help diminish pollution and lead to economic stimulation. Poverty would be reduced by allowing fewer people to go out in order to look for jobs. The diminution in the number of favelas would also result in a reduction in the number of prostitution rings in Brazil. Community farms would also benefit from the reduction of numbers of poor people in that people in urban areas would have more land on which to farm. All of these factors are dependent on what goes on internally in Brazil, but they also rely on external organizations and governments and people for aid and assistance.

If one were to ask members of the American public where Brazil was on a map, most of them could pinpoint the largest country in South America by land mass and population with ease. But many people do not know what is truly going on within Brazilian society. Brazil is urbanizing at an astonishing rate. Millions of rural Brazilians are moving to the cities in order to find more promising work and to gain access to the healthcare that is mainly provided in urban settings. But when they move to these cities, they are then unable to find work or a place to live within the city and thus the overpopulation problem continues to rise. The only choice these people have left is to move out into the slums or shanty towns on

the outskirts of the Brazilian urban areas. These favelas can be considered as some of the most concentrated spots of poverty in the Americas. People have no food, no clean water, no proper infrastructure, no electricity, and little hope for a better future. But this can change with the implementation, by governmental and other international organizations, of my proposal for the construction of New Towns. The Brazilian people need hope for a better future. My proposal gives them that hope and has the ability to change millions of lives. We, as global citizens, must act now and not later. We must show Brazil we truly care.

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