There are many third world countries around the world. In comparison to first world countries, third world countries are underdeveloped, suffering from poverty and dealing with crisis daily. Two of these third world countries are Guatemala and Haiti. There are both similarities and differences between the two and one main issue that exists in both countries is the role of women.

Guatemala lies in Central America. The total area of land is 42,031 square miles with the highest elevation being Volcan Tajumulco at a height of 13,845 feet. Guatemala is called the “land of eternal spring” because of the usually warm weather during the days. There are few natural resources with the main one being the volcanic soil. Guatemala exports mainly coffee, with cotton and sugarcane being other important export crops. The main transportation route is the road network, which consists of three main highways; the Inter-American, a parallel route near the Pacific coast, and the Atlantic Highway. The capital is Guatemala City and the total population is 12,335,580. Spanish is the main language and Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity are the major religions. The monetary unit is the quetzal.

The colonial history of Guatemala began with the arrival of the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado in 1524 and ended with Guatemala’s declaration of independence in 1821. Spaniards arrived in Guatemala under the command of Pedro de Alvarado in search of precious metals and unbaptized souls. Alvarado reported back to his captain, Hernan Cortez, that the country was of the most populous area encountered. In lacking of the precious metals, Guatemala offered the Spaniards cheap labor. However, some sectors attempted to protect the Indians. More than half of the Guatemalans were descendents of Mayan Indians. Westernized Mayans and mestizos (mixed European and Indian) were known as ladinos. Powerful authorities designed a policy to
restrict Spanish-Indian interaction. The country lacked the resources to enforce the restriction and therefore most of the crops developed depended on the Spaniards employing the Indians.

The first colonial capital was Ciudad Vieja, which was ruined by floods. The next colonial capital, La Antigua Guatemala, was founded with the name of Santiago de Guatemala in 1943. It was the center for culture, economics, religion, politics and education, and became one of the richest capitals in the New World. After damaging earthquakes, it was moved to present day Guatemala City in 1773 and founded in 1776. Guatemala gained independence from Spain on September 15, 1821, and Mexico in 1823. From 1838 until 1865, Rafael Carrera, a folk leader, dominated the government. Liberal leaders then began holding power in 1873. In the 1900’s Ubico gained power which began the revolution. This included fair elections, expanded education systems, social security and a labor code.
Haiti lies in the West Indies. The total area of land is 10,712 square miles with the highest elevation being Pic La Selle at a height of 8,773 feet. The capital and largest city is Port-au-Prince and the total population is 6,884,264. It was the first free modern nation in the Western Hemisphere after the United States. Average temperatures are between 70 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Vegetation and wildlife are very important, being primarily an agricultural country with no large manufacturing. The main crops are rice, maize, beans and sugarcane, but the leading export crop is coffee. Main natural resources include copper, gold and marble. Haiti has a very poor transportation system which uses deteriorated roads, one railroad and eventually air travel. French and Creole are the main languages and Roman Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, and Vaudou are the major religions. The monetary unit is the gourde.

Haiti became a French colony in 1697 when sugarcane was starting to rise in growth. This set a pattern of slave worked plantations. About 100 years later, the black slave population started a revolution, leading a war with France. The French Revolution in 1789 had the slogan of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” and let out all of the selfish ambitions of the free classes. The main person to take charge in Haiti during this period was Pierre Francois Dominique Toussaint L’Ouverture, a former slave with great leadership qualities. He eventually became the commanding general, conquering Santo Domingo by 1801, and then abolishing slavery in
eastern Hispaniola. Haitian forces defeated the French and in 1804 Haiti became the first independent black-led republic in the modern world. As it developed into a nation, it faced civil wars, political assassinations, and territorial divisions.

Jacques Dessalines, the leader of the Haitian army, declared himself emperor and proclaimed the independence of Haiti in 1804. The country was divided in the north and south. During these next few years, Haiti was torn by the civil wars. Decades elapsed with repeated cycles of new leaders and familiar patterns of authority and power. Abraham Lincoln’s recognition of Haiti’s independence in 1862 raised Haitian pride. In 1915, Haiti lost its freedom and was crushed by United States forces. The last United States marines were withdrawn in 1934. Two patterns of government emerged including a relaxation method and a less personal rule. Haiti was aiming to progress toward the establishment of democratic government. Population increased though economic progress did not that well.
There are many differences between the countries Guatemala and Haiti. These differences can be determined by the Human Development Index (HDI) Report. The adult literacy rate in Guatemala is 68.6% compared to the 49.8% in Haiti. Though those percentages are not extremely far off, one is below half of the population while one is above. This is for ages 15 and over. The GDP in Guatemala is 3,821 and 1,467 in Haiti. In Guatemala the human poverty index is 23.5% and in Haiti 42.3%, which again is above and below half the population. The percent of the population not using improved drinking water in Guatemala is 8 and 54 in Haiti. The probability at birth of not surviving to age 60 is 31.1% in Guatemala and 52.9% in Haiti. The total population of both countries is increasing but in different numbers. In Guatemala it has risen from 6 million in 1975 to 11.4 in 2000. In Haiti it has risen from 4.9 million to 8.1 million. The average income for males in Guatemala is 5,772 and for females is 1,836. The average in Haiti is 1,902 for males and 1,049 for females.

One of the greatest differences has to do with health. Specifically in the population using adequate sanitation facilities, it is 85% in Guatemala and 28% in Haiti. For the population of one year olds fully immunized against measles, it is 83% in Guatemala and 54% in Haiti. There are 93 physicians per 100,000 people in Guatemala but only 8 in Haiti. This may be because the
health expenditure per capita is 78 in Guatemala but only 21 in Haiti. One of leading global health crisis in both countries is undernourished people. In Guatemala it is 22% and in Haiti it is 56%. The number of people over 15 living with HIV/AIDS in Guatemala is 27,000 and 120,000 in Haiti. The infant mortality rate is 44 per 1,000 births in Guatemala and 81 in Haiti.

Another main difference has to do with technology. The number of telephone mainlines per 1,000 people in Guatemala is 21 and 7 in Haiti. The number of cellular mobile customers per 1,000 people in Guatemala is 61 and 3 in Haiti. Primary exports in Guatemala is 76% and in Haiti is 15%. Electricity consumption per capita is 240 kilowatt hours in Guatemala and 41 kilowatt hours in Haiti.

There are also a number of similarities between the countries Guatemala and Haiti. The life expectancy at birth is close in age. It is 64.8 in Guatemala and 52.6 in Haiti. The percent of underweight children is also close with 24% in Guatemala and 28% in Haiti. The population below the income poverty line is 57.9% in Guatemala and 65% in Haiti. The annual population growth rate is very similar with 2.6% in Guatemala and 2% in Haiti. The population under age 15 is 37.3% in Guatemala and 40.6% in Haiti. The percent of imports in Guatemala is 25 and 29 in Haiti.

One main similarity deals with education. In Guatemala, the public education expenditure was 1.9% in 1985-1987. It was exactly the same for Haiti. The pre-primary and primary public education expenditure is 63% in Guatemala and 51% in Haiti. The secondary public education expenditure is 12.1% in Guatemala and 18.1% in Haiti. The adult literacy rate is somewhat similar being 68.6% in Guatemala and 49.8% in Haiti. The enrollment ratio is 83% in Guatemala and 80% in Haiti. The assistance received in Guatemala is 263.6 million and in Haiti is 208.3
million. The seats in the parliament held by women are similar with 8.8% in Guatemala and 9.1% in Haiti.

The roles of women are a main issue in both countries. Women are treated unfairly, controlled and deprived of opportunities that men are given. There is gender inequality and less political participation.

In Guatemala, Mayan women are looked at by tourists. Everyday people watch women in the household doing stereotypical work such as weaving. They are often in this home setting, yet doing work with a child nearby. Some women give weaving demonstrations perform voluntarily for tourists. The women who weave for tourists are not hostile toward them for the hope of selling items to make money. Some tourists however, forget this is the Guatemalans lives and they are in a real home performing actual work. This has increased the amount of women that support themselves because of the sales. This is beneficial especially to those women who have to support children without the help of a male figure. Many women become the primary deciders on how the family uses the finances.

Though women at times have a say with finances, when they do incur them, they do not have a say in many other things. Guatemala experiences some of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the region. Uses for biomedical services for pregnancy related care tend to be very low. Most births occur at home or with someone who has little or no training. Not only do the newborns suffer, the women have a chance of dying. When there is training available, most women can not afford it and therefore still suffer in birth. Along the lines of doctors, these are typically males because females are not given the chance at higher jobs, if any job at all other than at the home.
The female adult literacy is not as high as male adult literacy, but it is 61.2% compared to the males 76.1%. The female average income compared to males is 1,836 to 5,772; which is relatively low. The difference of pay is great even though some of the jobs may be the same. Though, in general females are not offered the positions males are offered. Females are not offered high position jobs shown by the only 8.8% of women in parliament seats. Female employment in agriculture is 14%, in industry is 19%, and in services is 68%. Women received the right to vote in 1946 along with the right to stand for election. The first year a woman was appointed or elected was 1956. Overall, women are given a greater opportunity in life in Guatemala than in other third world countries. However, these opportunities are still far behind that of first world countries.

In Haiti, a main issue with women is that of them suffering. Because of political beliefs and actions in the 1990s, women underwent assassinations, massacres, torture and other physical abuse. A main form of political violence is rape inflicted on women organizations and individuals. Men do not allow women the rights politically and therefore terrorize them and assault them violently. During the 1980s women first started with feminist groups trying to surpass the violence inflicted upon them. New social movements started with women in position, however violence was still an issue and demands were given to all women. Although women were eventually given the right to vote, there was no fundamental change in their legal and social positions. Women are held not only for their own actions but for the actions of their family as well.

Women take on the role of slaves in Haiti. They receive only two-thirds the pay that men do. Women join together to form groups and gain strength. This often fails against poverty, disease, human right violations and corruption. Women are viewed as dependents, and when
given a right it is seen as a “privilege.” When women manage to get a job or position, it is usually held through or because of marriage. Most of the women in decent positions are placed there because of marital and family networks. Normally, women are responsible for selling food crops and being the link between small rural gardens and urban consumers.

Women account for 55% of the total immigrants. They work as maids, nurses aids and very few as secretaries in private firms. The majority who were able to get jobs worked in hotels restaurants, and hospitals. Still women are exploited, trying to make money by using sexual means. Women were treated as being second class to men and therefore felt the struggles of inequality. Overall, women were looked as being lesser of a person than men and treated in that respect.

In doing research on this paper, on the countries of Guatemala and Haiti, I learned a lot of new information. Both countries are third world countries. However, Guatemala is more advanced and not as low in poverty as Haiti is. Guatemala’s main problems deal with financial issues in not having enough resources for the huge population. Haiti’s main problems deal with the neglecting of women and high poverty levels. I did not know there could be such great of a variance between third world countries. I also thought that the literacy rate was much lower, mainly below about 20% or less. However, both show to have higher literacy rate than I thought. Just because a country is classified as third world does not mean that it is completely incapable of all abilities first world countries have. It simply means it is deprived of the advancements that allow the abilities first world countries have.

Women are neglected in more ways than just physical abuse by the men. They deal with abuses as extreme as massacres. Just because of the fact that they are women, they are treated as
lower than men. Because of lacking the opportunities to be well educated, they can not advance as far as men in the working class. Therefore the pay is less. The cycle continues around to poverty and therefore can not support their families or even themselves.

Guatemala and Haiti are only two of the many third world countries in the world. According to the Human Development Index Report, Guatemala is ranked 120 and Haiti is ranked 146. This means there are 26 more countries between these two which are worse than Guatemala. This does not even include those which are worse than Haiti. It is upsetting to think how behind these countries are and how many of them there are. As Americans, we are so far ahead of other countries and very fortunate for that. I do not think we take the time to think about how well off we have it living in this country. The majority of us do not need to worry about being able to get a job, or having enough money to buy a meal everyday, or getting beaten or massacred by others. Doing this paper helped me realize how fortunate I am to have the life that I do. I could not even imagine the difficulties and struggles of those living in third world countries.

I have a few suggestions about what I have learned. I think, first of all, that these third world countries need to be moved up to a higher level. However, in doing so I do not believe that first and second world countries should move up as well. That would continue to keep third world countries far behind which is not what the goal is. There needs to be more of equality between first and third world countries. We all have come into counter with giving donations and volunteering. If each of us Americans does something to help, this problem can be helped as well. However, it is not completely up to Americans. People in third world countries need to be willing to move ahead, learn how to do so, and take on the responsibilities themselves. America can teach if third world countries are willing to learn.
Works Cited


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