

Abrieanna Burkhart
University of Missouri High School, Columbia, Missouri
Ukraine Orphans Facing Starvation, Factor 11: Malnutrition

Orphan Starvation in Ukraine

Guilty. Appalled. Ashamed. Confused. A half ate meal, left on a plate to be scraped into the trash. Raiding the pantry an hour later for a snack. A gathering of a family to celebrate a birthday feast. All the while, a world away without a bowl, not a fancy one, no particular size, not new or old, just simply without a bowl - he goes hungry.

Across the world children of all ages are abandoned, forgotten, abused, given up, or orphaned. 9,000 children in Ukraine are biological orphans and more than 90,000 are social orphans (U.Sub) Orphans in Ukraine are considered third class citizens; therefore the Government does not provide adequate funding to orphanages to care for these kids. A disabled child could suffer starvation quickly, as they are not always accepted into an orphanage as the level of adoption is lower and the cost of housing a disabled orphan is higher than that of a orphan with no disabilities. Around 103,000 children live in Ukrainian orphanages, children's homes, and baby homes (U.Sub). To be an orphan in any country is a tragedy; to be an orphan in Ukraine is a sentence to death by hunger.

You hear a lot of people say that they are hungry, some going to the extreme of saying that they are starving. However, what most fail to realize is that starvation is a severe energy deficiency that could lead to death (M. Webster). While hunger is the uneasy feeling or painful sensation caused by want of food. World hunger is the want or scarcity of food in a country (W.H.). World hunger refers to malnutrition and undernutrition of people; both of which pertain to the effect of not having enough nutritional food. World hunger applies to any place that there is food insecurity. Nearly all the hungry people in the world, 780 million out of 795 million, live in developing countries, representing about 12.9 % of the population of those developing countries, Ukraine being one. An underdeveloped, or developing country, is a nation or sovereign states with a low Human Development Index, in relation to other countries (W.H). Food security occurs when everyone has sufficient access to enough food to meet the nutritional needs of their bodies, both physically and mentally (W.F.S.).

The underlying cause of hunger is a controversial topic . Some argue that the main cause of hunger is poverty. Some believe that government officials don't provide resources needed to obtain the ideal nutritional need of people. While poverty is a cause of hunger, malnutrition is the fundamental cause of poverty (M. Haerens).

Ukraine is an underdeveloped country in which 1.5 million people, out of the total population 44,405,055, are hungry (W.F.P.). In 1932 Ukraine faced a tremendous tragedy called the Holodomor, leaving 2.5 million people dead from starvation or severe illness. The Holodomor, was a man made famine that stretched across the country of Ukraine in 1932-1933 (G.Weigel). Families had to choose which child would get to eat dinner at night. Children had to watch family members starve to death. The effects of

starvation caused some people to commit cannibalism, some going to the extreme of murdering their own child. A quote by Galina Smyrna, a survivor of the Holodomor, reads:

"I remember Holodomor very well, but have no wish to recall it. There were so many people dying then. They were lying out in the streets, in the fields, floating in the flux. My uncle lived in Derevka – he died of hunger and my aunt went crazy – she ate her own child. At the time one couldn't hear the dogs barking – they were all eaten up." - (G.Smyrna)

Today, starvation and effects of the Holodomor linger on in families. Orphans in Ukraine suffer malnutrition due to the orphanages inability to finance nutritional meals. "These children have never walked. They are constantly in bed. They don't have muscles. Their legs are toothpicks covered with skin." said Mariana Vorovei, on April 20, 2017. 50,000 children live on the streets of Ukraine. There has been approximately a 60% increase in orphans in Ukraine in the last 10 years (USUF). Orphans who have a physical or mental disability, regardless of age, are often tossed out to survive on their own, because orphanages don't have the funding for healthy children, let alone those who need medical help.

Orphans who do require medical help, such as surgeries, often have to suffer through them with little or no medicine. During their stay at a hospital they sleep on slabs of wood and are only fed if they have their own bowl and spoon. For example, one orphan, suffered a broken femur from falling out a three story tree. He was attempting to obtain nuts to feed himself. He was taken to the hospital and put through three surgeries and given no pain medication or IV whatsoever. His femur had to be pinned back together in several locations. During his recovery time, things just got worse for him. He had no spoon or bowl so the hospital did not feed him. The one thing that saved him was the mother of a child down the hall found out that this boy was not being fed and was kind enough to offer him a bowl. However, rations were small, and the "porage" they received contained little to no nutritional content. It was week three before his US foster mom was made aware of the accident and rushed to his side, by then he could not lift his head and had lost about 30 pounds. The adoptive family is known personally to me. Their story was told at our 4H Club meeting (D.Northrup).

Typical families in Ukraine today consist of 3-4 people. Families upbringing their children to respect traditions, practice patriotism and have respect for their ancestors. In ancient times and into the present, it is expected that children know their genealogy back to the 5th and sometimes 7th generation. "Contemporary Ukrainian families face different financial, housing and private problems. The instability of earnings and indefinite future has an essential influence on internal processes of family life in Ukraine." (P.U).

Ukraine's government displays their lack of acknowledging an orphans worth in society by the misappropriation of care and funding provided to an orphanage. Instead of valuing a child's life as the key that could change the world for the greater good, an orphan child's life is labeled as a lost cause. In order to change the view of orphans, as a burden, society must be made aware of the value of an orphan's life, as it can be a seed that could feed the world. Boys that reach 16 years of age, have three options: join the

military and be put on the frontline of the Russian border, go to trade school if they are lucky or fend for himself on the streets. The lack of options is the reasoning why around 50% of orphan boys are dead by age 20. Odds are not much better for girls that age out of an orphanage at 16, most will be forced into sex trafficking. It is said that “Knowledge is power” and implementing the power of the 4H experience is the platform to provide orphans with lifeskills and the chance to prove their worth in society as tomorrow’s leaders, movers, shakers and doers.

4H started in 1902 when A.B. Graham organized a group of youth from Ohio into a club that was called “The Corn Growing Club”. Today, 4H empowers youth to learn: agriculture, robotics, cooking, hunting, entrepreneurship, among hundreds of other project offerings. 4H is a global organization reaching over 50 countries around the world, including those in Africa, Europe, Asia, South America, and Australia (4H.org). 4H changes lives. 4H builds the foundation for our future.

4H’ers of today are working on issues like food security, climate change and sustainable energy. Programs in 4H use STEM technology to engage youth in the learning process. 4H has a slogan “Learn By Doing” and a motto “To Make the Best Better”. These two saying are the foundation for what the purpose of 4H is. The youth reached through 4H exceeds 7 million members across the world (4h.org). 4H is not just farm kids doing farm things, the program reaches urban and suburban kids as well. Along with the numerous leaders and volunteers that help keep 4H rolling, these youth are able to change the world, by doing. They have the capability to make the best of what we have, better.

4H at the global level has a program that allow kids to teach kids about possible solutions to the growing problems of today’s society. For example, the Global 4H Enterprise Gardens in Ghana Africa, gives kids opportunities that involve hands on learning, integrating the science of positive youth development, agriculture, and innovative partnerships. Youth learn to plan, plant, manage and harvest their crop to feed their community and themselves (G.4H). Through this program they learn a business plan to grow their own produce which can provide not only careers, but food stability.

My proposal is bringing the 4H educational program to Ukraine orphanages in the rural areas that are suffering from the lack of awareness and funding. Implementing a successful program like the Global 4H Enterprise Gardens in Ghana Africa has the potential to flourish in the less privileged communities of Ukraine with a focus on the orphanages. “In 2013, Ghana’s 4-H Enterprise Gardens yielded 25 cobs (maize) per row, compared to 10 cobs per row produced by local farmers.” (G.4H) With the scientific advancements being made in agriculture we have a chance to educate young people with life savings skills to edge closer to ending food insecurity in our future generations. “Nike Foundation and the 4H Tanzania partnered to conduct an assessment of barriers that exist for girls in education and agriculture. The study discovered that girls face more barriers to social and educational participation.” (G.4H) The financial community is awaking to the global problem of food insecurity, we have to bring Ukraine orphanages to the spotlight.

In the Canadian 4H program, a leader by the name of Edith Zawadiuk, took a trip to the Kherson- Odessa

region of Ukraine were she sat in a round table discussion and was asked the question, “What do young people in Alberta do?” to which Edith replied, “They take 4H of course!” (E. Zawadiuk) By the end of her presentation, she had the opportunity to bring 4H to Ukraine in 2002. When she left there was a possibility of two clubs in Ukraine, quail and gardening; however, there was an issue as to where members would receive the seeds needed for the gardening club. It wasn’t long after her return home that she received a call informing her that a company from Japan agreed to provide the seed necessary for the gardening club. When Edith returned to Ukraine in 2005 there was a total of fourteen 4H clubs in the Kherson-Odessa region (E.Zawadiuk). The seed of 4H has already been planted, but is not serving the third class citizens that have no parents to help guide their future. They deserve a fighting chance to change their bleak future - inside the orphanage and out. Armed with the education in agriculture that 4H can offer, they could change society's view and be striped of their lost cause label.

In Missouri 4H there are tons of unused educational project packets that have been utilized in the past, but are outdated with current delivery methods. These packets could be sent to Ukraine to be utilized in the 4H educational program. If state 4H fees were raised in the USA by \$0.10 across the 6 million youth who register in 4H every year, we could have \$600,000 the first year. This would just be a start to help implement the program’s teaching, translating languages, shipping cost and awareness based marketing material. 4H members grow up learning to serve their club, community, country and world. Lending their head, heart, hands and health to the cause of making the best better.

Members start learning basic skills in projects within the first year of participation. The program material is presented in a manner that allows for minimal material needed and is broken down to ages from five to eighteen. Doing a demonstration to showcase the skills learned in a project is second hand to 4H members. Money raised could be put towards video lessons captured through demonstrations by 4H member and clubs. The wood working project, for example, could demonstrate how to build a raised garden bed. In Ukraine some orphanages have gardens, however the cooks are the only ones who get to use them. If a child wanted a tomato to eat, they would have to buy it off the cook's (D. Northrup). The garden beds would allow the kids to grow and tend to their own produce. A gardening demonstration could be videoed and put together by youth participating in the film making project, gardening project and the Master Gardeners that the youth are exposed to. Thus, teaching the orphans how to properly grow a garden while obtaining maximum produce. This could follow the kids out of the orphanage and into their daily lives, providing food for themselves and a potential to make money.

Spreading awareness in the 4H family starts at the club and can spread like a wildfire through the Community Youth Liaison, Regional Representatives, State Council, National Council and Global Council. 4H members today are preparing to be tomorrow’s leaders, attending Youth Civic Leaders Summit, Legislative Academy, State Congress and Citizenship Washington Focus. Building a foundation with today’s youth to serve today’s youth is one step towards the stance against hunger as a whole. Hunger could be fought in Ukraine today as it is being fought in Africa now with the power of a 4H member and the caring adult volunteers. “Working with, not alongside of, government is central for long-term, sustainable development and ending hunger.” (W.H.P)

We have the knowledge to teach an entire generation about how to grow their own food; food for their family, their neighbors, their community – their future through 4H. The impact has the opportunity to decrease the reality of food insecurity that our world faces. The generations that are to come, have so much riding on the current generation to change the world's view on hunger. 7 million 4H members are hard to ignore when united on a cause and Ukrainians' views of their orphans' rights of citizenship and participation in society has to be rebranded. Those in control now of an orphan's future will one day find themselves among the elderly population, lonely, forgotten and possibly starving. Every day that goes by without any action from the government to teach the future generation about agriculture is a day in the life of a future generation that can expect to be hungry.

Through the support of the United States Department of Agriculture and cooperation through local extension agencies 4H has thrived in the United States. For over 115 years, 4H has been successful in teaching youth of America how to survive and prosper in agriculture. We have the resources to end food insecurity at our fingertips. A seed planted in a young person's life about the hardships of food insecurity could lead to a bundle of roots interlocking with passion that has the potential to end the issue at hand. 4H youth today are our future world leaders of tomorrow. The story told at my 4H meeting about the orphans who may not eat without a bowl, was the seed that started my journey to ending food insecurity for orphans. These orphans are people too and they deserve as much of a chance as anyone to make a difference in this world. They have the power to change their generation for the better. Imagine a day in which, food insecurity is a thing of the past, a day when world leaders have the passion to end world hunger, and the willpower to stop food shortages in the world. The youth of 4H and these orphans could be those people.

Imagine going into an orphanage where the children are up playing, smiling, laughing and have full bellies. Their hands and feet dirty from tending to their garden, not caring about the dirt, but so excited to show you their garden and offering you something to eat. Imagine if, every orphanage had the knowledge to teach those children how to grow their own food. One little seed, in the hands of someone that knows hunger. We can make this vision a reality.

“To be an orphan in any country is a tragedy; to be an orphan in Ukraine is a sentence to death by hunger.” - Abrianna Burkhart

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