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Nicaragua, Malnutrition

Nicaragua: why are the people starving?

Nicaragua is a small country in Latin America with a population of 6.311 million. (Worldometers) It is about the size of the state of Mississippi. (Decision Science News) It has lush green forests, the largest freshwater lake, and it has 19 volcanoes. Nicaragua has a constitutional democracy. They have a president and four government branches. The average family has 4.9 people. (Esri) Many families in Nicaragua live in wood or brick shacks with dirt floors. Most of the workers make minimum wage which equates to working less than a dollar an hour. (Minimum Wage) They are in the Ring of Fire so they have many different natural disasters including earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, and hurricanes. During which they lose a good water supply, and access to affordable food. Five of the country's 17 departments have chronic malnutrition rates of over 30% – and the rate exceeds 50% in the regions where most of Nicaragua's indigenous people live. (Unicef) Data also reveals that stunting among children aged under three in targeted areas is higher than global mean rates. (Shanique Wright)

The size of Nicaragua is 6.311 million as of 2019. (Worldometers). It is the largest country in Central America is sq. km. Most Nicaraguan families in the city with a just their families, but in rural populations they live with their extended family. The rural population in Nicaragua is 40.89% of the countries population while 59.11% are urban. (Statistica) 70% of the country is involved in agriculture. (WFP) 42.09% of the land in Nicaragua is being used as agricultural land. (Trading Economics) The Nicaraguan diet consists of cilantro, mangos, limes, avocados, cabbage, eggs, fish, plantains, red beans, and of course corn. There are a few common dishes that are partially made or eaten everyday. Gallo Pinto (red beans and rice) and Nacatamal (a large corn cake filled with meat and vegetables) are common foods. (N. Cahill) Families either grow the food themselves, or they go to the market to buy it from a store or local seller. They use hand tools or oxen driven plows to plow fields. In rural communities the cook with fire. In the cities they use normal electricity. Their main exports in the agricultural field are coffee and sugar.

They have pretty good healthcare in Nicaragua, but people are not required to go to check-ups. It costs 25\$ to have a regular check-up. Most people do not have to pay that though since the government is on a socialized medicine program. The rural villages can not get to the 32 hospitals in Nicaragua. People fall through the cracks and can not go anyway close without having to make it a day trip in the rural communities. Most of the people think that it is a luxury to have the help of a doctor.

Education is not good in Nicaragua. Since the 1970's it has not improved very much. The government took money away from schools to fund wars and it has not been a top priority ever since. One in Ten kids cannot read or write. (Rebecca Smith) The cause is that many families have to take their kids out of school so they can have money to buy food instead of spending it on clothes. They need their kids to work

or they could not eat. Even though the kids are making money they still have stunted growth. This is because the schools provide food, but the families are trying to spread the money out to feed everyone.

The present status of Nicaragua is 25% of the population has no clear access to food, and about 1 in 5 children are chronically malnourished. (Lisa Nikolau) Only 25% of nicaraguans have safe drinking water. The severity of this is getting better but it is still severe. By from 2001-2012 poverty went down by 20%. (Lisa Nikolau) Roughly 40% of the population is in poverty and 60% of rural areas are in poverty. (Lisa Nikolau) Only a third of the population has access to bathrooms. (PCI) Whenever they get back on their feet Nicaragua is prone to storms which blow over and they lose all their progress. The rural population is affected the most. The money they get from crops isn't enough to feed others even sometimes with themselves. Their crops are not worth much, and they do not have access to better paying crops. There has been a study showing that with the more education the mother and father have the taller and less malnourished a kid will be. (Opportunity International) In nicaragua the women grow the food, and are looked down on. The men hold all the power in this society. The men either go work for their family or just sit around and drink. The elderly are getting less pension and are getting targeted by the government. Not many children go to school and have to work on the sides of the roads to make a few dollars so they can eat. Since the country is poor they build their houses out of whatever they can find. This has led to a major issue of deforestation in Nicaragua. Most of their trees are gone and the only ones left are on the upper and right hand side of nicaragua. Their main exports of cane sugar and peanuts take away water from the forests and kill trees. They also use trees as wood. They have a lot of soil wear with too much mono-crop farming and not taking care of the soil. This has caused crop yields to lessen, so the impact is that they have less food to eat.

There are many different solutions to help with the malnutrition problem in nicaragua. The main one I have thought of is introducing Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) to Nicaragua. GMOs are plants and animals that have a gene changed in their bodies to make a trait better. This will make more food for the people of Nicaragua. It will also help with jobs as well due to the increased amount of food grown, it will need harvested by more people. The reason they have not implemented them yet is because there's a stigma against GMOs. The large corporation Monsanto has created a niche market in some South America countries where they are making farmers only buy their GMO seeds from them, and not letting them re-sow the seeds after they harvest them. Then making them only use round-up for weed control. The other issue with GMOs is that we do not know what could happen in the future with them since they are fairly new.

The normal solution to the problem of a big corporation is contact the local seed agencies in Nicaragua, but they do not have very many local seed companies. So I propose Iowa State University contacts one of the ten agriculture universities in Nicaragua to help meet with local farmers to show that they do not need to get with the big companies and still get the GMO seeds they are hooked on. The Universities can also help the global study of GMOs and how they affect the environment to prove that they are not hazardous.

My second recommendation is to hire specialists in rural communities to teach better farming practices to the locals. Any local in a rural community can fill out an application when they are in a city to apply at a local university. They will be given room and board in a training facility at a college. The specialists will have to go through a paid monthly course that will teach them better farming practices, and how to plant crops that will better the soil. Those specialists will then live in rural communities to reach others and supply the right knowledge. That will help families make more food to feed their children. The problem is the cost of money.

The solution to the problem of money is taxing the big corporations that are slowly destroying the Nicaraguan jungles by deforestation. The companies would have to go through the government on how much jungle they can cut down and would have to pay a tax to do so. The tax would supply the government enough money to stop unlawful deforestation, and help pay for community betterment such as my proposed solution.

My third solution is to introduce sanitation systems to help the country not have to deal with diseases that have been caused by not getting rid of bodily waste in a safe manner and having bad drinking water. Lack of hygiene has led to 70 Million US dollars in wasted money in a year from health problems. (Bjorn Larson) Lack of sanitation has caused 500 deaths per year which could have been prevented. (Bjorn Larson) So many rural communities have been influenced with either getting sick and not working because of lack of sanitation, or choosing to go to the doctor and being hungry. Building large scale sanitation systems like the US are hard to make, and cost at least \$500,000 US dollars at minimum.

The solution to the problem of lack of sanitation is to introduce small scale water purification centers. There are many cheap easy ways that you can purify water. One such way is by using clay pots to purify the water. Nicaraguan soil has clay in it so even the locals can make the pots if they want to. Another way is that many organizations are sponsoring villages to get metal pumps that will eliminate the need to walk over a mile for somewhat clean well water.

My last suggestion is that we build community outreach centers that can give out loans for better farming innovations, help farmers and people to get back on their feet after a natural disaster, store clean water in cases of crises, and provide basic knowledge on topics that the people need help with. The topics can be on agriculture, sanitation, and other basic needs that they need to know. These community shelters can be made out of natural disaster resistant materials. The clean water will be a great help in many urban communities. They will not have to walk 2 km to get somewhat clean water from a well. Since Nicaragua is the fourth most country affected by natural disasters this will make sure that many people will not have to worry as much after a disaster.

The cost to make these is somewhat substantial, but that can be solved by sponsorships from countries such as the United States. This money would go towards getting the peoples support on the side of the US and showing that we just want to help them. We need the support of the people because with the dictator Daniel Ortega in power no organizations can help the people.

In conclusion we need to help this country that is in urgent need. With the recent uprising by the former president Daniel Ortega the need for help is getting worse and worse by the minute. We need to help the future generation prosper into great global contributors. "Talent is equally distributed, opportunity is not." We can argue what "equally distributed" really means, but I'd submit that neither talent nor opportunity are equally "available" to all people. (Leila Janah) This is saying that everyone has the talent to do amazing things, but not everyone has the opportunity to prove that they can. This is the case for nicaraguans. They are a strong, hard working people that get up after they have been put down by mother nature and economic issues. They need help to live because they are only surviving right now. They are not living. The difference is that they are working hard everyday just to get minimum food to live rather than having enough for them to be able to grow normally.

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