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Belize: Factor 10, Factor 14

Food Security Essay: Belize

If you go to Belize today and meet ten different people, chances are 4 of them are living in poverty. When you live a life where everyday income is not a realistic option there is no way that food is one either. A lot of Belizeans are not able to access food and food security is but a dream. They do not have the luxury of going to the local McDonalds' restaurant around the corner. Most Americans would not even dream of having to worry about being able to afford one meal per day. However, this is life for about 40% of the population in Belize.

Belize is located on the Caribbean Sea, south of Mexico, and northeast of Guatemala. Hills and mountains coat the inlands, while mangrove swamps and rays are laced along the coast. In the south the land is covered in flat terrain, swampy coastal plains, and low mountains. In Belize the climate is tropical with very hot and humid weather. Belize is often subject to hurricanes and flooding along the coast. It is a relatively small country that is about the size of Massachusetts. The country is a huge tourist attraction due to its beautiful landscape and gorgeous beaches.

While the landscape of Belize is simply breathtaking there are still some issues with the country. Belize has a very heavy debt burden to other countries. Its debt is comparable to the debt of United States but on country with a population smaller than that of the state of Wyoming. The unemployment rate in Belize has only been increasing recently and so has the crime rate. Another huge problem in Belize is their increasing involvement in the Mexican and South American Drug Trade system. Belize also has one of the highest rates of people living with HIV/AIDS in Central America. Not only that but, there is a huge conflict over the sanitation and contamination of groundwater in the country.

Most of the people in Belize are Creole, Mayan, Mestizos, and a small population of 7% of Garifuna. Belize has an immensely diverse population however, most are interracial unions. It is not common for Belizeans to live with their parents past the age of 20. Popular sports in this tropical country are boxing, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and track. Popular style of music is Garifuna, an Afro-Caribbean type-style. About 77% of the population is some type of Catholic or Christian. 14 percent are some other type of religion and about nine percent consider themselves not to have a religion at all. Belizean culture is thoroughly influenced by the Mayan empire that previously resided there. Other Central American countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, and the Caribbean all play a vital part in the history of Belize as a country. These countries also help to shape the culture and the customs of this country. The United States plays a key role as well in Belize. The influence of our government policies, the support we offer to them, and in our education system. Belize is influenced by the United States by the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of media.

Something else that is often associated with culture in Belize is the high prevalence of people living in that country with HIV/AIDS. AIDS is an enormous health concern for most all of the people living in Belize. It poses a major health risk to Belizean health as a whole. The major

problem for surrounded around HIV is not even the number of the population affected, it is mostly that there are not nearly enough testing facilities available. Malaria is also a major health concern for most Belizeans. Even though malaria is both preventable and treatable Belize does not have enough resources to provide for either of these things. Dengue fever, also a disease carried by mosquitoes, is another huge health concern for Belize.

Belize has no report of a failing government; however their government is rather unstable. Belize utilizes the help of the United States for financial assistance as well as political guidance. Their government often looks to our countries decisions to help them mold their own laws and policies. According to the Belize Times in August of the year, they have received reports that the government is very unstable.

Belize has a primarily high-quality health care system. Most health care providers administrate health care at a very low cost to Belizeans; some even offer it with no charge at all. Compared to most of Central America their health care system is great but it isn't even comparable to that of North America and Europe standards. In the public health care sector many of the hospitals are over-crowded and under-supplied. In the private health care sector it is, of course, a lot more expensive and the cost is typically directly from the patient and rarely from private insurance. If the cost is not subsidized by the government most Belizeans cannot afford to get the better private sector health care.

Although there is access to health care, the better health care is just not attainable for most Belizeans. 4 out of 10 people in Belize are living in poverty. In Belize, there are the very rich and the very poor, and there is a huge income gap between the two groups. The number one foreign exchange earner is tourism, followed by the export of sugar, bananas, citrus, and marine products. Despite their profits in these areas, there is still weak economic growth and a large public debt burden. About 3% of the urban population in Belize is living in poverty. And almost 13 of the rural population are living in poverty. Compared to the United States 15% of American living under the poverty line Belizeans have about 1% more people in poverty than the United States.

Most people in Belize have access to water in spite of the devastating poverty rate. The water in Belize is typically healthy and easily accessible; however half the water that is provided for Belizeans is rain water. The government has used the countries extremely predictable rainy season to maximize the amount of water available. The only problem with this idea is that they have almost no way of regulating the rules on the purification process. Also, it is hard for them to manage their ground water because of oceanic phenomenon like El Nino, so it has become the secondary source of their water supply. The Water and Sewerage Authority is held accountable for overseeing not only the duties of purification but also for managing the supply of water.

The Water and Sewerage Authority is a perfect example of the work being done in Belize to insure the country makes advancements and that basic human needs are met. Another program that is attempting to aid Belize is one that focuses on helping prevention of agricultural degradation. SAVE THE RAINFOREST, Inc. is a company devoted to coming up with alternative methods to prevent using the rainforest for any use other than conserving the

environment. There are not very many programs invested in assisting the advancement of Belize but there are some such as UNICEF, the Red Cross, and UN.

Belize has issues that, granted, cannot easily be fixed but with time and a lot of effort these problems may be solved. If Belize had a stable government a lot of the problems would be able to be taken care of. The economy in Belize is extremely poor right now. This is only because they use the assistance of other countries, such as the United States, and when those countries economy's fall through, Belize's economy plunders as well. Not being so dependent on other countries would allow Belize to have control of their own financial standings and it would also allow them to control other aspects of the way the country is run. For instance, a stable government would provide Belize with the ability to be able to regulate water sanitation through government agencies.

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