

Four Meals

Bozton Hansen

Copper Hills High School

To understand what the bright spots were doing differently, the mothers first had to understand the typical eating behaviors in the community. So they talked to dozens of people — other mothers, fathers, older brothers and sisters, grandparents — and discovered that the norms were pretty clear: Kids ate twice a day along with the rest of their families, and they ate food that was deemed appropriate for children — soft, pure foods like the highest-quality rice.

Armed with that understanding, the mothers then observed the homes of the bright-spot kids, and, alert for any deviations, they noticed some unexpected habits. For one thing, bright-spot moms were feeding their kids four meals a day (using the same amount of food as other moms but spreading it across four servings rather than two). The larger twice-a-day meals eaten by most families turned out to be a mistake for children, because their malnourished stomachs couldn't process that much food at one time. (Sternin, 2010)

Introduction:

In the mountains of Vietnam, the women and children maintain a status of having a good survivability rate but low nutrition. (Chen & Hiebert, 1994) This status is caused by the high amounts of parasitic infections such as ascaris, hookworm, and trichuris. These infections are just a start; there is also a widely experienced vitamin A, iodine, and iron-deficiency in women in and around Vietnam. The problem in Vietnam is caused by the inability to obtain clean drinking water and proper sanitation. Even with these health problems, women are joining the work force and sending their daughters to schools to get an education just as boys and men do, this is progress, but while looking forward, what is being missed?

Although women and children in Vietnam are moving forward to catch up with the world, some very important aspects of their daily life that causes them to have a high survivability rate but also gives them a poor nutritional status are being overlooked. Women and children in the mountainous regions of Vietnam do not have access to clean water or sufficient sanitation. Vietnam is currently the third largest exporter of rice in the world, but only recently because of its recovery from a food crisis in 1988. (Chen & Hiebert, 1994) Women are still partially discriminated in the work force causing them to have insufficient funds to feed their family.

Part 1: Causes of poor nutrition

There are many reasons for the poor nutrition in Vietnam the leads to the fact that many women and children are malnourished in the country. One of the major reasons for poor nutrition is a lack of clean water to drink and cook with. Another big problem is that people in this area do not have access to proper sanitation. (Chen & Hiebert, 1994) These two things contribute to the lack of health and in furthering the malnutrition due to the fact that when people are sick, their immune system is weakened, which lets other germs in and therefore furthering their sickness.

Water in Vietnam is proof of pollution taking place there, lakes and rivers in lower areas are becoming more like sewage dumps. There is also large urbanization taking place in coastal areas that are bringing more oil spills due to ports being built for trade. (Doung & Binns, 2003)

This affects all of Vietnam because more people need the water and cleaner water is going to the upper class leaving everyone else with the contaminated water.

Places with a high density of rivers are being urbanized because of the amount and availability of surface water. These are also being polluted the most because of the high population. The Vietnamese government is trying to manage the distribution of clean water all over instead of having all the clean water go to one specific area or group of people. Over the last few years the government has done much to manage the availability of water, they also have a plan to further this policy. Some of the ways the Vietnamese government is trying to distribute water fairly is halting pollution and improving water sanitation.

In late 2005, a group of people set out to help the Vietnamese become a cleaner and healthier people, these people were from the Hygiene Centre. They came up with research and graphs that represented how well the country kept their hygiene up and what could be improved. The group focused on the Handwashing Handbook which talks about the international need for good hygiene and focuses on the need to wash hands, especially with soap. The Handwashing Handbook is a global promotion for washing your hands with soap to stop the spread of diseases and sickness. With this, the group helped the people of Vietnam with some of their sanitation issues.

Part 2: Effects of insufficient sanitation

Vietnam has the most health care centers in Asia, but receives the littlest amount to pay for the services, this affects people because they can easily go to a hospital, but don't always receive the care they need. Many of the centers don't even have weighing scales or sterile needles. (Chen & Hiebert, 1994) This is a problem for the Vietnamese because with their extraordinarily low health, they can't depend on health care professionals to get them better because they can't afford the supplies to help the people.

Another problem in Vietnam is the cost of the little health care they have is making the government cut back on other things that help keep people healthy. One of the things that are being cut back is mosquito spraying, this contributes to the spread of diseases like malaria, some strains of which cannot be cured or treated by a common antibiotic, and which requires different medicine that cannot be afforded. (Carew, 2010) This cycle is happening in many places in Vietnam and has many different consequences that require the health care system to need more money, taking it from other places that, if properly funded, could stop the need for some of the health care's services.

Part 3: Solutions to the health problem

There are many things that can be done to keep Vietnamese women and children healthy and keep the diseases away from them. One thing they can do is eat more meals with less food as part of each. This will benefit people because when eating fewer big meals, their bodies that are malnourished, doesn't know what to do with all the food at one point in time. By eating fewer small meals their bodies can process the small amount of food and be more efficient in getting them the nutrients they need. (Sternin, 2010) This is only a small part of what can be done to help the people of Vietnam be healthy.

Another solution would be to have humanitarian aid help the health care system to buy equipment and training for the medical personnel. This would help the people a lot because the health centers would be better equipped to help sick or injured people and the personnel would be able to be more effective in what they do to help their patients out.

Vietnam is trying to reform their healthcare system, while this is going on, they also want to add health insurance. This would be a good thing for the people of Vietnam because it would

help get the money flowing into the system and it would cost less if something happened to someone and had to take care of it at the doctors. Health insurance would be good also for the economy of the country because it would help the centers get money to get equipment that would benefit people that need treatment.

Another option for helping the people of Vietnam would to have the government stop taking money out of other programs that would in the long run slow down or even stop the spread of diseases. (Carew, 2010) This would mainly mean the spraying of mosquitoes, this is helpful because mosquitoes carry the disease malaria, by not spraying poison for them, the country is causing this illness to spread. If the government were to keep the budget for spraying for them, maybe the illness would stay around for a while, but in the long run, it would be more beneficial to the people because more mosquitoes would be dead and there would be less around carrying malaria.

Conclusion:

Vietnam has many health issues, mainly them being clean water not being available and people being so malnourished that their bodies cannot handle the food that they do eat. Many things can be done to help the women and children of Vietnam to overcome these hardships and to make life easier for them. Some of the things that can be done are helping them by giving them humanitarian aid to help pay for some of the equipment that they can use and don't have to help the sick and wounded. Vietnam is a very important nation in the world and they need to be helped in whatever way possible to make them healthy and be able to stay on their feet in these hard times. Right now is especially hard because of the world wide recession that also affects the people in the mountains of Vietnam.

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