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Haiti, Factor 16: Education

Haiti: The Base of Fixing Poverty is Education

“Foreign Assistance is not an end in itself. The purpose of aid must be to create the conditions where it is no longer needed.” – President Barack Obama

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”- Chinese Proverb

Poverty is the one problem that is challenging to fix with no set cure. In Haiti, education is the best way to work towards fixing this problem. With Education we can teach the Haitians how to improve their country’s quality of life. Education has proven to work in other countries such as the United States of America. You would not think this now from growing up here, but when we first came to America the Native Americans taught us how to survive. We need to help the Haitians just like we were helped a long time ago through education in order to better their lives. Though in Haiti we need to teach them more sophisticated techniques, the principal idea is still the same. Haiti wasn’t always in poverty. When it was conquered by the French it was full of life but also slaves. In 1791 to 1804 the slaves had enough of their cruel slave masters and conducted the first and only successful slave revolt. After this occurrence the country was now run by slaves that did not have money or government leaders. They had finally reached their idea of hope that had been running in their minds for generations. This seemed enough for them, but it wasn’t enough to sustain a country.

Haiti is located on the island of Hispaniola which it shares with the Dominican Republic. Haiti has a population of 10.8 million that all live on a land area of 27,560 sq km. It has a human development index of 0.48 out of 1 as well as a 53.4% prevalence of undernourishment according to the Global Food Security Index found at foodsecurityindex.eiu.com/Country/Details#Haiti. Massachusetts is about the size of Haiti with a difference of 150 square miles. Massachusetts also has a population of 6 million. Haiti has more than 4.3 million more people and only 150 more square miles. That seems a little cramped. A typical subsistence farm family has an average size of six family members. On average the Haitian diet consists of one meal a day that could range from various meats, black beans, cornmeal, arrowroot, chicken eggs, or rice. A farm family would have minimal to no access to health care. Even with very few health care providers available a lot of them are inferior in their medical education. A farm family would own about 2.5 acres. They would grow coffee beans or sugar cane. Crops are harvested by hand with a

few occasions where animal power is used for the harvesting of sugar cane. These methods are toilsome and hard, but can be changed.

Haiti seems to be the poster child for third world countries. It has the stereotype of being a country past help. Haiti has so many overwhelming problems as you can see by the continuing amount of poverty despite the amount of aid it has received. Education is the basis of everything which would support the needed improvement in their country. Even agriculture you need to study and learn in one form or another to know how a combine works, the makeup of plant genetics, or how our soil is comprised. In Haiti through education there would also be more opportunities to provide nutritional aid.

In Haiti about “thirty- five percent Haitian youth are unable to read and the average child spends less than four years in school” according to the hopeforhaiti.com .This percentage is even less in children who live in rural areas. In Haiti rural schools are few and far between due to the lack of government funds, limited facilities, and low enrollment. Because of this school is only really afforded to the elite. Ninety percent of Haiti’s schools are private according to hopeforhaiti.com. A Haitian school year is from October to July with a two week break at both Easter and Christmas. A child would first go to kindergarten for two years and then transfer to the primary school. Primary school consists of preparatory, elementary, and intermediate with each lasting two years. Primary school is what must rural and urban kids attend but do not, in most cases, advance to a higher level of learning. If they were to continue their education, they would take an exam to see if they qualify for a high-primary or secondary school which is contingent on the student graduating primary school. After 2 years of secondary school you would go to a university, medical, or law specialty school. School in Haiti isn’t like a school system that we would imagine in our culture.

Hope for Haiti is an organization that is striving to build communities by following this progress of education, nutrition and health care, clean water program, infrastructure, and finally economy. This organization has been running for twenty five years and impacts five hundred thousand children and adults yearly. According to Hope for Haiti they have “Executed a wide range of education programs including: teacher salary subsidies to ensure quality teachers, book share fund providing students with five core subject textbooks and notebooks, back to school supplies equipping students with materials each year, small scale construction in partnership with buildOn, school lunch programs featuring local produce, impacting the work of more than 600 teachers and 15,000 students annually (when supporting 60 schools), and 450 teachers and 10,000 students annually (when supporting 40 schools)”. As you can see this program has been impacting Haiti in a positive direction. This level of impact needs to be supported on a much larger scale in order to see the results needed for this country to overcome its adversities.

At this current time there are many barriers for Haiti’s Education. Some of these include undernourishment, stress, natural disasters, and daily life. As well as some that are barriers for agriculture

education and productivity include corrupt government, lack of technology, lack of proper knowledge, and understanding of trade policies. All of these affect the country as a whole as well as the single family.

Gaining access to food markets and adequate nutrition is a barrier that we can meet. It can be fixed by international trade, raising wages, and making more available jobs. It also can also be met by government programs and other international organizations. But how are employment and living wages raised? To raise employment you need to bring businesses to the country or support local business' growth and the number of needed jobs. Wages can be raised by making a minimum wage and increasing it with time as well as making the currency worth more. In order to even these out supply and demand needs to be more equally balanced. This is where the education on how to utilize the land best will be crucial.

In Haiti, improving agriculture productivity can prove difficult with little to no education on agriculture, technology, electricity, and even how the government works. It is hard to fix these barriers in a short amount of time and with the quality needed. Education takes time as it will take at least one generation for the progress to be truly evident. Some of the traits that need to be shared are crop rotation and introducing technologies with emphasis on how to use them. Technology and electricity I believe go hand in hand. Without electricity you cannot power technology. How do they get electricity? Wind power from wind turbines is an efficient and cost effective means to fix the problem. This would benefit the country by creating jobs and giving them a useful means to begin self reliance. The wind turbines could be donated by outside organizations such as companies or non-profit organizations.

Bringing electricity to the country of Haiti would in turn allow technology to be taught and made more available to the rural area families and farmers. By making technology more available you would create more jobs, improve the economy, make food more available, create better transportation, bring running water into rural homes, and increase the quality of daily life. Technology would revolutionize how education would impact this country. It would bring computers, tablets, and other learning tools into classrooms as well as make hands on learning materials more available. The electricity bringing the technology to the people in the classroom would also make it accessible for daily use.

The best way to bring electricity to Haiti is by wind power through wind turbines as I have previously stated. This method is a clean way of creating electric without harming the country's delicate environmental structure by only emitting nontoxic substances. A wind turbine would also help the economy because it does not require fuel or carbon expenses, only operation and maintenance fees are needed which in turn provides jobs. Livestock, farming, and tourism can all take place around the wind turbines eliminating wasted space. An average onshore wind turbine with a capacity of 2.5-3 MW produces enough electricity to power about 1,500 average households and has an average lifespan of 20-25 years. The longevity of the wind turbines make it a very economical investment in the future for Haiti.

A corrupt government is one of the hardest barriers that exist. In a country like Haiti where the government is unstable we need to unify the country in order to fix this complex problem with a simpler plan. My plan is to fix poverty through an education system. Just as the Chinese Proverb teaches we need to teach the people how to do the tasks for themselves so that they are not dependent upon outside sources continually. The money that would be needed to fund this plan would have to come from other outside sources such as The World Bank due to the fact that the government couldn't sustain the needs currently. The government's involvement, cooperation, and encouragement are still crucial to this plan. The best way to gain the results needed is by making more schools available to rural and poor urban families as well as making more opportunities for the children of Haiti. We need to teach them the importance of crop rotation, soil erosion reduction, deforestation reduction, and the basis of technology. Through this they will gain an understanding of safe and helpful agricultural practices that will make food availability, quantity, and quality rise. This could be accomplished through agriculture students from the United States' Universities being allowed to go to Haiti as interns to give the needed education to the Haitians. This plan would change Haiti to a more self-reliant country. It may take some time, but I am a true believer in what education can accomplish in a relatively short time. Each step in the right direction is an improvement.

Haiti has a history that is extraordinary. They overcame slavery in order to achieve what those for generations had hoped for. The Haitians are a people that never give up despite adversity. They have had to face governmental instability and natural disasters that have left their country tattered and torn. Education is the necessary catalyst to their success going forward. Through this we can revolutionize Haiti by teaching them the proper agricultural practices and giving them the opportunities that they need to build their country back up to a prospering country. We can change their everyday unneeded toil to educated progress that improves their quality of life and land. We need to join Hope for Haiti and continue to enhance the work that they have begun. Everyday a rural farmer makes an avoidable, unwise decision that will hurt his farm. As modern agriculturists with knowledge to share we have a calling to teach him that there is a better option. This calling is to teach the modern ways of agriculture and how to sustain it. As modern educators we have a calling to help that rural family whose child has never been to a school because there wasn't one available. We need to empower the "thirty five percent Haitian youth who are unable to read" and the average Haitian child that spends less than four years in school. A change in how education is approached is what is needed. We can help the Haitians overcome these barriers but only action will make it a reality. By putting this approach into action we teach the Haitians by giving them the proper tools and resources for them to then take into their communities and teach what they have learned to others. This in turn will help their communities to grow, sustain themselves, make wise government decisions, and be able to support prosperity for their country. Education is also how we create the conditions in which foreign assistance is no longer needed as President Obama suggests is the basis for offering Foreign Assistance. This is the essence in which the Chinese Proverb was written. This is the way we teach Haiti to fish and to feed themselves for a lifetime.

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