
In “Weather Patterns, Food Security, and Humanitarian Response in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Menghestab Haile discusses the food crisis of that specific region. He cites “low agricultural productivity, lack of agricultural policies, poor infrastructure and high-transport costs, lack of appropriate marketing strategies, frequent extreme weather events, high-disease burden including malaria and HIV/AIDS, weak financial support systems, lack of safety net systems and political conflicts” as the main causes of food insecurity (Haile 2005: page number?). He then thoroughly examines the ways that understanding the drought patterns, agricultural systems, and challenges of the national economies of the region can improve policy and humanitarian action.

What struck me most in this article was the astounding fact that between 2000 and 2002, 850 million people in the world were classified as chronically malnourished (Haile 2005). That is more than twice the population of the United States. It is discouraging to know that even with all the humanitarian effort and government spending, there are still that many people who struggle every day to obtain something that to me is trivial. I was also initially surprised that Haile would cite the HIV/AIDS crisis as a contributing factor to the food crisis, but he explained it as being just another catalyst for the destruction of Sub-Saharan family life and economic welfare.

While reading this article, I was thinking about the impacts of globalization on human standards of living. People have been starving and struggling through social problems since the beginning of civilization, but each community’s problems were their own when news was shared by word of mouth. By making information and transportation instantly accessible and convenient, advances in technology and communication over the past century have created a global community. Being able to text a donation to the Red Cross to provide relief in Haiti from the comfort of your living room is a concept that would have been incomprehensible even twenty years ago. It is almost impossible not to be aware of food crises, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters around the world. Fortunately, most humans have an instinct to help others in need. Humanitarian efforts by both individuals and governments are a large part of the Western world. However, it sometimes seems as if the world’s problems are impossible to solve. Do all humans have a born right to good food and clean drinking water? Do all humans have a right to the high standards of living we have created in the industrialized Western world? Images of tribal people living in grass huts and cooking over open flame make me feel sympathy, but that is the result of my enculturation. Those people are living exactly as their ancestors have been for thousands of years. They will never live the way that I live, but if they have never been on the internet, watched a news broadcast on television, or read *Time* magazine, they will never know how much “worse off” they are. This is by no means a reason to ignore human suffering when we possess the means to help, but it is important to remember that not every single society can be made to match the Western model.