

“Faced with today’s food and energy crisis, how can society improve its well being?”

Our world today is burdened by immediate wants and desires with little consideration for future generations. The political leaders and governments of many countries have only one finite, natural resources as the medium on which most of their economy and infrastructure has been built. In order for basic human activity including business, production and manufacture of food to actually happen, there must be a source of energy which for the past decade or more has depended on natural gas and oil. Many studies show that we are nearing the end of the oil- driven civilisation as oil stores are running out. There are plans being made around the world for alternative methods of generating energy for example wind energy, and nuclear energy. In developing countries like Somalia, however, forward planning and innovation is the least of their worries as majority of their young population are dead or dying due to an inadequate food supply ; a very basic human right. Needless to say, there is no time and no point even bothering about energy provision and building infrastructure in these nations as the concern of highest priority is maintaining survival of the starving members of the human race.

Thus, we have a clear divide between the nations of the world; those with more than enough food to feed the population and enough energy to drive roller coasters at theme parks and those who only dream of an era of constant electricity and who plant seeds with the hope of food to eat after harvest time.

The societies facing a food and energy crisis are usually the developing or third world countries e.g. Ethiopia and Afghanistan. The two elements to the crisis; starvation/poverty and limited energy are associated with each other. An impoverished infrastructure and poor economy due to reduced energy supply leads to poverty and no means of facing harsh conditions of no food supply. Hunger and malnutrition eventually leads to a wasting population with very few able bodied citizens and thus no one to aid the country’s development. In order to figure out a solution we need to understand the root of the problem. Although a well rehearsed statement, history has taught us that it is crucial to reflect on faulty systems and patterns of action so as to inform future decisions and plans.

Corruption undoubtedly is a factor in the generation of high poverty levels seen in many developing countries.<sup>1</sup> Some are still suffering from the effects of past wars and the effects of being taken over by another country. In many ways, a slowing down of the economy and improper distribution of resources results in a scenario whereby the people have no access to their country’s wealth. Furthermore, the assets that would otherwise have been used to further a nation’s progress are being channelled to government officials’ bank accounts.

In order to explain the sudden unrest in meeting energy demands in the future, we need to understand the boom in the economy that was a result of oil discovery. Oil became a readily available and efficient means of generating energy that could be used to run a society: transport, fuel for machines to produce goods and so on. There is an abundance of other natural resources that could be harnessed to yield energy as well and this is highlighted below. However the market for oil and the trade between countries was a catalyst for the seemingly never ending dependence on oil as the foundation on which the day to day running of society was established.

History teaches us lessons and sometimes we are too busy with the development of new technology to see the very obvious solutions to our complex problem.

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Agriculture was the framework by which the very first set of modern society was organised. Families had a farm or garden where they produced enough food for their families and then sold the rest in the market to earn some money. Hay and other straw material left over from animal bedding could be burnt and used to fuel machines used in the house or in the processing of raw food.

Nowadays, In the western world, agriculture is more commercial and very few would be prepared to live the lifestyle implicated above. However, there is a significant amount of waste material generated by our everyday use. Therefore, one means of producing energy could be the use of biodegradable waste as a fuel to generate energy. This would be the best of both worlds as we would reduce land pollution and convert “useless material into “useful energy”.

Equally important, is tailoring the needs of society to what is available in that particular environment. Developing countries should be aided in using their natural resources whatever it may be, in the best possible way to improve their living standards. Even crop produce can be harnessed to produce usable forms of energy.<sup>2</sup>

In brief it takes a collaboration i.e. the working together and union of resources to combat an equally shared problem. The richer countries can provide the training and equipment to assist the developing countries and more times than not, these poorer countries have resources that can be valuable to both parties. As long as exploitation and a selfish attitude remains ingrained within our human nature, an everyday necessity like food will become a problem faced by many.

On the whole, we need teamwork, we need wider thinking and more research into what different nations have to offer as potential energy sources. I strongly believe that the ultimate solution is partnership and then, we can benefit from each other in a mutually synergistic relationship.

#### References

- 1- Julian DU. Corruption and corporate finance patterns: an international perspective. Financial Market trends (2008) vol 13:183-208
- 2- Nick Sutcliffe and Alan Mencin. Prospecting Biofuels: Plants matter (Energy and Earth). Journal of renewable and sustainable energy (2009)

#### SUMMARY

The world is constantly changing and we have to be as flexible as it is adapt well to these changes. Starvation and the gradual exhaustion of oil reserves are challenges that we have to battle in this generation and many to come. I have tried to highlight where I think the focus should be: we need networking between world leaders and more research into the resources that our planet is abundantly blessed with. The collaboration of greater power as a unified species and the potential of valuable resources inevitably means that some of the challenges we face today can be tackled head on and will no longer seem as a difficult issue that is too complex to even contemplate.

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