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Haiti: Giving Hope One Plant at a Time

Straight from the movies a land of gorgeous days and peaceful nights, sunsets that can sweep you off your feet, an abundant amount of beauty. Or, a land of corruption, starvation, robbery, attacks, and lack of basic resources. Both are the same place and sometimes even the same city, they are all located in the country of Haiti. Haiti is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, West of the Dominican Republic and South of Cuba. Haiti is known as one of the poorest countries not only in the Western hemisphere but also in the world. Haiti's government is led by Jovenel Moise and his Prime Minister, Fritz-William Michel. These two leaders lead Haiti in a Republic, Unitary State in a Semi-Presidential System.

Haiti has a total population of 10.98 million people with 38% of the population living in urban areas which is approximately 6,148,669 and 55.28% living in a rural population which is 4,974,507 people. In Haiti only 43.75% of Haiti's population has electricity. The lack of electricity is caused both by where they live and the financial struggles of living in Haiti. Being apart of an average Haitian family is made up of 4.3 people who live in a two room house made of mud walls, floors, and roofs made from local grasses and palm leaves. The windows are covered with wooden panels. The majority of houses have no water, or electricity, and are built in tight areas with other people living beside them (Britannica). The reason the houses are so small and poorly built is because the average income in Haiti is approximately \$2.50 per day, which translates into the families of Haiti are only bringing in approximately \$350 a year (Dunkel) to take care of themselves and their seven person family. But that is only those who are fortunate enough to be employed and actually have a job. In Haiti you will most likely find people roaming the streets looking for a job so they can provide for their family, because in Haiti over 70% of the Haitian population are unemployed. Just because the minimum wage has not increased does not mean that inflation in Haiti has not been happening. Which has put in lots of stumbling blocks for family whether it be buying food, sending the kids to school, or providing basic needs for the family. Families in Haiti do not have access to food, school, and health care. In Haiti over 200,000 kids do not attend school because most schools in Haiti require a tuition fee causing there to be a problem within the family because they can not afford to pay tuition (World Bank). Also, because of the lack of funding in Haiti's health care system and the overall lack of money in Haiti, many kids go without seeing a doctor until they are critically ill. Haiti can barely afford to put money towards the healthcare system let alone food. When the people of Haiti are forced to live off of \$350 per year and most of the food they eat is imported from the United States, that means the food prices are very high. Only 66.76% of the land is cultivated

and used by the Haitian's to feed themselves. Their diets are mainly made up of cassava, plantains, bananas, corn, yams, sweet potatoes, and rice. The general meal that they consume in Haiti is usually rice, and not very much of that. With the lack of money to buy food, people in Haiti are literally starving to death. "Over the years, I've seen plenty of kids in Haiti with malnutrition get sick with infections or something else and die. Sad but not unusual. This is the first time that I have seen them literally starve to death,"(Hu CNN) But feeding their country is a country effort. Most farm families have seven to eight children and two parents. Although the typical farm size is only 3.2 acres it may seem very small to America but there it is average. Because of the unpredictable weather in Haiti with the tropical or frigid, rainy or cold,

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temperate or monsoonal temperatures, it is hard to farm and produce a good crop yield. Another huge issue that the people of Haiti face is the lack of clean water and not having a permanent way to solve the issue. Most of the citizens that reside in Haiti do not have pipes inside their house, and there is no really good way to get clean water to them.

“The causes of malnutrition and food insecurity in Haiti are multifaceted and, in addition to natural disasters and climate-related factors, include poor infant and young child feeding practices; lack of access to clean water and sanitation; high unemployment; and poverty.”(US Aid) So when combining all of these you get an extreme disaster adding up to be one of the most poorest countries in the world. A way that we could combat this malnutrition is through utilizing non-profit organizations, donations, and volunteers. “Approximately 40 percent of the country is malnourished. In fact, one in five children is malnourished. In addition, 80 percent of rice, the country's major food source, is imported, thus creating a large dependence on foreign exchange” (Borgen Project). With those brutal facts the only way that Haiti will be able to combat food insecurity and malnutrition is through sustainable farming. My recommendation is utilizing hoop houses and chicken coops.

Through the use of hoop houses they will be able to grow and feed themselves, and with chickens raised in chicken coops, they will be able to feed themselves as well. An average hoop house costs around \$25,000. The cost is for a 1,000 square foot building, which would equal about 500 plants. With the use of non-profit organizations they would be able to cover the cost of the first round of plants and the hoop house. Through utilizing chickens and chicken coops, the average cost of the chicken coop would be around \$1,000 and would hold about 250 chickens. Between the chickens there should be about ten waterers which would equal approximately \$500. The chickens could eat the grass and natural nutrients, and the rotten plants from the hoop house. Also the chicken manure inside of the coop could be used as fertilizer for the hoop house. To water the plants inside the hoop house and to fill the chicken waterers we would utilize rain barrels which average around \$50. You would probably need about four of them, that cost would be around \$200. The total cost of the project would be about \$26,700, but we would also need volunteers to help teach them how to farm sustainably, help them build their hoop houses and chicken houses, and also how to correctly nurture the plants and the chickens. But the only way that plan

can be put into action is through donations, the community, and the government. We would need donations to send workers and help the Haitian families learn how to farm sustainably. We would also need the community members to be able to help themselves by being willing to work in the greenhouse daily and care for the chickens to make sure they have water and are fed.

Lastly, we need government support to make sure that the residents are keeping up on the daily task and if they need a little bit of support, give the support the Haitian people need to help make their project successful. To make sure that we are able to maximize and make this project be sustainable in Haiti, we will need to properly inform the residents on the proper nutrition for the chickens and how to properly plant, grow, and pick their garden to reach its maximum harvest rate. Also, the hoop houses and chicken coops need to be monitored on a monthly basis to make sure they are being tended to successfully so the product of the hoop houses and chicken coops will make an impact on the malnutrition of the Hatians.

The chicken coop and the hoop house should be able to be placed in a community, allowing the whole community's nutritional needs to be met by consuming the goods of their labor. With the green house

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being able to house many plants, a community should be able to share its abundance and be able to help with the malnutrition in each of their homes. With the chicken coops, the whole community would be able to eat the 200 eggs that each day. The idea with the vegetables and chickens is that a family will be able to consume a healthy meal. Because of the lack of money in Haiti, growing the plants with chemicals, and having to buy multiple bags of feed each week would not be very sustainable within the community. Utilizing sustainable farming provides the opportunity of growing the plants with natural resources, feeding the chickens off of the earth and greenhouse leftovers, and utilizing rain barrels to water the greenhouses and the chickens is the most promising solution to helping feed the Haitian families and will have lasting effects within the community and the country.

That is why through the utilization of sustainable farming, non-profit organizations, volunteers, and government support I believe that sustainable farming will have long term positive effects in Haiti. Providing the opportunity for Haitian families to grow their food, will help with malnutrition and raise the overall health of the citizens. Through my recommendations, I believe that we will be able to turn all of Haiti into looking like it came straight from the movies, a land of gorgeous days and peaceful nights, sunsets that can sweep you off your feet, and an abundant amount of beauty. Instead of being a land of corruption, starvation, robbery, attacks, and lack of basic resources. So let us go out and give hope one plant at a time.

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