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Hunger in Bangladesh

There are currently 6,602,224,175 people living in this world; however, every five seconds a child dies ("Population 2008"; "Hunger Facts"). The saddest part about all of these deaths is that they were caused by hunger and malnutrition, both of which could easily have been prevented by proper nutrition. Every year 862,000,000 people go hungry. To different people, poverty means different things. The Rehydration Project is an organization working to stop the millions of death caused by Dehydration. Here is what the Rehydration Project thinks, "HUNGER is not appetite; it is a profound, debilitating, devastating, intensively painful, human experience. It keeps us from working productively, from thinking clearly, from resisting disease. Ultimately, if it goes on long enough, it kills us" ("Hunger Facts- Ending Hunger").

In the United States, the poverty line for one person is \$9,039, and for a family of four, it is \$18,104 ("Official Poverty Line"). However, the Poverty Line in Bangladesh is \$1 a day ("Globalis"). In Bangladesh 63,000,000 people live below this poverty line. The difference between those two poverty lines is extraordinary. Bangladesh is a rather young country; it recently gained its independence on December 16, 1971, after struggling for its independence since 1947 ("1971- Independence War"). For such a young country, Bangladesh has a large population of 150,448,339 people and a density of 2,600 people per square mile; it is ranked number eight for population size in the world. Bangladesh is the size of about 2% of the United States. Bangladesh is also ranked third for having the largest number of poor people, following only India and China. The people of Bangladesh are mostly farmers. In fact, only about 18% of the population lives in cities. The poor farmers of Bangladesh are using old outdated technology to farm, yielding smaller crops than a farm using more updated farming techniques. They are not able to produce enough on their farms to survive ("Bangladesh").

Around the world, people are working to assist people living in these conditions, but with numbers like these, what is the best possible way to help the situation? I believe that building agricultural extension programs offering education and advisory services to family farmers for implementing technologies and practices from research and development efforts is the best solution for helping to relieve the hunger throughout the world and especially in Bangladesh.

The average family in Bangladesh is made up of six people. Although in most families, two children will die before their second birthday ("Dimensions of need"). Most families live off about one U.S. dollar a day. Bangladeshi women get married very young. Recently, however, the legal age for women to get married increased from 14 to 18, but the age for men to get married is still 21. Despite the legal age, most women are married by 15 and have at least one child by 19. As a result, annual population growth is 1.48% ("BANGLADESH").

Eighty percent of Bangladeshis live on farms, and agriculture is the most important part of the Bangladeshis' economy. The average farm is 0.1 hectare, approximately .247 acres (Dimensions of need). The farm homes are usually made of bamboo, consisting of one or two rooms. It is very rare for a farm in Bangladesh to have plumbing or electricity ("Bangladesh").

Bangladesh grows more rice than any other country, even though its people don't have enough food to eat. In fact, Bangladesh farms produce three crops of rice a year. Jute, a fiber used to make twine, is its chief export crop. Sugarcane, tea, tobacco, and wheat are other chief products. Most Bangladeshis' farms not only have crops but also have some sort of livestock. The livestock on these farms are generally

undernourished and produce poor meat and very little milk. However, the livestock in Bangladesh are good for animal hides, making Bangladesh a leading supplier of animal hides. Bangladeshis cannot produce enough food for sale, or to supply their families. This is due in large part to the old farming techniques that are used. Around 1970, some farmers began taking advantage of the improvement of fertilizers and seeds, yet they are still having trouble producing enough crops (“Bangladesh”).

Nutritionally speaking, Bangladeshis usually consume 1,800 calories a day; the recommended daily amount is 2,100. Ninety percent of the family’s income is spent on food. The most common foods eaten is rice and fish. Bangladeshis usually drink tea and water (“Dimensions of need”). Food, even on farms, is often scarce.

Due to the food shortages and unsanitary living conditions, many people suffer from Cholera, Leprosy, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Malaria alone kills thousands annually. Recently there has been a shortage of nurses, doctors, and medical supplies (“Bangladesh”).

The education in Bangladesh is also very poor. Seventy-five percent of the population from age 15 and up is illiterate. This high illiteracy rate is partially due to there being no law requiring that people attend school. In fact, less than half of Bangladeshis attend school (“Bangladesh”).

Building agricultural extension programs offering education and advisory services to family farmers for implementing technologies and practices from research and development efforts could affect the farmers of Bangladesh greatly. Currently there are not enough programs to help educate the farmers as to how they could produce enough crops for their families. The agricultural productivity of Bangladeshis’ farms are not to where they could be because the farmers have not been educated enough to yield the amount of crops that could potentially be grown with the rich soil of Bangladesh. Because there is not a surplus amount of crops, the price of food is too much for most (“Food Farming”).

As of now, the farmers are working toward ways to produce more crops and save money, but they are limited due to their techniques. Bangladeshis farmers use cows to pull plows because they are more practical than tractors for many reasons, including the lack of money for the original tractor or gas to put in the tractor. While using cows may seem like a good idea, it is not as efficient or reliable as a tractor (“Food Farming”).

Women are especially disadvantaged in Bangladesh because they depend on their husband or father’s farm to make the money for their family. Of course the women help in many aspects of the farm and household, but very rarely do they work outside of the home, causing them to feel especially helpless while their family is starving. By offering education and advisory services to family farmers regarding technology, women would be given more opportunities. When the farmers have enough money, they wouldn’t need their daughters to drop out of school to stay home and help around the farm (“Options and Opportunities”). Then, the women could stay and get an education. After getting an education, the women can get a job and learn to support themselves and their families. With more children staying in school and getting an education there will be more doctors and nurses because more people will have an opportunity to study to join these professions.

There are active programs in Bangladesh that are working to help provide food security. One such program is the World Food Programme, which provides “Vulnerable Group Development”. This two-year program helps the poorest women in rationing food each month, and some women even get extra money every month along with food rations. Another program is “Integrated Food Security”. This program provides money, rations, and training to help households have better food security. Another great program in Bangladesh is “School Feeding”, which targets schools in ultra-poor neighborhoods in efforts to increase education (“WFP”).

The farmers of Bangladesh have begun using more advanced techniques and tools on their farms, and they continue advancing; although, as of now, most still are in need of some assistance. Many organizations offering aid in Bangladesh are focusing on how to offer some sort of education to the farmers on agricultural techniques so that they can yield more crops. As of now, the situation for family farmers is slowly improving. It will still take time, and if agricultural education and new technologies were offered to family farmers, they would better be able to produce enough for their families and perhaps even make a surplus. The small family farmers will be yielding much more due to the advanced technology they will be using. With enough food to take care of the family, the farmers can also sell food for profit. In the end, the farmers are not the only ones who will benefit by this. The Bangladeshis living in the cities will benefit by the farmers doing well because the food prices will go down and there will be more food to go around.

Educating farmers on how to use technology will make food more available. The prices of food would also make it more reasonable for the average Bangladeshis to purchase healthy food to give their diet some variety.

Additionally, the environment would not have to suffer because the farmers wouldn't be doing anything worse than they are now. If anything, this could help the environment. The farmers would just be using their land more efficiently. The environment will be preserved better because the farmers will be making enough money to better care for their land.

The increased productivity and yields by small-scale subsistence family farmers would make it possible to educate more small-scale family farmers in the use of technology. The farmers who have not yet been educated in technology will see the benefits produced by it, and then they, too, will want to be educated. Once they become educated in the new technology, they will be able to reap the benefits. I believe that there is no way in which educating family farmers in technology could be harmful to their livelihood. While it may be tough for people who have been farming all of their life to begin using new techniques, it is a sacrifice they should be willing to make for their families and themselves. The surplus crops they are able to produce will make it all worthwhile. With the quantity of crops produced with the help of new technologies, the farmers will be able to allow their children to go to school rather than work on the farm. With more people being educated, the economy will improve, improving all aspects of life for Bangladeshis.

I believe that a program should be started in Bangladesh to educate the farmers on technology for farming as well as helping to provide the technologies. This program would only be able to help a few farmers at a time, but slowly, it will be able to help many people in need. Even just by helping one family, this program would be doing a lot of good. The Bangladeshi farmers would have more food security because the food would be plentiful, even if not at first. People's incomes in Bangladesh would also improve, boosting the economy and helping the Bangladeshis who are not farmers. Overall, the country of Bangladesh would greatly benefit from a program like this because it would open up opportunities for people and alleviate the hunger and death that affect people now.

This program would have many parts to it, but here is how it would work. First of all, volunteers from the Peace Corps, UNICEF, churches, as a mission trip, and schools, Universities can send students majoring in Agriculture, would go over to Bangladesh and find farmers who were interested in learning about new technologies to use on their farms, such as irrigation techniques, tractor uses, new fertilizers and such. The program will begin by only using volunteers from countries with successful use of technology in agriculture. Those volunteers would go back to their native country and advertise for specific farms that needed sponsoring. One major celebrity would be chosen from each participating country to be the spokesperson. Their responsibility is to get people interested in donating the resources

needed. Other celebrities would be recruited to help advertise. Anyone would be able to sponsor, giving as much as possible. The volunteers would be looking for money, farm equipment, and people with knowledge of how to use farm technology.

Service organizations, churches, or wealthy people would be able to completely provide for a farm if they wanted to, as a sort of an “adopt a farm” program. People and organizations that chose to do so would be responsible for supplying the farm with tools, such as tractors, as well as maintenance money. Although it would be a lot of work, the organization would receive monthly information on how the farm and family are doing. For farms that are not “adopted”, their resources will be gathered from everywhere and when the volunteers had enough resources they will return to Bangladesh and begin teaching the farmers how to use the new technology.

The first group of volunteers in Bangladesh would find people in Bangladesh who wanted to assist in teaching technology to farmers. The people who wanted to teach their fellow farmers would travel to the United States, or any other country willing to offer college education, specifically in agriculture. The program would fund for the people’s trips and would find sponsors to provide for the cost of tuition; once again this would be a sort of “adopt a student”. After being formally educated in this area, the Bangladeshi students would be able to go back to Bangladesh and begin serving their community by teaching farmers how to more effectively use new technology. The students from Bangladesh will “pay back” the program by learning English and assisting in translating for the program as well as teaching how to use the new technology.

Another aspect of this program would be a “farming exchange” program. This program would find U.S. farmers, or farmers who were educated in the use of technology, who were willing to have a Bangladeshi farmer stay with them while teaching how to farm using advanced farming methods. The Bangladeshi farmer would stay at the “host farm” for about a month, preferably during harvest or planting season. The Bangladeshi farmer would be taught how things on the “host farm” are run and would be expected to help out in whatever ways possible. After staying at the “host farm” the Bangladeshi farmer would return to Bangladesh with their “host farmer”. The U.S. farmer, or farmer from other countries with advanced education in the use of farming technology, would be able to go to Bangladesh at a season convenient for them. The farmer who had hosted the Bangladeshi farmer would teach how to implement the new tools and techniques on their own farm. The other farmer would also help teach the family of the Bangladeshi farmer how to use the new technologies.

Retired farmers from the United States, or other countries using advanced technology, would be encouraged to participate in this program as well. Retired farmers would be able to volunteer in Bangladesh and teach what they know about how to run a successful farmer. The farmers would also be able to donate used tractors or other farming tools to the farms in Bangladesh. The retired farmers would be able to go to Bangladesh at anytime convenient to them and stay anywhere from two weeks to three months to help.

For this program to be successful, it will take a lot of work from many different people. I think it would be wise for countries that have the money to donate funds to this program. The countries that can afford to donate money should do so because we are only as strong as the weakest link, and if there is suffering in another part of the world, it is our responsibility to help. Everyone is connected, and if we choose not to help just because we may not see all the suffering in front of us, eventually we will be affected, and by then it may be too late to do anything about it. I also think that people with millions of dollars should be using that money to benefit others. Money would also be needed to make it possible for volunteers to go to Bangladesh and help teach how to use the new technology and advise the farmers on what they can do to best use their land. Eventually, it will be the Bangladeshis themselves teaching each other about the advancements in technology and how to apply them to their family farms. When it gets to

the point where the Bangladeshis are the ones volunteering to help the less fortunate Bangladeshis, then this program will be doing what it needs to be doing.

In conclusion, this program will help farmers learn how to use new technologies in order to yield more crops. This program is simple, but it needs help from many people. Farmers around the United States, and other countries using advanced technology in farming, need to assist the farmers in Bangladesh. With the help of this program the farmers will be able to produce enough crops to provide for their families.

The best way to help the Bangladeshi farmers would be to provide them with an education in technology. The Bangladeshi farmers could easily provide for them selves with just a little help getting them started. The food shortage in Bangladesh is shocking, especially given the amount of farmers. Rather than just handing out food to people in need, we need to teach farmers techniques so that they can yield enough for their families as well as produce a surplus for a profit.

Everyone needs to do his or her part in order to help with the hunger around the world. Hunger is a very real thing to people everywhere. Those who are able to go on with their lives without knowing the true meaning of hunger need to step up and make a difference. The number of children who die from hunger is unreasonable. With the amount of technology available in the world no one should be suffering from something that can be so easily cured. We have to find that cure and provide it to the people who are suffering. The impoverished people around the world need to know that they are not alone, so we all need to do our part to be there for them. Just remember that every five seconds a child is dying from hunger, and there is something we can do (“Hunger Facts”).

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