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Nigeria, Malnutrition

Nigeria: A Country in Severe Need of Help Solving Malnutrition

Malnutrition in Nigeria is an ongoing problem that must be addressed for the sake of the Nigerians. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa with over 230 million people, and people living in this West African country are at risk of malnutrition for numerous reasons (*Federal Republic of Nigeria*, n.d.). Anything that can be done needs to be done to help Nigeria. Out of the entire world, Nigeria has the second highest number of stunted children, and 32% of these children are under the age of five. It is estimated that two million children suffer severe acute malnutrition. Seven percent of women in Nigeria also suffer from severe malnutrition (*Nutrition*, n.d.). These trends are not seeing improvement, and more ways to address malnutrition in Nigeria need to be considered as soon as possible and changes need to be made.

About 80% of this land is used for agriculture such as for both crops and livestock. The percentage of rural and urban areas is close to equally split, 52% is rural and 48% is urban (Bessa, n.d.). There are many major crops and exports that happen in Nigeria. Some of the major crops are beans, rice, sesame, cocoa beans, and rubber. The main food exports are groundnut and palm kernel oil (*Agriculture in Nigeria*, n.d.).

In Nigeria there are two main rivers that lead into none of the world's largest river deltas. Nigeria has many valleys, hills and mountains. The climate varies depending on where the location is. More in the south is like a tropical rainforest, towards the east is the Obudu Plateau, and along the coast is where there are mangrove swamps (*Federal Republic of Nigeria*, n.d.).

In each household there are approximately 4-6 people. Each woman in Nigeria has 4 or 5 children (*Average Household Size in Nigeria | ArcGIS Hub*, n.d.). Nigeria has a large amount of different types of meals and food. Some traditional foods in Nigeria are maize, yams, and plantains. These foods are a large staple in Nigerians diets. Some Nigerian meals consist of stew, porridge, soups, and jollof rice (*Take a Taste of Nigerian-Inspired Meals | Virginia Family Nutrition Program*, n.d.). Nigerian meals usually have a bigger amount of beans, vegetables, and fish. This fact differs a little bit in the areas of Nigeria, but not a whole lot (*The 'Nigerian Diet' and Its Evolution: Review of the Existing Literature and Household Survey Data*, 2023).

Agriculture is a large part of Nigeria. About 80% of the food they have comes from small-scale farmers (*The Local Food System in Nigeria – Northwest Tennessee Local Food Network*, 2021). There are many small markets around all of the communities where the families go to buy their food.

In Nigeria there are many different types of housing. Some of the most common houses are bungalows. Bungalows are one of the main types of houses in Nigeria. They are one of the oldest types of houses there. Another type of house is a duplex. There are many different types of duplexes. Some types are terrace duplexes, which is like a townhouse, or there is a fully-attached duplex, which is a house that is not connected to another duplex (*Top 10 Common House Types in Nigeria (With Pictures)*, 2023). Although these seem like nice houses, there are also many people that simply live in pure poverty and have little to nothing.

Education in Nigeria is not very good for the children. 1 in 5 children do not attend school. Although the education is free, 10.5 million children in Nigeria are not in school. There are almost 500 schools that have been destroyed and many more have been damaged because of conflicts. Gender roles are a large part in why there are so many children not going to school. Almost half of the children not going to school are female (*Education*, n.d.).

Healthcare in Nigeria is not very well accessed. 1 in 6 children die before the age of 5. Healthcare is limited in some areas, so this is a main reason why so many people can not receive healthcare (*Barriers to Accessing Health Care in Nigeria: Implications for Child Survival*, 2014).

In 2018, there was a state of emergency declared involving Nigeria's water. The access to clean water varies in the areas of Nigeria. In this case, the access to clean water is not very good in the rural areas. 40% of households do not have access to very much clean water (*Nigeria: Ensuring Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All*, 2021). Because of the poor water access, there are higher numbers of deaths happening. Since there is not much good drinking water, these families have no choice but to drink contaminated water. This has caused an increase in both diseases and deaths (*Nigeria: Ensuring Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All*, 2021).

Nigeria also does not have very good access to toilet facilities. Almost 50 million people do not have access to a basic bathroom. Along with there being poor bathrooms that cause people to be unable to have access to using clean restrooms, there are also people that do not believe in having good bathrooms. However, that does not involve more people than the amount of people truly without access to toilet facilities (Abaga, n.d.).

Malnutrition in Nigeria is an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed. Anything that can be done, needs to be done. In the world, Nigeria is the second largest country with the highest number of stunted children. 32% of these children are under 5. In Nigeria out of all of the children, about 2 million of them, 2 million of them suffer some severe acute malnutrition. 7% of women that are able to have children also suffer from this (*Nutrition*, n.d.). These trends are not getting any better. The number of children that suffer from malnutrition has been staying around the same for the past few years.

There are many factors that are causing this severe malnutrition. Some of the main causes are poor feeding practices towards children, poor access to healthcare, poor access to water, and the high levels of poverty. The effects of malnutrition are large and have many effects on Nigerians. Malnutrition is worse and a larger amount of people suffer from it in urban areas. Malnutrition is something that affects

everyone differently, but women are more likely to be affected. This is because they need more nutrient-rich food than men, which at times they can not get (*Gender Inequality*, n.d.).

Malnutrition is a very serious condition that affects many children in Nigeria. These conditions need to be reversed as soon as possible to stop the high amount of children dying from it. Malnutrition leads to many diseases that cause the deaths of almost 420,000 children each year in Nigeria. Because of the young children being so affected, it is causing drains in the future of Nigerians.

During the past years, people have noticed the huge impact malnutrition has on Nigerians. People such as the president, governors, and UNICEF advocates have started to begin to bring ideas of ways to come up with potential solutions to solve this issue. Some of the main ideas to start solving malnutrition in children are supporting mothers to breastfeed their children for at least the first 6 months of life. Another idea is to have all families educated on the correct feeding practices towards older children.

These will be the start to having children to be well nourished and to begin good eating habits. There has also been a program that has begun to treat children suffering with severe acute malnutrition. This program treats the children, and also guides the mothers on the right paths on how to feed and nourish their children. This program has treated 12 million children since it started in 2019 (*Uniting in the Battle to End Child Malnutrition in Nigeria*, n.d.).

Although these are very good plans to stop malnutrition, I do believe that they will not impact the country of Nigeria as much as they should. The reason behind this is that these plans were made a few years ago, yet a large number of Nigerians still suffer from malnutrition. These recommendations have had a positive impact by teaching families more about malnutrition as well as treating children affected. The only negative impact this has had is not being able to completely solve malnutrition in Nigeria.

There are many solutions and recommendations to solve malnutrition. As a person that cares deeply about children being able to live happy and healthy lives, I would love to be able to make changes in the world to help stop malnutrition. Nigeria needs hope and help for their country to become a better place for people to live in happily, and not to live in fear of their children potentially losing their lives because of this serious condition.

Nigeria's population is constantly growing. Every year, Nigeria's population grows by about 3%. With this being said, more than half of these people are under 30. With this large number of people under the age of 30, there are growing rates of children that are prone to be exposed to malnourishment. This is because in Nigeria there is not enough being taught or shown to parents about malnutrition that will be effective enough to be able to stop this issue right away.

I think that if there were mandatory lessons for parents to teach them how to nourish their children correctly and how to keep them on the correct nutrition path, then the numbers of children being affected with malnutrition or dying because of it would go down. This is not something that could be done very quickly. A lot of time and thought would have to go into it so people can be taught correctly and so it can be effective.

Another way malnutrition could be solved is not only teaching parents about the correct ways to feed and nourish their children, but to also teach older children how to properly feed and take care of themselves. The younger they are taught and the more people that get taught, the more effective it will be on the population. People would be eligible to teach the families and children this if they have a strong knowledge and are able to teach the proper knowledge in the right ways.

Another issue is the large and growing population, and there not being a large amount of food. Without there being enough food, malnutrition will likely take many more years to come to an end. If there becomes more food easily provided and accessed, then more families and children will become better nourished. Even though farming is huge in Nigeria, there could always be more possible jobs to open up to create more food.

If more food is produced, and families are taught how to properly nourish themselves and their children, then malnourishment can possibly become less of an issue. If this happened, they could start living better lives and make Nigeria a better place to live and grow more healthy families.

I think that these resolutions could positively impact the whole country if they are accomplished properly. They can easily be done around the whole country of Nigeria. It would be costly, but if the world food prize organization, or the world food programme would possibly sponsor and lead these plans, they can easily become a reality and a lifestyle of Nigerians. The Nigerians also need as much help from everyone else in the world as possible.

Nigeria needs the help of everyone they can get. Malnutrition is a huge and real problem that needs to be solved as soon as possible. Without it being solved, there will only continue to be more illnesses, diseases, and deaths of young children in the country. Without our help, nothing will happen, and no changes will be made. They need us, they need these changes to happen. The people and children of Nigeria deserve better lives and deserve to be able to live and change the world.

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