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Angola, Factor 11: Malnutrition

## **Angola: Conquering Malnutrition**

As the world is constantly developing with new advancements in technology, people tend to lose sight of what truly matters. In the blink of an eye, people become obsessed with the latest trends on Twitter, hashtags on Instagram, and bios on Facebook. As people are constantly striving to earn acceptance from others, they become unaware of growing problems in today's society. The reality is, people go for days without a trace of food inside their stomach, while others are deciding whether to eat at McDonalds or Burger King for lunch. Going without, is not uncommon for the citizens of Angola. These people are living in critical types of harsh environments- drought, water borne diseases, undernourishment- and are merely happy to fill their bellies. Although the world is capable of producing enough food to feed all of its people, Angola continues to struggle in providing enough food for its citizens. However, there are many ways to provide these families with the constant, yet adequate nutrition that they deserve.

### **1. Angolan Living**

As a country that is still progressing, Angola is faced with extensive famine. During 2014, the population consisted of 24.3 million people. (BBC. Web). Over half of the population is unemployed and lives below the poverty line (AdvaMeg Inc. Web). This forces families to live off of \$1.50 a day (SOS Children's Villages. Web). The modern family consists of seven members; two parental figures along with their average of five children (Euromonitor International. Web).

An ordinary household often has difficulties feeding their members. The majority of families have a diet that mainly includes different types of cereals. Many of these families, can only afford one meal a day. Therefore, never having the privilege to take in more than three of the food groups. Which results in malnutrition (World Hunger Education Service. Web).

Due to extreme poverty and chronic malnutrition, diseases tend to spread very quickly. Thus, the need for medical care is crucial. Unfortunately, Angola has very few hospitals with an inadequate number of staff members. This is a result of the country still recovering from the damages it received during their violent Civil War, which occurred about 26 years ago. The mental trauma and battle wounds still deeply affect today's surviving citizens (AdvaMeg Inc. Web). With the countless number of civilians in critical need of care, doctors and nurses are extremely scarce. There are only 1,200 doctors available continuously trying to serve the majority of their population which is in need of help. The patient to nurse ratio is even more alarming with an average of 10,000 patients to fewer than 14 educated nurses (SOS Children's Villages. Web).

Education is not necessarily a priority in modern Angola. In some areas, it is extremely limited. Although 63% of children between the ages of five and 18 are enrolled in primary school, over sixty percent of households remain illiterate. Of the few who attend primary school, only twenty-seven percent receive a higher education. This makes the possibility of a professional job highly unattainable. Therefore, two-thirds of the population depend on agriculture as a source of food and income (World Hunger Education Service. Web). They do this by selling agricultural products that they produce or by doing paid work in the agricultural sector. On farms averaging between one and two hectares, many products are produced; coffee, bananas, sisal, tobacco, and cassava. Some farms even domesticate animals including cattle and pigs (World Hunger Education Service. Web). Most families survive off of the products they grow. If there is any extra food left over, they sell it to a local market for a little extra cash. Sadly, this does not happen very often due to the low yield rates as a result from the infertile soil (World Wildlife Fund. Web).

## 2. Problems

There are many logical reasons that can explain why Angolan farmers are having difficulties improving their agricultural productivity. Over the past decade, Angola's climate changes have been extremely unpredictable. With poorly distributed amounts of rainfall, extreme droughts are not uncommon for Angolan farmers. Without having experts to predict weather patterns, farming can be a bit of a gamble. As a result, being able to acquire decent yield numbers, is virtually unreachable. This makes the possibility of paying farm labor a decent living wage, not very probable (SOS Children's Villages. Web).

Due to low yield production throughout the harvest season, markets tend to have minimal amounts of food at very high prices. This makes it even harder for the average family to provide a decent meal for its members. Therefore, many of Angola's citizens suffer extensively from malnutrition. As the food market prices continue to go up, laborers are still working for a wage which is not yet able to provide a sustainable life (SOS Children's Villages. Web).

## 3. The Presence of Malnutrition

Malnutrition and hunger deeply influence the daily lives of all who they affect. Not only can they cause low levels of energy and mental impairments, they may also cause illnesses including cancer and liver disease. These disorders are even more likely to occur when someone is affected during the time of their early childhood. This directly influences the supply of food that agriculturalists are able to produce. Having low energy and mental impairments can influence people's ability to work. Without being able to work efficiently, jobs may not always be done to the greatest extent. Repercussions could involve a difference in yield rates or food quality (World Hunger Education Service. Web).

Most families living in Angola, contain members that are suffering severely from malnutrition. In many of these families, it is the children who are living with this misfortune. This causes them to obtain severe illnesses. As young children are not able to care for themselves, other members of the family who could be earning a living, are being required to care for their needs. This results in an even lower income for these households (Kayser Family Foundation. Web).

Angola is ranked the number one country in the world that is suffering from malnutrition. Malnutrition affects one in every five children living in this area. Over four percent of all deaths that occur in Angola, are a direct result of malnutrition. Most of these deaths occur in young children (World Hunger Education Service. Web). Of the children living in Angola, twenty-nine percent of them under the age of five are stunted. These children are not growing. Another sixteen percent of these children are underweight. Eight percent of those, end up being wasted. This means that they tend to be very weak, the majority of the time. Having difficulties like these while developing during early childhood; could end up affecting Angola's entire medical futures (Unicef. Web).

## 4. Angolans Need For A Solution

Malnutrition in Angola is improving, but very slowly. Having to treat the majority of the population; makes it impossible for medical health professionals to administer proper and thorough care to every one of the Angolan citizens influenced by this illness. With the severity of malnutrition that many of the patients possess, it is very costly and time consuming to nurse those who are affected back to health. If many of these families do not receive help soon, the impact could involve an increase of infections, which is a result of malnutrition. The major viruses that could be spread as a result may include bacterial diarrhea, protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, thyroid fever, dengue fever, malaria, schistosomiasis, and rabies. This makes the need for medical help in Angola crucial (Index Mundi. Web).

Eliminating malnutrition for good in Angola, would help revive the country, along with the citizens. Extreme famine limits people. Without having to worry about where their next meal comes from, people can start to focus on developing themselves. Perhaps, receive an education. With an education, comes a good paying job. With a good paying job, comes the capability to be able to earn a living. Citizens will be able to live a fuller life with healthier food. Thus, making them and the people around them, feel better. The spread of disease will come to a halt. People will be living a healthy, more sustainable life, along with upcoming generations. The future will be bright for all Angolan people (MDG. Web).

Malnutrition is caused by the presence of many things in modern day Angola. Climate volatility plays a enormous part in malnutrition. For the past four years, there has been a continuous drought occurring throughout all of the country. This results in low yield rates, meaning not enough food has been produced for the population. A consequence of this is the spike in the price of food. This spike is the reaction to low food supply. This leaves families that live below the poverty line; unable to maintain healthy eating habits. To help solve this issue, agriculturalists will need to be educated about ways to help keep their crops healthy and growing, even through a major drought. Perhaps, they will be able to implement cheap irrigation systems to help protect their crops from low rainfall (SOS Children's Villages. Web).

#### 5. A Solution For Malnutrition

There are many ways to finally conquer malnutrition in Angola for good, but many include items that are not easy to access within the country. One treatment of a therapeutic feeding lasts around two months. It is very effective when it comes to treating malnutrition. These foods consist of four main ingredients; Sugar, dried skimmed milk, oil, and vitamin and mineral supplements. Ready-to-use therapeutic foods are produced in the form of peanut butter based pastes and biscuits that are loaded with protein and energy. These do not spread water borne diseases, as they do not contain or need any water. There are many different companies that manufacture these types of therapeutic foods; Plumpy'nut, Edesia, MANA, and Valid Nutrition. They are incredibly easy to store considering the facts that they do not need to be refrigerated and they are able to withstand two years on a shelf (GiveWell. Web).

Requiring no preparation before feeding, therapeutic feedings would be a simple way, short term, way for patients to be treated while being in the comforts of home. Being easy to understand, perhaps the feedings may be made and administered by a friend or family member. Therapeutic feedings would be the perfect solution to malnutrition. Families could be using therapeutic feedings right away, but sadly, they are not able to afford them at \$60 per treatment (ACF. Web).

#### 6. More Solutions For Malnutrition

No one solution will be able to conquer a difficulty as big as malnutrition. Several different actions will need to be taken to resolve this illness for good in Angola. As citizens begin to receive education, they will need to make movements to generate more fertile, farmable soil. Compost piles would have a definite benefit to Angolan soils. Communities could set up designated areas to create a natural fertilizer with items that would otherwise, go to waste. Simple, everyday household trash could make the difference between life and death for someone living in Angola. Having communities come together to place their everyday, unused items such as egg shells, banana peels, leaves, manure, coffee grounds, and much more, will result in better crop quality and higher yield rates (Composting. Web).

Compost piles are incredibly easy to care for. With a little education, virtually anybody is able to take on the responsibility of tending to one. The first step into making this life changing process, is getting started. Volunteers will initially help a community start to introduce their very own compost pile. The process in building one, is very simple and easy to understand. To begin, straw or twigs must be stacked and lain a few inches deep into the ground. Next, citizens must add their materials into the compost, along with manure. Finally, you must place a cover over the top. The cover may consist of almost anything. Perhaps, the large leaves from their banana trees could be used to cover their compost. After all, the cover is only used to keep the moisture within the pile. The only leftover responsibilities after getting started are to water the compost and to turn it every 2-4 weeks. Requiring only three months to produce an efficient compost pile, the all natural fertilizer may be implemented into the Angolan farming systems in no time. Spreading this fertilizer among Angolan soil will result in an abundance of nutrients within their soil. Larger communities may even utilize more than one compost at a time. After a community has successfully completed and distributed their first compost pile, they will be required to help educate another community on this same process. This is to help assure that changes will continue to be made throughout Angola (Composting. Web).

## 7. Setting Objectives

To accomplish something as big as conquering malnutrition in Angola, organizations and corporations will need to set steps to be able to achieve all of their goals. The first Millennium Development Goal states that organizations will try to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Using this goal as a guide while trying to ending malnutrition would be a perfect fit. Creating a target objective of how many citizens in Angola cured of malnutrition per year would help steer organizations in conquering malnutrition for good. An example starting goal would be to cure 2,000 citizens of severe to acute malnutrition by the end of the year. At the end of that year, organizations would review their goal and make an updated intention based on leftover supplies from the past year and results compared to the previous goal. Keeping goals will push organizations to keep their processes and transformations going (The World Bank. Web).

## 8. The Need For Support and Education

These ready to use therapeutic foods are not affordable for the average family, but the individual suffering through each day, is definitely justified to have the treatments. This is recognized by the People in Need organization. For the past year, 560 local volunteers have been helping to fight child malnutrition. People in Need has trained volunteers to examine children for any signs of malnutrition. So far, they have examined around 230,000 children and 32,000 of them have been treated for malnutrition. They are all training farmers to grow nutritional beneficial crops. In addition, they are instructing women and mothers on how to prepare nutritious meals (ReliefWeb. Web).

Education will be just as important as treatment when it comes to fighting malnutrition. Without education for family caregivers and agriculturalists, Angolan society will continue to struggle with this illness. People in Need have shown great efforts in focusing on ending world hunger. They encourage volunteers and organizations to join in on the fight as conquer malnutrition for good (ReliefWeb. Web).

## 9. Conclusion

Everyone needs to be involved to make these changes and actions successful. Families will need to be willing to learn about nutrition and illnesses to better themselves and their loved ones. After they are able to successfully survive on their own, they will need to continue flourishing along with helping other families in need. Communities need to be able to carry out health surfaces such as hospitals and small health centers. This will help provide jobs for many people. Angola's national government must be putting tax money into building these medical centers for these struggling communities. Organizations and corporations need to come together and be involved in donating, treating and educating people on these treatments, nutrition and preventions for malnutrition. Rural and urban farmers will play a key role in fighting illnesses because they are the country's main source of food. Therefore, agriculturalists will need to produce nutrient rich foods to feed their population. The quality of these foods must be nearly perfect. With a little education, and some technological improvements to the way they farm, agriculturalists should have no problem meeting the needs of Angolan citizens (ACF. Web).

Treatments and education will be able to provide Angola with absolute results when it comes to malnutrition and agriculture. As sponsors and volunteers begin to join in on the action against illnesses like malnutrition, there will be a significant change in Angolan citizens behaviors and living conditions. People will become healthier. Education will thrive. Jobs will be created. Money will be made. Most importantly, Angola's future will be changed forever. As their society develops into a healthier, more sustainable place to live, they too, will be able to create an Angolan Dream.

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