

TITLE:

Haiti Peanut Butter Project

ONE SENTENCE:

The project would create jobs, stimulating local production and distribution of peanut butter to combat hunger and malnutrition in Haiti.

IN DEPTH:

HPBP would establish small peanut butter production sites throughout the country, each connected with accommodating philanthropic organizations already in operation. The nucleus of each production site would consist of one motorized peanut butter machine (approx. \$500) and a locally-hired director to manage collection, production, and distribution of peanut butter. Supporting local agriculture and stimulating cultivation of protein-rich food, peanuts would be purchased from local farmers before being roasted, ground, mixed with accessible ingredients (salt, sugar, cinnamon), and poured as peanut butter into 4-liter plastic tubs for distribution. (Shelled peanuts may be purchased from market vendors, effectively distributing wealth.)

Project directors would be intelligent men and/or women, well-respected by their communities, who would use their voices for nutritional education. Walking through a given neighborhood, they may point to distended abdomens and reddish hair, informing others of the critical importance of dietary protein.

Each site may function in one of two ways, depending on financial support and the location. In a rural area, where it is very unlikely to find a peanut butter market and where hunger may be more extreme, foreign dollars may be used to subsidize peanut butter sales. Such subsidies afford greater access to the product; more important, they provide a direct means for foreign donors to translate dollars to on-the-ground, locally-produced nutritional aid. (This is especially significant in Haiti, where many tons of food aid rotted in ports due to bureaucratic red tape. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23507559/> )

The second function concerns lack of subsidy funding or an established peanut butter market involving non-machine-equip producers. This sustainable form caters to entrepreneurs who would pay a small fee for the efficiency of motorized grinding, or to educated individuals who would purchase peanut butter at production cost.

PROBLEM OR ISSUE ADDRESSED:

A Creole/French-speaking teacher who has lived in rural Haiti, I've learned of the reality most Haitians face. It is not unlikely for a family not to eat one day out of the week, and during the dry season, that painful day may multiply; one of my students came to me asking for food because his family hadn't eaten in three days.

HPBP primarily addresses severe hunger and malnutrition, which is a pathology affecting the roots of poverty, for it has its hand in every poor decision. If we are to help Haiti to its feet, to combat hopelessness, corruption, overpopulation, deforestation, etc., we must educate. I can tell you from the looks on my students' faces that if we are to educate, we must address hunger, and we must do it systemically. HPBP attempts to replace mud cookies with peanut butter.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT MOST, HOW?:

Children would benefit most due to the vital importance of protein in their development. However, individuals of all ages would benefit greatly, protein translating to longer attentions spans at school, more efficiency in work, and a diminishing of the unfortunate consequences of hunger: fatigue, irritability, and poor decision-making, for example. As more people learn fundamentals of nutritional education, as they notice distended abdomens receding and reddish hair regaining its color, as they feel more energy within themselves and notice more life in the eyes of their peers, the potential for word-of-mouth ripple effects becomes exponential.

Each project director would have a legitimate job, providing the means to support family/friends. Peanut farmers and vendors would benefit. Local business may profit; bakers making peanut butter cookies may capitalize on a novel, delicious, and currently unfamiliar product; local banks may benefit from the use of HPBP services.

INITIAL STEPS:

The first step would be connect with "Project Peanut Butter" and "Meds and Food For Kids," two groups addressing hunger and malnutrition via peanut butter in Africa and Haiti respectively, in order to exchange information and ideas. Next, one would identify and contact other respected organizations currently working in Haiti, assessing interest and logistics concerning the implementation of peanut butter production sites in situ. One would then hire and train local project directors at each site, distribute peanut butter machines, and thus begin the peanut-protein revolution.

OPTIMAL OUTCOME? HOW MEASURED?:

The optimal outcome would involve hundreds of peanut butter production sites throughout the country, each catering to nutritional, economic, and educational needs of surrounding communities. Quantitative analysis of project effectiveness would be easy with administrative records of the number of peanut butter tubs sold per month and to whom in a given location. Determining the average number of family members eating a tub of peanut butter and how long a given tub lasts, it would be easy to figure the number of individuals served from a production site; compiling information from every site would afford an accurate measurement of the number of people benefiting from the project as a whole. Qualitative surveys may provide information on increased quality of life. Should HPBP be exceptionally successful, its simple structure would

be easy for other countries facing similar issues to adopt.