

Kayleigh Rose Myers
Tremont High School
Tremont, MS, USA
Somalia, Malnutrition

Somalia : Feeding the Future of The World Starts Now

Introduction:

Children in Somalia are undernourished from the time they are conceived to the time they grow into adulthood. Malnutrition affects everything from growth to learning to emotional well being. No child should ever have to worry about the source of one's next meal or water availability, but many face this problem every day, children and adults alike (unicef.org). Conditions continue to worsen as the wars and conflicts going on in surrounding areas continue to escalate and the general lack of food dwindles.

Somalia is a country the same size as Texas, but this small country faces more nutritional problems than the whole of the United States of America. The country has a population of around 14,650,000 people in it. The 55% rural population is at a greater disadvantage than the 45% urban population. The country is in the Horn of Africa, which borders the Gulf of Aiden and the Indian Ocean. Somalia gets rain on average 4 months out of the year. The little amount of rain they get results in an average of 4 inches or less of rain each year and it is only decreasing from time to time.. The absence of rain and abnormally hot days around the year can lead to drastically dry summers and droughts that cause water shortages and crop failures that then can lead to food and water shortages.

Family:

Somalia has a high export rate in agriculture-related fields. Their most popular exports include sorghum, corn, sesame, cowpeas, fruits, and other vegetables. Somalia has a few other popular exports such as livestock, fish, animal hides, frankincense, and myrrh (britannica.com). With all these exports it still does not bring in a lot of money for the families of Somalia. The average wage for a day is 50,074 Somali Shillings which equals just about \$88 U.S. dollars. Jobs in Somalia are mainly agriculture-related and this field of work is the most stable source of income in the country as long as the drought season does make it exponentially more difficult to grow food to make money.

Families in Somalia consist of a man and his wives. One man can have up to four wives total, and each wife has several children. Once a woman decides to get married she moves in with her husband and his family, so very small homes are very full in Somalia. Homes that are most commonly seen are round huts made up of brush and other items that are found around them in their area. They follow a caste system that puts a hierarchy on men, so the boys go to work when they are able to and the girls are caretakers of the home. Young children do get a basic education that is given by other members of the community, and it consists of just the basics to get by in life, such as simple math, language arts, and reading.

Malnutrition Problems:

The malnutrition and dirty water conditions in Somalia create problems for all the children that are growing into young adults to help support their families. Malnutrition is staying the same in the country but we should be doing more to help it improve (worldbank.org). This problem affects the rural population worse than the urban population because of constant conflicts in Somalia pulling the government's attention and focus away from this problem and they focus more on their countries problems with war. The government is not at fault, but they could be of more assistance than they have been in the past few years in order to help the people of our next generation.

Malnutrition disproportionately affects children and pregnant people more than it does men and the elderly. When children are in the womb they absorb their nutrients by being connected to an umbilical cord which is connected to the placenta that is connected to the mother, and the fetus gets all the necessary nutrition, oxygen, and life support from the mother (chop.edu). With mothers suffering from malnutrition before being pregnant and then during the pregnancy it increases the chance of having a baby that is malnourished. If a child comes out of the womb malnourished they are more likely to stay in a malnourished state all the way throughout life.

Solutions:

One solution that is being implemented now is supplying micronutrient supplements and vitamins to Somalia. This is a great solution because it provides the micronutrients that the bodies need in order to hold all the other nutrients from other food sources. The only problem with this solution is that it does not also help the water crisis that pairs with the malnutrition that they are facing. The second solution is bringing food and clean water to the people of Somalia organized by the Action Against Hunger Organization (actionagainsthunger.org). This solves both the food and water shortages but it fails to solve the underlying problem of the micronutrient deficiency. The organization also has come out in need of more workers to help the cause, but has not prevailed. The first two solutions are being used in Somalia now and they have not shown a significant decrease in malnutrition so we may have to use efforts from other countries. The third solution is bringing clean water, food, and health services to Somalia so they can get treated for diseases they may have and then get food and water to continue on a healthy path. The downfall to this solution is that Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world and the health care part would not be feasible long term. The best way to mitigate malnutrition would be to mix the best of each solution together and minimize the weaknesses of the plans.

I would use the first option and the third option as the mix of solutions that would help the most with the lowest risk factors. The micronutrients will allow the people to build up their vitamins in their body so the body can absorb the other nutrients from food too. I would also use the free clean water of the third option for the best solution. Health care would be great but it is not as feasible as clean water access. Once they get clean water and nutrients in their body it should mitigate some of the health risk also. It is important to ensure that the elders in the community encourage and make an effort to teach the younger generations how important it is to accept the help they are given. The government should lean back a little on this issue, by that I mean they should help assist but not force the people because that could cause civil unrest and civil problems that Somalia is not equipped to handle. The micronutrient solutions are helpful but only with macronutrients to aid in the absorption of the micronutrients. The macronutrients that

are commonly consumed are fats, proteins, and carbohydrates. In a healthy adult their diet should consist of around 50% carbohydrates, 25% proteins, and 30% fats in their day to day eating habits. The best way to increase their macronutrients would be to eat foods that are higher in carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. The best source of carbohydrates are bread, rice, oats, beans, and starchy vegetables such as potatoes and corn. Protein sources that are best are meat, eggs, nuts, and soy products. The fat sources that are best include butter and oils such as coconut, peanut, and palm. (healthy-kids.com) With the macronutrients being needed in order to absorb the best micronutrients I feel as though it would be best to send in macronutrients and micronutrients. In order to send these nutrients in we could partner with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

Another option would be to host an event like Life Aid. In 1985 Life Aid was a music event that was hosted to raise money for Africa and countries facing famine. 170,000 people either showed up or tuned in to watch the show (history.com). This produced \$127 million U.S. dollars to support the cause. If we could apply the same concept to the Somalis situation I believe we could produce similar results. I believe popular media personalities would be on board with this idea.

One final important solution would be to get the government more involved. Government involvement is a difficult topic because sometimes the government can abuse their power. In this case I would suggest that the government set aside a larger team to come up with large-scale operations that allow them to send in clean water and the proper nutrients that are needed. The operations could consist of the Somalian government getting supplies flown in from other countries that are willing to help, and setting aside money for their rural areas to send in supplies to these people. Without the government assistance the people of Somalia are going to have a much harder time in coming out of these trying times.

Funding:

The best groups that would help fund these operations would be The United Nations (UN) and UNICEF since they are already partners and attempting to help the Somalis. The UN has already established a presence in Somalia and that creates a sense of connection to the group but the people since they are familiar with them. UNICEF is already working in Somalia, but on much smaller scales because they are unable to move into a larger area due to staffing issues, but with the UN alongside them it adds more hands to the group. When thinking about what programs to use in order to bring the most aid to Somalia we should use UNICEF because they provide good nutrients and clean water to children who need these things. UNICEF also supports the parents of these children because they believe that without good support from parents the food will not make much of a difference to the children. (unicef.org). They should also establish that the problem of malnutrition will most likely take several years, if not longer to fix and make it a sustainable solution. If they find a food that is inexpensive but full of micronutrients and vitamins they can use it and it would lower the overall cost of the program. Some foods that would serve as an excellent choice would be brown rice, beans, oatmeal, and quinoa.

If the Life Aid program is used by celebrities with very large social media presences could help with the funding along with asking for help from their followers. This program could also draw in enough money to ensure enough food and water for a while for the people of Somalia. The

Life Aid program is a good way to make money for the people and show support for your favorite artist while raising money for Somalia.

Conclusion:

Somalis are facing extreme malnutrition and drought that is going to take some time and out of the box thinking to remedy. Simple solutions can make a difference, but it is going to take everyone putting their heads and hearts together to help these people get through these very difficult times. The Somali people have a long history of facing malnutrition and/or starvation as early as 1985. Live Aid raised \$127 Million U.S. for famine relief in Africa and surrounding places, but that is just a starting point for the total amount it would cost to eradicate this problem.. They are going to need patience, help, and support through these trying times. When everyone comes together and puts in an effort to provide clean water and nutritious food it gives us a sense of altruism (Houghton M. Harcourt dictionary.com). I hope to be able to make a difference in the kids' lives by giving them a meal so they can go on with their day and not have to worry about if or when they are going to eat today or any time in their future lives. The country needs help and as a global community we must help them. I hope to see my solutions be put into action and be useful in the world.

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