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“Looking To the Future: Sustainable Paths toward Food and Nutrition Security in Ecuador”

The Rockefeller foundation and the Mexican government established the cooperative wheat research and production program in 1945 through the Green Revolution to improve the agriculture output of the countries farms. Instrumental in the success of the program was Dr. Norman Borlaug. Astounding results were produced, an example was Mexico, a country that went from having to import half its wheat to self-sufficiency by 1956, to exporting half a million tons of wheat by 1964. From the example of Mexico we see other countries making strides towards self-sufficiency, including countries like Ecuador.

In Ecuador, the women of the family are usually responsible for the care of the children and the household. The men of the family take a less active role in the child-rearing and housekeeping. In recent times however, the roles of women and men have changed. In urban families men may share the household work if they have wives that work outside the home. Teenagers generally socialize in groups. The girl in the family must ask permission to go out alone with a boy. At about the age of fifteen girls may have a “coming out party.” Dating usually comes after this phase in a young girl's life. When a woman turns twenty she will usually marry. Most families try to have their children finish school before they get married. Visits from other family members and many friends is very common in Ecuador. When they get together for a meal and conversation, visitors are always welcome. Even if unexpected guests arrive during a meal, they will be offered a full meal, and may also be offered a gift upon departure. Other facts about people in Ecuador and their welfare include the population of around thirteen million persons, consisting mostly of 15-64 year old females. Ecuador's population density is one of the highest in South America at 47.7 people per square kilometer. Mestizo is the highest ethnicity group in Ecuador at 65% followed by indigenous at 25%. The official language of Ecuador is Spanish. Ninety-five percent of the population is Roman Catholic. The net immigration rate is about 8.58 migrants per 1000 population. For every 31.97 deaths there are 1000 live births. On average women give birth to about three children. Forty-five percent of children are malnourished, and 65 % of the population live below the national poverty line.

The Ecuador poverty report states that although the oil boom of the 1970's led to unprecedented growth, poverty remains pervasive in this Andean country. The distribution of wealth is highly skewed, and close to four million Ecuadorians, about thirty-five percent of the population, live in poverty. Another seventeen percent live in extreme poverty and cannot meet their nutritional requirements even if they spend everything that they have on food to eat. Poverty is higher in rural areas, where two out of three poor people live.

The poverty report argues that a successful poverty reduction strategy can be based on the following components: basic nutrition and health programs for the poor; programs that strengthen the assets of the poor, which are labor, land, and housing; and support for a strong and stable demand for labor. In particular, the first two components will require public resources. Hence, resource mobilization for the financing of social programs and targeted interventions are an essential part of Ecuador's poverty reduction strategy. The report that a coordinated effort to expand nutrition programs to reach the most vulnerable groups, which are young children and pregnant mothers, would bring high returns in the long run for Ecuador. But, while chronic malnutrition of children under five years of age with 45 percent at alarming levels, the many

modest nutrition programs only reached 5.5 percent of the 600,000 poor young children below the age of five in 1994. A close examination of several of these programs reveals that they do attempt to target, and that targeting costs are very well invested (i.e., leakage to the non-poor is relatively small). The real problem however, is within financing and implementation constraints, is to reduce the degree of under coverage. With respect to health the main provider of health services in Ecuador, have plunged the basic health system into a crisis. Many public health posts can no longer provide fundamental services, and the poor have increasingly come to rely on the private sector for health care, which then absorbs twelve to seventeen percent of the household budget. Not all poor can turn to the private sector. About half of a million of them cannot afford such expenses and are left without help even when they critically need curative care.

The nutritional status of the children under five years old reflects the development of the country. The most recent data from the 1998 national survey on the living standards, compared with the 1986 DANS Survey, demonstrated a very significant reduction in the prevalence of stunting from 34% to 26%, plus the prevalence of underweight decreased from 17% to 14%. Regional differences and especially ethnic differences reflect a high prevalence of under nutrition in indigenous groups. Among the most widespread micro nutrient deficiencies, iron deficiency anemia is the most important one and affects all groups. The problem has serious connotations, because the prevalence is higher than 50% in most of the age groups; presenting greater risk in children between 6 months and 2 years, and in pregnant women. Vitamin deficiency A is moderate and the problem of zinc has caused increase concern in the last few years. Iodine deficiency is being controlled thanks to salt fortification. The Integrated Micronutrient Program develops strategies of fortification, supplementation and nutrition to deal with there deficiencies. The food and nutrition situation in Ecuador reflects its' socio-economic reality; the production potential, the capacity to transport and to commercialize foods that satisfy the nutritional requirements at all population levels. Food production and the yield of main consumption products and their relation to the market are important to establish the potential that food and nutrition security offer to the Ecuadorian society as a development strategy. A national policy of food security as a development with new initiatives of rural development, food supplementation and micro nutrients along with education and active community communication will help in the fight against hunger.

The Nutrition Country Profiles are concise reviews describing the food and nutrition situation in individual countries, with background statistics on food-related factors such as agricultural production, as well as selected health, demographic and economic indicators. The outline of the profiles follows the FIVIMS conceptual framework of food security and nutrition, including indicators of immediate, underlying and basic causes of malnutrition. The data come from the United Nations agencies' global data banks and from national institutions. They were compiled and interpreted by national experts from the countries in collaboration with nutrients from the Nutrition Planning, Assessment and Evaluation service of the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division.

Reliable data on the nutrient composition of foods consumed by people are critical in many areas – health assessment, for formulation of appropriate institutional and therapeutic diets, nutrition education, food and nutrition training, epidemiological research on relationships between diet and disease, plant breeding, nutrition labeling, food regulations, consumer protection, and agricultural goods and products, as well as for a variety of applications in trade, research, development, and assistance.

Knowledge of human energy and nutrient requirements are essential for the complete assessment of food supplies and nutritional needs, enabling the governments to monitor nutrition

programs and to plan development activities in general. The Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO), in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations University (UNU), organize biennial expert consultations on nutrient requirements.

As the world's population becomes increasingly urbanized the proportion of people living in poverty in cities goes up. With over half of the world's population predicted to be living in urban areas by about 2020, there are pressing needs to address how cities deal with service provision and city planning for healthy lifestyles. For many countries, the current rate of expansion of urban agglomerations has brought about severe challenges to food and nutrition security in addition to the provision of basic services such as adequate housing, water and sanitation systems, the provision of health clinics and schools. There is a need to focus on the factors specific to life in urban environments which impact the nutritional status of urban environments.

Few crises have affected human health and threatened social and economic development like HIV/AIDS. As infection rates continue to escalate around the world – particularly in countries with large rural populations and widespread small-scale agriculture – the pandemic is having a significant impact on food security and nutrition, creating a deadly cycle. HIV/AIDS typically strikes households most productive members first. When these people become ill, there is an immediate strain on the family's ability to work, feed themselves and provide care. As the disease progresses, it can become even harder for a family to cope with, especially as resources are drained – for instance, valuable assets, such as live stock and tools, may need to be sold in order to pay for food and medical expenses – and poverty advances. Without food or income, some family members may migrate in search of work, increasing their chances of contracting HIV – and bringing it back home to their family. For others, commercial sex may be their only option to feed and support their family.

The situation of my focus family is staying about the same. They are not in very good shape with their land or crops. If they had help learning how to plant properly and farm properly they would do fine but they are pretty much in the dark about how to do any of the farm work properly. I think that if they were taught how to read that they could figure out how to farm and plant a field and find a job to help support their family.

My recommendation would be to make sure that the people had food and clothing to live with. Then I would teach them how to farm a garden or field properly and that would help provide food and money, I would also teach them how to raise animals such as cattle and hogs for a source of meat and protein that they need. Teaching them to read would help them be able to get a job and earn money that way. If people could teach others that live in Ecuador how to do these things they could really turn their lives around.

From doing research and writing my paper I honestly think that with programs such as USAID we can really help make a difference by helping families in other countries build houses and plant gardens and crops to help stop the hunger problems. If people could come together and work at providing food and clothing and houses for people in the third world countries we could truly help stop poverty. Every year I go to an in gathering for my church and we pack boxes with clothing, school supplies, baby things, sewing machines, and things such as that and we send them to Nigeria and places such as those and I feel that that is a very good way to help stop poverty and a good way to show the people in need that there are people that care and that people are willing to do that to help.

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