Malnutrition Plant in Haiti

Dan Schmitz

Issue:

Malnutrition is pervasive in Haiti. Even prior to the earthquake in Jan. 2010, one in three Haitian children under the age of five suffered from malnutrition; and greater than 50,000 acutely malnourished. Hampering efforts, water, electricity, roads are under-developed or non-existent. Materials and skilled labor are scarce. In addition to permanent physical and mental stunting, malnourished children are much more susceptible to succumbing to diseases such as diarrhea, pneumonia, and measles.

What has been done:

Abbott and Partners in Health have united to combat severe childhood malnutrition in Haiti. This is being accomplished by a $6.5MM grant from Abbott including funds to build a malnutrition plant as well as developing infrastructure and providing manufacturing expertise. The goal is to create a local and sustainable solution to treating malnutrition in Haiti. I have led this program which to date has completed the following major milestones:

a) Developed a safe and efficient manufacturing process
b) Identified cost savings opportunities to reduce operating costs
3) Completed all construction documents and have chosen a construction company
4) Site prep completed including building road, connecting branch to electric grid, and digging a well
5) Set up a pilot plant to optimize process, formulation, and provide training

Impacts/New Partnerships:

Through this venture I have had the opportunity to branch out well beyond my laboratory and research management. With this project I have had the opportunity to partner with academia (formulation development and agriculture), the American Peanut Council and a number of its industries, and Food Safety experts. This has been an opportunity to build a “business” from the ground up and under highly adverse conditions. Another challenge is that the acute malnutrition product will be distributed free of charge. In order to have a sustainable operation, and not rely on donations to operate, other food products will be manufactured and exported for sale.

Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)

The current timeline is to break ground on construction this August. The plant should be completed before the end of this year and commercial production is planned to commence the end of Q1 2012. The goal is to initially produce enough product to treat 10,000 children and eventually ramp up to treating 50,000. We will be creating 60 new jobs by opening this plant and will be stimulating demand for commodities for local farmers.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

The FSLI experience has provided considerable insight into both my strengths and weaknesses as a leader. This awareness has really helped me to manage both in order to lead more effectively. Additionally, FSLI really helped me expand my appreciation of food systems beyond just the commercial sector, and this has helped me tap into many other key resources to drive this program. Simply put, I'm a better leader because of FSLI.

Contact information:

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