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Greece, Populations

Greece: How the Economic Crisis is Affecting Food Insecurity

Introduction

Greece? The movie *Mama Mia*, white sandy beaches, blue oceans, and a beautiful tourist attraction are many things that probably pop into your head when someone says Greece. Or do you think of refugee camps lining the borders, children starving in school, and families struggling to survive? Greece's economic crisis has been kept under wraps and not publicized due to the sheer amount of people below the poverty line and the economic crisis. As of now, Greece can not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Greece, In Short

Geography: Did you know that there is a country that is almost the same size as the U.S. state Alabama? Greece, a southeastern country with many islands, is so small that it can be compared to a state. To illustrate, as of 2020, Alabama had a population of 4.9 million people, and Greece had a population of 10.72 million. In Greece, 8.5 million people live in urban areas like Athens compared to only 2.1 million people living in rural areas.

Climate: Greece has a temperate climate, with warm summers and mild winters. Their winters are wet and their summers are dry. The climate fuels the tourist industry and makes it a perfect place to vacation.

Government: Greece has a parliamentary republic government similar to the United States. It has a president and a prime minister. President Sakellaropoulou is the Chief of State and has been in office since 2020. Prime Minister Mitsotakis has been the head of government since 2019. They also have a cabinet that is appointed by the Prime Minister and three branches of government like the United States. Greece has a royal family although this family does not rule over the country, but are figureheads used to remember the past. For a law to be passed in Greece it has to be voted on and passed through the house much like in the United States.

Population and Agriculture: Even though most of the population lives in an urban area, 64 percent (353,000 hectares) of their land is cultivated. The country's major crop exports are olives and tobacco. The average farm size in Greece is 5 hectares which is about the size of 12 and a half football fields or 12 and a half acres. Greece has a warm mild climate that makes it perfect for growing olives. They export olives and other fruits and vegetables that they can grow in their mild climate. Greece's main imports are crude oil and petroleum.

Family Structure and Daily Life: The tourist industry also reflects on the families that live there, by influencing their careers and how they live. Vendors and entrepreneurs are very common because tourists like to purchase handmade and homegrown items. The average family in Greece has only

one possibly two children. Their diet is Mediterranean and consists of greens and fish. Greek is the official language, and it is spoken by 99 percent of the population.

Food, Water, and Sanitation: One hundred percent of the drinking water is sanitary in Greece, and yet they are one of four European countries that rely on salination for their drinking water. (Salination uses ocean water and extracts the salt and bacteria so that it is sanitary.) Salination gives Greece unlimited water even though the rivers are very polluted because of runoff from fertilizers and chemicals associated with agriculture.

Jobs and Employment: Although they are having low employment rates a lot of their citizens are in the tourist industry. Unemployment rates have tripled from 2008 to 2013. Unemployment has had a serious impact on their economy and income. Cab drivers and other service jobs are very common in Greece along with entrepreneurship. Many people have started their own businesses or found another way to make a living.

Topic: Population

Greece has many problems, many of them having to do with overpopulation and the flood of refugees coming from Syria and Saudi Arabia. Greece is also very different from the United States in many ways. In the U.S. when a child is born that child is automatically a citizen of the U.S. This has affected how they handle the immigration crisis. Around four percent of adults are unemployed in the United States whereas 21.5 percent of people in Greece are unemployed.

Immigration: There has been an influx of immigrants seeking refuge in Greece. They are piling up in camps across the border, which are unsanitary and are compared to prisons. EU officials have demanded that people living in the refugee camps are provided with food no matter their legal status. The people in them are seeking asylum and are not being given it because of the strict rules Greece's government has enforced. To be allowed into the country and be eligible for welfare checks, a tax number and residence permit have to be provided. This is why asylum is not always granted. A letter from the ministers of other European countries stated that "suitable accommodation is not provided and a minimum level of physical subsistence" is not supplied in the refugee camps.

Economic Difficulties: Economic difficulties have affected the economy and made it crash along with the global stock market crash of 2009. The increase of people has spread resources thin and caused prices to skyrocket and the euro to lose value after their currency change. Forty percent of rural citizens in Greece are on the verge of poverty and experiencing food insecurity. Nineteen percent of these people are extremely deprived and struggle to find healthy nutritional food on a daily basis.

Impact on Food Security

Trends in Food Security: Food insecurity has doubled from 2008 to 2016 throughout the country. Families don't have enough money to feed their children a piece of bread before school in the morning and there have been multiple accounts of children passing out in school because of hunger. Obesity used to be a problem in children and now those children have lost weight and become part of the population that does not have access to food.

Effects on Populations: Greece has had a rise in population, therefore, spreading resources thin. There are parts of Greece that do not have a reliable food or water supply. The camps along the border have been neglecting their inhabitants and causing problems for the rest of the country.

Environmental Effects: Greece pulls its water from the ocean and takes the salt out of it so it is drinkable. This is called salination and is rarely used in other countries. A flash flood can put thousands of people out of drinking water.

Solutions and Recommendations

In history, there have been many times when a country has had severe problems because of an economic crisis. The Great Depression in the United States was devastating not only to the U.S., but other countries also had problems because of factors like inflation among other issues. To get out of the Great Depression the United States had to create more jobs and find ways for the people to make money again. Unemployment rates were chronically high and people didn't have enough money to buy food because they had no jobs. The US created jobs paying people to make state or county parks and other attractions. The government paid them a small amount but it was enough for people to get back on their feet. This is more helpful to the people because they have to work for the money, not just get free handouts. Americans, like the Greek people, are very proud and won't just take money even if they need it. To complement this, several solutions may exist.

Solution 1: Around 60 percent of people in Greece are below the poverty line and don't know where their next meal will come from. Many people don't have the money to buy food for their children. There have been accounts of children passing out in school due to hunger. Greek people are very proud and do not accept handouts unless it is affecting their children. Many parents will do whatever they can to provide for and help their children. As a result, this may mean accepting money or a job even if they have not personally earned it.

Creating a program that provides funds for people in need would be a short-term solution that gives them a chance to provide for their children and have enough money to purchase food. This could happen by making an "adopt" a family campaign. Programs like this could be used by Greek families who are financially stable, other Europeans, and people from around the world. These people would get to choose an amount of money to donate. Half of this money would go to the government employees that are running this program and paying them. The other half would go to the families in need and could be used for buying food or paying bills. These jobs could go to people that have lost their job or bring a new source of revenue for the citizens. This is not a long-term solution because the donations would dry up. Although this could be a good solution for the immediate future and help people get a good start.

Solution 2: Due to Greece's economy being severely collapsed the prices of everything have gone up including food prices. A food shortage is not the problem in Greece; the problem is that food is not affordable and a lot of families don't have the money to buy food. Employment rates are at an all-time low and still on a downward trend. Creating jobs for the citizens will help pull this country out of poverty and help people get back on their feet. Greece is a tourist industry and thrives on visitor demand. COVID 19 has had an impact on their economy but it has not been the only factor.

Creating jobs that help the tourist industry like creating new attractions can help Greece become a hospitable country once again. There is always manual labor to be done and with many people not employed this is a good opportunity. Unemployment levels would decrease and people are making money, so they can get back on the right road. The government would fund this. Even though the country is broke and this will cost more money it will help the people thus generating revenue.. This will also create supply and demand within the country and give people money to spend. People will have food and will not just be accepting handouts. This program would not go on forever, but its effects would continue to grow and create prosperity throughout the country.

Solution 3: Many people in Greece are having trouble affording nutritional food or any food. A solution for this could be giving out a couple of hundred dollars per family member, so they can help grow their own food. This would be similar to the COVID relief funds that Americans received. Since a majority of the population live in urban areas they would not be able to create huge gardens but a couple of tomato plants on a balcony or a five-gallon bucket could help out. This may not seem like a lot when thinking about the individual numbers, but if all eight million people do this it will add up to be a lot of food. People who have the space for a bigger garden could share it with their neighbors or friends in the city. This would be a small step, but it could save Greek citizens from starving and malnourishment. This could also expand to beekeeping or raising chickens to collect eggs.

Conclusion

Greece is no longer a place to go for a vacation with sunshine and beaches. There are refugees kept in camps along the border, citizens unable to provide food for their children, and overall the country is in a state of crisis. Greek citizens don't know where their next meal is coming from and simple strategies like making donations, creating jobs, and growing their own food are just a few ways that could help Greece get back on its feet. Overall, if the people are healthy, employed, and satisfied the country will flourish.

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