

Aid Worker's Report on Poverty in a Ghanaian Village

I arrived in Ghana several weeks ago. After a week in Accra I began the journey to the north of country to the village where I am now based. As you know Ghana is located in the North-West of Africa.



Ghana is a considerably poorer country in comparison with other countries in the west like Britain and the United States, meaning that the country is LEDC, standing for Less Economically Developed Country.

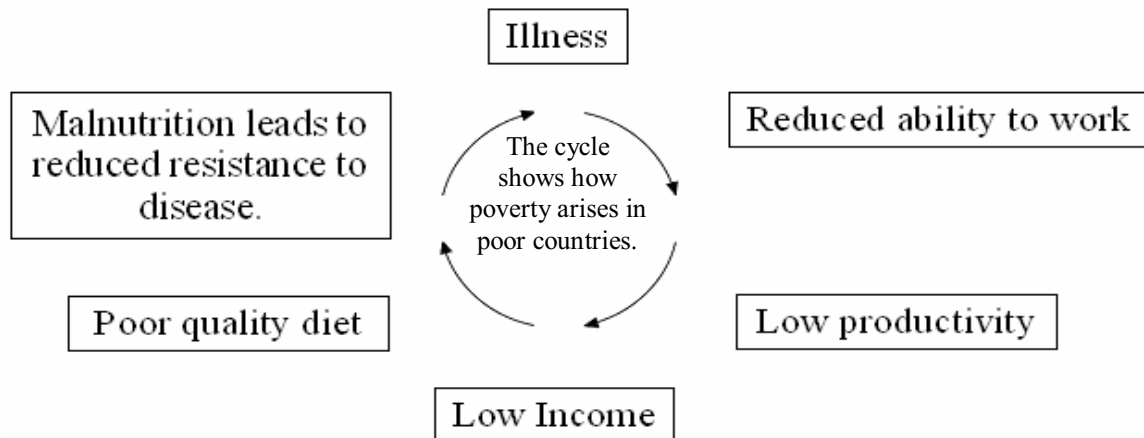
Although in 2002 Ghana was written off \$893 million dollars of their debt costing two organizations. They are still heavily in debt of \$3.7 billion dollars. Most of this is owed to the US.

The climate of Ghana is hot and a dry because it is located near the equator. There is not much water because of the poor rainfall. This means that many rivers and lakes dry up meaning a starvation of fresh water for poor towns and villages. This is the main cause of disease and poverty in Ghana. Compared to Britain the climate is very different. In Britain the climate is mild and wet. This climate makes it very easy to grow crops. However in Ghana it is impossible to grow most crops, this is another cause to poverty.

Since arriving in the village I have worked closely with a number of families, in particular a woman called Grace. The conditions in which grace and her family live are more shocking than I could ever imagine.

She lives in a mud hut with a straw roof. She has no access to clean water. This is the main reason why two of her children have died. She has almost no possessions and the food is very scarce. They have almost no money, not even enough to buy medicine if one of her children were to fall ill.

I feel it is important to explain why grace and her family live in such conditions, along with millions of other Ghanaians.



Millions of children die from illnesses, which could be avoided through very inexpensive medicine. Grace's family is one of those who are at high risk.

Less Economically Developed Countries cannot often afford a national welfare system e.g. pensions and employment benefit. Once grace has to give up work she will no longer be contributing to the families funds and will have to rely on her children.

Most families cannot afford to send their children to schools, meaning a lack of qualifications and a low earning potential. Grace cannot afford to send her children to school meaning that it's very likely they will end up as bad as they are now.

The government are concentrating on paying back national debts rather than investing in public services. For grace's family this means no bus service to get to well paid jobs.

Sometimes the crops fail due to unreliable or extreme weather such as drought. This means that grace cannot buy supplies she needs sometimes and that if she plants her own the harvest may not be successful.



Malnutrition is common due to lack of food or unvaried diet. Grace can only afford to feed her family once a day with a type of porridge made from corn.

Corn only goes into two of the groups in the pie chart this means that her family is severely malnourished.

So what does poverty mean to Grace? It

means she faces a number of difficulties everyday. I believe that every human being deserves these ten basics of life.

- Food
Grace has food but very little and not very nutritious either.
- Water
She has no direct access to water; she has to walk miles for only a small amount of unclean and possibly contaminated water.

- Access to medicine
She has to buy medicine; often she has no money to do so.
- Shelter
She lives in a small one-room mud hut. If this house were in Britain it would be deemed uninhabitable.
- Money
Grace has very little money, in British pounds the amount compares to £0.25.
- Clothing
Grace's family has very little clothing and what they do have is second-hand. In Britain the family's clothes would have been used as rags.
- An education
Grace cannot afford to send her children to school.
- Faith
Grace believes that her children's lives will be better than they are now.
- A form of entertainment
For Grace's children there is not much in the way of fun as they work all day trying to survive.
- Support
Grace and her family are supported from the other residents of the village just as Grace supports them back.

I have hopefully by now built a good picture of not only what life is like in the village but also the reason why the problems exist. I understand that all the problems of the inhabitants cannot be sorted overnight. However I believe that there is a project that could make a big impact on their day-to-day lives.

An irrigation system on the fields would be a great way of insuring that every year would supply a harvest.

I suggest that a well is built in the centre of the village, so that they could stop the long trek to unclean water. With a well there would always be a clean supply of water.

As the government is in debt it cannot afford to pay for free healthcare programs. Maybe Britain, the US and other rich countries could pay for a healthcare program temporarily while Ghana gets it financial state back under control.

Clothing is very scarce in poor villages and towns. A project could be organized to send clothing from Britain to Ghana and other LEDC countries.

Many families cannot afford to send their children to school so again, richer countries could fund a free education system.

I hope my report has been useful in determining life in a Ghanaian village.

Lauren Anderson