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Improving humanitarian relief and the current state of Kenya

Kenya is a nation compiled of low plains that rise to the central highlands divided by the Great Rift Valley, and a fertile plateau to the west (“World Fact book”). Kenya is also abundant with savannahs, grassland, and extraordinary inactive volcanoes. The nation is located in the eastern coast of Africa, and is approximately twice the size of the state Nevada (Nationsencyclopedia). Kenya is composed of about 39.802 million individuals, and unfortunately, half of them live in poverty. The population of Kenya has more than tripled since 1960, and is placing pressure on the country’s resources (google.com/public data). Together with a widening income gap, this has receded gains in education, health, food security, employment, and income (Rural Poverty Portal). The term “food security” when used by the global community, is often used to describe not only the availability of food, but the ability to invest in food. Having a trustworthy source of food and sufficient resources to purchase it, is what food security means. When a family does not live in hunger or fear of starvation, is when a family is considered food secure (Office of Global Food Security). There are countless unsafe living conditions in Kenya that need government attention, and food security. Clearly, Kenya is a location that needs more than a few pledged donations.

Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya, also known as the “100 year old city in the sun” or Kenya’s sugar bowl. There are 3 million people who reside in this city, along with the camels that may serve as a taxi ride. Nairobi is filled with many individuals that have the ability to stay in 5 star hotels, just as any other city, and beautiful high rise buildings dating back to 1904. The cities width is manageable to walk in a matter of only thirty minutes (Nairobi, the Capital City). The climate encourages popularity for the outdoors and an appropriate amount of tourism. Only ten miles from the city’s center is where the wildlife roams completely free.

Kenya is located in the rich volcanic soil of the highlands, and it maintains good annual rainfall. These conditions make agriculture the mainstays of the economy, sometimes supplemented by irrigation. For most of the income, 79% of the population relies on agriculture (ruralpovertyportal.org). Kenya is also known for the production and exports of tea and coffee. Tea, the nation’s drink, is said to be an envious quality. (Nairobi, the Capital City). Kenya has almost committed to invest a minimum of 10 percent of their national budget on agriculture (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). Many children in Kenya do not grow up with the dreams of being a farmer; they end up farming due to the growing rate of poverty, and to ultimately make ends meet for their families (Canada’s Office of Urban Agriculture).

As Nairobi may present a positive representation of Kenya, the realities of slums are terrifying. There are approximately 2.5 million individuals who live in the slums, in about 200 settlements in Nairobi. These 200 settlements represent 60% of Nairobi’s population, occupying only 6% of the land (Kenya 2011 Missions-Kibera Slums). An estimation of 1.2 million people call Kibera, Kenya their home, which is the largest slum in Kenya, as large as three times the size of Manhattan (Njeru). The government provides no services such as electricity, water, sewage, or garbage pick-up, due to the fact that this settlement is illegal. When it begins to rain, it washes all the garbage, sewage and dirt down the hills filling the trenches. The individuals that reside in this immeasurable poverty are among the 40% unemployment rate in Kenya (Kenya 2011 Missions-Kibera Slums). Due to the fact that the slum has never been recognized by the government, Kibera has no clinics or hospitals. The only medical assistance comes from charitable organizations. Because of the unsanitary and unsafe living conditions, many suffer from illnesses such as malaria, cholera, and HIV/AIDS. A large problem contributing to the unsanitary conditions is not having any plumbing systems other than a latrine; which is later emptied by a hired child to dispose of in the river (Kenya 2011 Missions-Kibera Slums). Clearly this is no place to be raising

children; the vulnerable conditions often result in the children looking for self-comfort, such as sniffing glue and finding drugs. Hunger has serious affects to the body, and to ones emotions. Children motivated by survival, sell their bodies in prostitution, for the hope of food (Kenya 2011 Missions-Kibera Slums). One out of every three children in Kibera is orphaned (Kenya 2011 Missions-Kibera Slums). “Families are lucky to receive one meal a day, and would steal anything for any value. It is all about the survival, the roads I walked were composed of mud and garbage. The huts were crammed together, and there were a few community faucets with unsanitary water from the city. The food is cooked over charcoal, and livestock along with domestic animals roaming the streets. It is an unsanitary place to reside, and they need assistance” (Interview by Ron Bryan). Ron Bryan is the general Superintendent of Iowa Yearly Meeting. Ron evangelizes and spreads the word of God throughout Kenya.

There is currently a crisis taking place in the Horn of Africa, which includes Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. The United States is providing emergency assistance and is one of the largest donors, helping more than 4.6 million of those in need of assistance, and providing over \$580 million to date in fiscal year 2011 (Feed the Future). President Obama says, “The United States is leading an effort to reach out to people around the world who are suffering, to provide them immediate assistance and to extend support for food security that will help them lift themselves out of poverty. All of us must join together in this effort, not just because it is right, but because by providing assistance to those countries most in need, we will provide new markets, we will drive the growth of the future that lifts all of us up” (qtd in See Change Feed the Future). Through Feed the Future, the United States is contributing to increasing the accessibility of staple foods, transport barriers and reducing trade, technology to help populations in adapting to increasingly unusual weather patterns and harnessing science, and supporting efforts to minimize marginalization of specific populations (Feed the Future). Feed the Future is an organization that is motivated to advance global stability, and prosperity by improving the vital needs for people in desperation (Feed the Future). Feed the Futures’ vision pursues two paths to make a difference: (1) initiating a steadfast foundation for change by aligning the United States resources with country-owned processes and sustained, multi-stakeholder partnerships; and (2) addressing the root cause of hunger that potentially affects millions of people (Feed the Future). Feed the Futures’ initiatives consist of: assisting farmers to gaining access to fertilizers, and improved seeds; supporting the creation of cooperatives for farmers and creating a bold political voice; setting up extension services to teach remedies of conservation agriculture; spreading the tools for reducing post-harvest losses, so after months of hard work and good harvests, farmers don’t lost 40, to 60 percent of their crops, and the nutrition and the income they offer because of insufficient or poor storage (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). The creation of cooperatives means when farmers unify together in an alliance to better one another’s business. Feed the Future also has assisted in creating a global partnership called ‘1,000 Days’ to improve nutrition during the critical period from the beginning of pregnancy through a child’s second birthday (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton).

On August 11, 2011, Hilary Rodham Clinton, the Secretary of State in the United States, made numerous remarks regarding the food crisis in the Horn of Africa. The knowledge in this paragraph is from the Secretary of State during her speech at the International Food Policy Research Institute. “What is happening in the Horn of Africa is the most severe humanitarian emergency in the world today, and the worst that East Africa has seen in several decades. The United States and our partners in the region, including the World Food Program, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, NGOs, and donor governments, are racing to save as many lives as possible” (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). The Horn of Africa region is receiving \$580 million this year from the United States, in hopes to cover the cost for food distribution, therapeutic feeding for those who are severely malnourished, clean water, healthcare, sanitation, protection, and other services for those in need (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). “Food security is key” Clinton remarked, “because our goal is not only to help the region come through this crisis, but working with organizations like IFPRI to do all we can to prevent it from ever happening again” (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton).

Dadaab, a refugee complex in eastern Kenya, was designed to hold 90,000 individuals. Before this emergency in the Horn of Africa, it was the largest refugee camp in the world, and some people have been residing there for 20 years now. As of now, 420,000 people live there, including thousands of third generation residents (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). A terrorist group known as al-Shabaab has prevented humanitarian relief from coming into the borders of Somalia. The group has threatened and killed many workers. From a credible source, they have also been preventing Somalis from escaping their country. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis, mainly women and children, have managed to flee to the north. This means these desperate individuals searching for relief are pouring into the borders of Kenya. Kenya's population is drastically being raised over its' capacity limit (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). The hunger crisis that the Horn of Africa is experiencing, is becoming a complex problem of infrastructure, governance, markets, and the education system (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). This is what Hilary Clinton has to say about the current hunger crisis:

“In other words, a hunger crisis is not solely an act of God. It is a complex problem of infrastructure, governance, markets, and education. We must rededicate ourselves to breaking this cycle of food shortages, suffering, and dislocation that we see playing out once again in the Horn of Africa. We must support countries working to achieve food security. We owe it to the people whose lives we are trying to save, and frankly, we owe it to the donors and the taxpayers who make our work possible. For the past two and half years, I have traveled the world from Kenya to India to Italy, talking to everyone from farmers and agricultural scientists to aid workers and heads of state, about Feed the Future, the U.S. food security initiative and a centerpiece of the Obama Administration's foreign policy. The United States has pledged \$3.5 billion to support rigorously developed plans to fortify the entire agricultural chain of our partner countries, from the fields and grazing area where crops are grown and livestock raised, to the markets where farmers sell their wares, to the tables and hearths where people receive the nutrition they need to stay healthy” (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton).

The United States is assisting to carry out comprehensive strategies that were designed by the countries (The Horn of Africa) themselves to meet their individual needs and strengths. Supporting herds in Kenya, is a leading concern, so USAID is working to connect them to markets, enhancing animal health services, and advocating local institutions for effective livestock trade policies (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton).

Women are often undermined in specific locations of the world. In Kenya, the United States is paying special attention to gender, to ensure that the women who do a remarkable amount of cooking, selling, harvesting, and planting are sufficiently supported. Not only is the U.S paying close attention to gender, but to the environmental impact of programs to protect the water, and the land for future generations, and to help farmers adjust to the effects of climate change (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). The U.S. State Department also aims to raise incomes and improve nutrition for 800,000 individuals (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). Unfortunately, there are still millions of individuals who certainly need emergency help, now in Kenya, and throughout the world (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). Kenya needs to compose a list of suggestions in order to improve their food security. They need to alter credit and land-use policies to support herders and farmers. Ensuring that public grain reserves are accessible when shortages are amidst, is a necessity. Last but absolutely not least, they need to bring in new technologies to support drought tolerance, disease resistance, and crop yields (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton). These policies may be difficult to get right, but they certainly are vital for maximizing wise use of the land and manageable economic opportunities for the people. Kenya is moving in the correct direction. In this time, the United States must help them carry on that progress, and that is something we the citizens can partake in (Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton).

On Tuesday August 30th of 2011, the World Bank stated that it will support critical interventions to improve the livelihoods and reduce vulnerability of millions of Kenyans affected by the drought (English.cri.cn). Through the Crisis interventions window, they are giving 87 million U.S. dollars and an additional 320 million to supplement existing and future projects in agriculture, health, water, and sanitation, to scale up medium to long term interventions in energy and water resources management (English.cri.cn.). Rather than developing any new recovery interventions, it has been determined that completing ongoing projects and altering pipeline projects that have drought-related components would be more effective in suiting Kenya's long term wellbeing. The World Bank has made a statement about their intentions: "In this regard, the bank's intervention will focus primarily on diversifying livelihoods of pastoralists, water resources management, value chain development, rural infrastructure development and environmental management" (English.cri.cn). Due to the ongoing crisis in Somalia, the Bank is responding by giving 9 million dollars for humanitarian assistance through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and an additional 30 million dollars for medical supplies and food for Somalia people finding refuge in Kenya and Ethiopia (English.cri.cn). For individuals in the Horn of Africa and its neighboring countries, the World Bank Group is supplying 686 million dollars to improve social protection, to save lives, and to facilitate economic recovery and drought resilience (English.cri.cn). Instead of putting agricultural money to waste, it will be distributed for provision of seeds, fertilizer, and inputs to farmers through the Kenya Agricultural Productivity and Agribusiness project. Sweden's Ambassador to Kenya, H.E. Mrs. Ann Dismoor said, "The humanitarian situation in parts of Kenya is alarming. There is also imminent risk that the famine in Somalia will spread during the next months. Sweden is strongly committed to alleviate the humanitarian relief in the Horn of Africa" (English.cri.cn). At the same time, the funding for health will be channeled through the Health Sector Support project to improve diseases surveillance, provide for essential medicines, medical supplies, and treating of severe malnutrition (English.cri.cn). Johannes Zutt, the Bank Country Director for Kenya and Somalia, said "Natural disasters will continue to recur. Our effort aims to support the government and the Kenyan people to better manage their resources, to improve food security and cope with climate change" (English.cri.cn.).

Kenya is at a current state of distress. The United States is doing a phenomenal job at distributing money to Kenya. Although, the condition of Kenya does not reflect this substantial amount of money this country is receiving. Kenya needs multiple improvements in land degradation, road networking, agriculture, education, land tenure, wages, employment, corruption, and health (Leading Causes of Poverty in Kenya). Kenya is ranked 35th for most impoverished countries, out of 196 in the world today (About.com Geography). By 2015, it is highly recommended that the slums are recognized in Kenya. The slums are dangerous to an individual's health, and life expectancy. One of the major factors that needs to be addressed is the education system in Kenya. Only 85.1% of the country's people are literate, and this plays a large role in the amount of employment. The amount of years for a woman to be in school is 9 years, and for males it is 10 years due to the 50% poverty rate in Kenya (Kenya People 2011). This is an unfair amount of education, considering the amount of possibilities there are here in the United States. Humanitarian relief is a necessity in Kenya. It is necessary because the government has not acknowledged many vulnerable populations, including one of the world's largest slums, in their own country ("businessinsider"). The money for relief is available, and advisors should be available to improve the causes of poverty. What Kenya's priority should be, is to apply these resources to the correct systems to lower poverty, and focus on what needs to be immediately improved.

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