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National Responses to Food Insecurity
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Thailand - *Engaging in diplomatic initiatives for conflict prevention and resolution and governance based on principles of democracy, accountability and transparency in public institutions, and the rule of law*

I have no fear in living a day in my life deprived of food. I am fortunate to live in a nation where food is accessible and have a family who is financially stable to provide such goods. Food is a blessing often overlooked and because of this the hungry stays hungry, and forgotten. My comfortable food security is not the same in Thailand. Over 19 provinces in Thailand have to question the necessity of food. Sometimes those who are questioning don't even have a possibility to eat. World hunger is a serious problem. Collectively every nation must act upon this issue because its outcome will determine mankind's integrity to prevent suffering. The vulnerable members of society who are enduring an undiplomatic food crisis need an effective method that will supply nutrition in a short and long term. The United Nations: High Level Task Force has taken on this world wide food insecurity; they have introduced the (CFA) Comprehensive Framework for Action to improve food taxation and trade, food safety, and agricultural investments etc. Food security has been assessed and initiatives have been made to combat and precede progress. However, the largest hurdle this plan faces is financial support. Programs within the CFA require an extensive amount of funding for its rewards to reap and overflow with job opportunities and assistance to the poor. Understand that food security may "practically" sound like a small issue compared to genocide, global climate change, and water preservation, but something so little can mean a lot. Diplomatic institutions must take control and make our society invulnerable to malnutrition. Daily nutrition is required to live a healthy life. The choices you make, communication you have with your peers, and energy to spare, is pending on your nutritional dosage. If food is not easily accessible and/or affordable, a world of problems is imminent. An unstable food security can cause a chain reaction of poverty, malnourishment, and war. Food insecurity is a bleeding issue that is draining Thailand's organisms and its resources. We can prevent this issue from ruining our society and take on new challenges encouraged from our past successes.

The northern area of Thailand is highly recognized for its mountains, hills, and narrow valleys. Such geographical landforms make farming twice as difficult to cultivate because of the low fertility, stony, shallow soil. Thailand's three seasons are Cool, Hot and Rainy seasons. The Northern region is highly favored by the Cool and Rainy season. Deep rivers etch the mountainous valleys filled by a five month heavy rainfall. This large intake of precipitation is helpful for flood irrigating rice paddies- Thailand's cash crop. The landscape and climate in Thailand offer some benefits.

Farming families in Thailand endure many economic and social challenges. Majority of the rice surplus is produced and marketed from central Thailand. Northern Thailand rice production has no play or say in the food marketing. Thailand's economy excludes farming that is used as a self-sufficient employment that supports rural society and lives up to the cultural customs. Some landowners are not only supplying food on their own families table but sometime a whole village. Since each family owns about 5 acre of land, the village collectively treats its acres as one whole. Whatever amount of production is cultivated; it shall be evenly distributed amongst each land stake holders. Families and villagers that practice subsistence farming fear their "head farmer" from catching sick. The family of community will go without food until authority is taken. This risk presents a complicated situation that has no good turn out. Subsistence farming is a method not accepted by the government. With no help, the poor will remain poor without any opportunity of advancement. The family's lifestyle of Northern Thailand will be magnified and put into an understandable perspective that will bring awareness to our society.

A typical family of 8 relies on subsistence farming. This family can be found living a harsh, hard-working life in a wooden hut placed locally around its 2.2 hectares of land in the Northern region of Thailand. Compared to Central Thailand, with 8.2 hectares, Northern families own a smaller land lot. With 4.5 million residents in the Northern area, property size is assumed and reflected in small vicinity. The family eats what the land reaps; specifically, rice, corn, sugar and other indigenous vegetables. Pesticide usage can be seen to cultivate the land. A land clearing method used is slash and burn. Sometimes you might find a community or farm that practices organic crop growing. A farming family will harvest and sell produce in a local market to earn funds. Since other families of the village are doing the same, consumer purchases aren't likely to be made. However a village that produces a surplus of food usually markets goods in a city, where purchases are likely to be made. Each family earns an average 10,000 baht which is equivalent to \$253 a year.

As for education, children are required constitutionally to attend a minimum of nine years. The free basic education encompasses a total of 12 years: (1-8th grade) primary and (9-12th grade) secondary schooling. Some children who live in rural areas must commute long distances to school in a city. If fortunate, schools located in rural areas- which prevent a distant travel - are often underfunded and teach with inadequate materials. Students in rural areas such as Northern Thailand are given an education of concept but without details. The useful lessons learned are earned from the farms of which rural families practice rituals and customs.

Major barriers a village or farm may encounter are low soil fertility, an insufficient irrigation system, and soil degradation. These posed factors are all result of a location misfortune. Since Northern Thailand is made up of mountains with low shallow soil fertility, it is unlikely to produce a surplus and/or variety of crops. In rain season, the mountains steep incline generates excessive flooding, but in return nourishes the shallow valleys of rice paddies. However when the five months of rain season is over, this traditional irrigation system is insufficient to the dry season and cultivation of rice. Wherever slash and burn clearing method is used, soil degradation is to follow. Slash and burn effectively clears a land lot, but the soil become tired and malnourished. Over using pesticides and insecticides on plants can make the soil unproductive also. There are many factors that play into agricultural productivity problems. With the lack of education and financial aid from the government, old practices will eventually ruin the ecosystem of Northern Thailand.

Political initiatives must be taken by Thailand's government to prevent and resolve food insecurity. Thailand is fortunate to have citizens who are willing to work and cultivate the rich rice lands of its country with pride and precision. Such a gift is overlooked by Thailand's government. This reflects its ignorance by allowing the poor to remain poor and the wealthy continue to gain. The government of Thailand must accept accountability for its rich and poor citizens. Democracy should be established amongst all members in society. Democracy ensures an equal chance for advancement, no matter what class structure or region you belong to. In progress, the vulnerable members of society may reduce and Thailand as a country will increase in worth and prosper from food insecurity.

The arable land found in Northern Thailand makes living conditions harsh to maintain. The land of Northern Thailand was "given" with mountains made of rugged rock and low soil fertility. Occasional droughts may force a farmer's traditional irrigation system from being sufficient. We as humans cannot physically change any naturally "given" circumstances, but we can change the impact we have on earth. So, if environmentally safe farming techniques were taught in school, old practices (such as slash and burn method) can be put to rest and soil degradation wouldn't pose a threat to next season's growth. Or if the government's economy recognized Northern Thailand possibly large contribution to the country's agricultural marketing, Families wouldn't have to fear starvation. These choices were contemplated and made. However, such decisions do not determine our fate.

Presently, change is evolving. “Adventist Development and Relief Agency” (ADRA) is a humanitarian organization that teaches citizens of northern Thailand “sustainable agriculture, livestock husbandry, product processing and marketing, and financial management.” The Sustainable Livelihood and Agriculture Project helped trading family farmers. Particularly, Farmers were taught environmentally safe farming methods that can utilize “natural fertilization and pest management prevent soil erosion, and more efficiently manage the region’s natural resources.”

Non-government organizations have conducted sample surveys on how many farmers practice organic farm development with or without a contract with private investors. About 83 farmers with contracts own organic or low-chemical rice farms. 85 conventional farms were surveyed without contracts. This information has proven the progress. A source of income is now being supplied to farmers with contracts. Additionally, these rice farms are practicing environmentally safe methods. A steady improvement has been made to address agricultural and economic issues in Northern Thailand. People are aware and beginning to take the initiative to fight for change.

Resolving the unjust treatment northern farming families receive will benefit the country and its people as a whole. The Thai government has shown improvement in its latest policy guidelines for the Ministry of Agriculture. The development goals are: (1) Enhance the competitiveness of agricultural, forestry and fisheries commodities and agro-industry. (2) Stabilize the economy and society and improve the quality of life for farmers to promote their independence. (3) Enhance farmers' organizations and establish an agricultural development network that adapts to local traditional knowledge and culture. (4) Improve the management system in agriculture, forestry and fisheries and use resources in a sustainable way. These goals address every issue that leads up to food insecurity.

Instead of fearing a drought or ailing sickness of a farmer, private investors have provided another source of income for farming families to depend on when in unfortunate events. Families who are practicing organic farming are guaranteed healthy food which prevents malnutrition. When you get rid of a bad habit like slash and burn clearing method, soil degradation will never conflict a farms production. As the government ensures realistic policy goals to accomplish; logically, agriculture will continue to be a successful industry in Thailand. Northern Thailand’s family farms will benefit economically and environmentally; shifting away from old bad habits ensures conservation amongst natural resources when green effective methods are taken into consideration.

Small scale farmers are highly encouraged to contribute to Thailand’s already large agricultural production. An population increase of subsistence farmers can help and also defeat the purpose of eliminating vulnerable members of society in a diplomatic manner. Positively, if these farmers practice environmentally safe methods; a farmer’s income, their family’s nutritional diet, and Earth’s ecosystem will benefit. Otherwise, their will be an increase in poverty’s population and our natural resources will continue to diminish before our eyes. When the government uses its authority to advantage and implement laws in regards to how small and large subsistence farming is conducted, production failure wouldn’t be an issue that causes all problems.

Based on my research, I came up with four recommendations to increase productivity by small subsistence family farmers and diplomacy. These recommendations would need serious funding. Understand that if these methods were implemented into our every day lives, hard work would be at ease and equality wouldn’t be hard to see when it comes to food security.

My first idea was to establish a food bank in Thailand. The food bank will be accountable for every plant species that originated in Thailand. The location will store the exact genetic seedlings requirements and environmental settings for its growth. This suggestion preserves the genetic diversity

found in Thailand. Traditional farmers are pessimistic about modern technology. For example, one article stated Thailand farmers who continue to grow rice the “old fashion” way just to protect “ancestral varieties”. These farmers withhold an “intimate connection” with their crops. This allows them to understand a plants natural growth. I respect the cultural bond farmers have with their produce, but traditional cultivation cannot and will not feed our growing population. Genetically modified production has a recognizably lost natural form and taste. Farmers who earn a living off genetically modified produce receive a quick and easy pay with no passionate connection in their work habits. In this, food banks can be to advantage. Farm families can use this location as a source to purchase genetically dynamic seedlings. Farming families who eats genetically enhance foods consume less than half the nutritional value found in organic foods. Growing organic produce reduces pollution in our environment and toxins we eat. Food security can improve when farmers of Thailand begin to make smart production decisions. Smart choices will eventually help solve the food crisis we face now.

In the northern region of Thailand there’s mountains, hills, and narrow valleys but no practical fertile land. Helpless families can be found working self-sufficient farms with the little they have. Thailand should build greenhouses in geographically challenged areas. Greenhouses required an extensive amount of money to establish and operate. This formation enables job opportunities. Green houses provide practical growing environments to feed and nourish a community of the highly populated like Northern Thailand. Investing in greenhouses can be a rewarding challenge.

On a political level, Thailand has some serious issues with financing agricultural production income. First, the government and its spending must be held accountable for its biased actions. Thailand’s government is known for favoring certain regions of its country in terms of production value. In that, Thailand should be penalized. The penalty would be an increased interest rate on the country’s debt. This idea can prevent any immoral marketing Thailand citizens endure.

In my research I found that such recommendations I stated also can be found in the United Nations Comprehensive Framework for Action on food insecurity. The three main components of their response are to improve food emergency assistance, enhance small farms production and social protection, and develop superior food tax and trade policies locally and internationally. Stated in the document, global food security crisis has “major financial needs to be met if the desired outcomes are to be achieved.” The UN wants this document to be recognized and not taken lightly. “...Improving food and nutrition security worldwide, systematically and sustainably, by going well beyond the immediate emergency response...” can be used as a tool for achievement of food security.

The issue food insecurity provokes is overwhelming. I’ve come to realize that our world is constantly changing, and we must change with it because inconsistency is never beneficial. Like the farming families in Thailand that suffer from unfortunate circumstances they live in, they must change or adjust for the better good of their production and well being. For the people like me who are blessed to live without a worry for food accessibility must learn and spread the awareness about the less fortunate. Jointly, we must come up with an effective method to fix this life threatening problem. The United Nations Comprehensive Frame for Action is a detailing manual on how global food crisis can be defeated. Humanity participation and financial reasoning is needed to support this fight. Participate by purchasing USDA food products which promotes organic food production. Support by sending a donation to ADRA- Adventist Development and Relief Agency who fights against poverty. Participate by sending your State Representatives letters of awareness. Support by informing your peers of the daily challenges vulnerable members of society have to encounter in northern Thailand. Spread the knowledge and influence a movement that promotes change. Sentential things like food are needed in an adequate quality, variety and quantity to live a healthy life. A world free from hunger is a practical picture I can see in our future. So use these precautions, awareness, and active participation as stepping stones to reach higher heights on issues that affect majority that lives here on earth- world hunger.

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