Aguayo (2003) Sierra Leone investing in nutrition to reduce poverty- a call for action

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This statistic intensive article presents many of the problems facing Sierra Leone from a nutritional perspective. Aguayo uses research and mathematics to persuade the reader that the malnutrition epidemic can be solved by the policy makers of Sierra Leone while revitalizing the economy.

The analysis was presented to ensure policy makers that solving the malnutrition crisis in Sierra Leone will reap economic benefits on the country. For example, malnutrition in Sierra Leone has lead to mass cases of retardation among woman and children. If this were to be solved, the social sector could be revitalized, as would the economy.

The article states that 46% of child deaths are attributed to malnutrition, and that over the next five years, and estimated 74,000 children will die in Sierra Leone because of malnutrition, and 252,000 children will be born with a form of mental retardation as a result of intrauterine iodine deficiency. If this were not the case, children would do better in school to help boost the economic sector when they become of age to contribute. One in six infants dies in Sierra Leone in their first year of life, and one in four dies in their first four years of life. The authors suggest that childhood mortality is one of the best indicators of a country’s development.

Woman and children are most affected. Women are a significant part of the Sierra Leone economy. The article states that “in the absence of adequate policy and program action to reduce the unacceptable rates of anemia in woman, the monetary value of agricultural productivity losses associated with anemia in the female labor force over the next five years will exceed 94.4 million dollars.” (Aguayo 2002: 3)

The author approaches the article from both an economic interest and a human interest, however I believe that this issue is much more than an economic issue, it should be approached from a humanist perspective and aim to reduce the cases of malnutrition in Sierra Leone. While the economy is important in Sierra Leone, the focus should first be to solve the mass amount of deaths in the country as a result of malnutrition. The author suggests that these cases go hand in hand; however I find that to be too simplistic. We should focus on solving the infant death rate first, and the economy later. I believe that it is too difficult to work on two massive issues at once, rather we should focus on them one at a time.

I do not disagree with the author that solving the malnutrition crisis will have some benefits on the economy, however, we cannot be assured that a poor country such as Sierra Leone has the resources to solve this problem single handedly. Investment in this issue needs to come from far more sources than Sierra Leone itself, and with the world in its current economic state, I am not positive that this is a possibility.