

JoMUN XV

Forum: General Assembly 3

Issue: Addressing and lowering child malnutrition in the Horn of Africa

Student Officer: Xiluva Mbungela

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

As reported by the World Health Organization (WHO), malnutrition is the most dangerous single threat to global public health. The Horn of Africa remains the only region in Africa where malnutrition rates have not improved over the last 20 years. This severe crisis is due to the convergent effects of numerous consecutive droughts, a rise in food prices and the repeated effects of armed conflict. The drought has had a major effect on resources required for living namely water resources. This consequently affects the availability of water for people and livestock living in the affected areas, as well as also affecting river flow levels.

The World Food Program (WFP) estimates that over 8.5 million people in the Horn of Africa, mostly children are facing food security crisis condition. In Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia the education of approximately 6 million children has been disrupted as a result of events such as drought, economic issues and conflict in the area. As the drought within this region continues, it is highly anticipated that the situation will worsen and further intensify current hunger and malnutrition. It is estimated that “600,000 children aged 6 to 59 months in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia will be in need for treatment or severe-acute malnutrition in 2017 and this number is expected to raise” (www.dehai.org).

Child malnutrition is the underlying cause of many of the struggles this region faces. There are many benefits of finding a solution to malnutrition. The straightforward advantages are clear when looking at the number of lives that would be saved, including the lives that are destroyed because of the side effects of malnutrition (such as disease). It is evident that there are also economic advantages. Considering that lost productivity from nutrition related causes that costs countries, can be avoided with the reduction of malnutrition--- specifically in areas of growth and development. For example, children will be able to attend school because they will not be sick, a more educated youth population tends to lead to a better economy. If child malnutrition became scarce in its occurrence, these developing economies can begin to make huge progress and become devoid of deaths caused by illnesses like malaria and diarrhoea of which child malnutrition is the leading cause.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is comprised of Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Kenya. It is said to be one of the most food insecure areas in the world mostly due to drought and conflict within the region.

Food Security

The World Food Summit of 1996 deemed food security to be a situation where “people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.

Malnutrition

An individual is deemed malnourished if they do not have access to the required calories and proteins needed for growth and bodily functions. Malnutrition can also occur when an individual is unable to use the food they eat due to an illness.

Drought

A period of continued dryness within an area that causes damage to resources such as crops and water. It can also prevent the successful growth and availability of these resources.

WASH

Water, Sanitation and Health.

Famine

A famine is declared when specific aspects of malnutrition, mortality and hunger are met. These conditions are usually characterized by food shortage, crop failure, population imbalance and widespread death.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

WHO, states that malnutrition is by far the largest contributor to child mortality globally, currently present in 45 percent of all cases. In this particular region, droughts have been ongoing because of the dryness and aridness in the region. This means that rainfall is low, inconsistent and unevenly distributed through the area. Even though in the past there has been continuous cycles of drought and flooding- there is substantial research and information that correlates these weather events with climate change. As well as this, conflict and food insecurity are undoubtedly linked. Conflict leads to the displacement of people and makes it difficult to cultivate land. In some cases, it has even obstructed humanitarian access, contributing even more to the vulnerability of people, more specifically children, in these affected areas.

Many people living in these countries are cut off from the economy due to inadequate transportation services and lack of telecommunication services and energy sources. Medical infrastructure and treatment centers are insufficient or non-existent in many places in the Horn of Africa. Even though there are 100 UN sites in Ethiopia dedicated to caring for malnourished children, they are reaching less than a third of the total number of undernourished youth. Water supplies are also scarce and inadequate. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations published a report in which it is stated that within Eritrea Ethiopia and Somalia safe drinking water is only accessible to one quarter of the population. In addition to this, many local and national governments within the affected countries do not have enough data or sufficient analytical capacity and other resources to respond to changing circumstances. Even when warnings are put into place within the country the response and action is slow. The health standards in the countries that encompass the Horn of Africa are often frowned upon internationally- in some cases they are said to be the worst in the world. The most sensitive and the most affected by this system are children, majority of which are malnourished or suffer from common diseases such as measles and malaria. Especially when considering that malnutrition is often difficult to identify, and the lasting impacts are often invisible. A child suffering severely from malnourishment can go undetected until it is too late to fully treat, and even then, the chances of being treated for malnourishment and the diseases mentioned above are low.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

WFP

The World Food Program has always maintained a positive stance on the reduction of child malnutrition in the Horn of Africa. They have continuously provided aid and have been involved in multiple projects to help the drought-stricken region. They have created numerous partnership programs with public and private organizations within the countries with the goal of alleviating several problems in the area, especially child malnutrition. Whether this involves short-term immediate relief or longer-term effects and plans, they have always managed to contribute to the reduction of the issue.

UNICEF

UNICEF is one of the main providers of therapeutic food in the Horn of Africa. The organization directly supports the rehabilitation of malnourished children by partnering with government run healthservices, NGOs and community organizations. While UNICEF mostly focuses its current efforts on immediate needs, it equally commits to creating more viable, and longer-term pro-child approaches in the region to prevent this kind of crisis happening again in the future.

Ethiopia

The government of Ethiopia and humanitarian partners have continued to prioritize the reduction of child malnutrition in the country. In 2013 the country announced and put into practice a revised National Nutrition plan that was created in an attempt to transform the economic and developmental trajectory of mothers and their children, this was to be done by addressing the issue of food insecurity within the country. As well as this, in 2015, the government committed to halve under five children malnutrition and mortality, which has been achieved, two years on. Furthermore, Ethiopia does indeed recognize and prioritize some of the most urgent needs within the country, those of which include nutrition, food, water, sanitation, health, child protection and education. For example, in an attempt to improve the situation of insufficient nutrition within the country, Ethiopia joined Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) which describes themselves as a global movement that unites leaders, businesses, researchers and organizations to improve nourishment.

Eritrea

Due to the Isolationist stance of Eritrea's longstanding president, the exact figures for malnutrition in the country are difficult to obtain. The government has been inconsistent in its approaches to alleviating its economic and food shortfalls. The current agreement between numerous UN programs and Eritrea shows major progress from the time president halted food aid into the country in 2007. Eritrea's Ministry of National Development and the UN signed the Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework in 2012, a four-year plan to address issues such as food security along with health and nutrition. UN Agencies like UNICEF have also been granted to work with healthcare sector in the country, that way the country can maintain its appearance of self-reliant. The country is at the very early stages of creating a sustainable model to child malnutrition.

Somalia

The country recognizes the need to lower child malnutrition in the country, however due to widespread corruption, and the lack of effective systems, this has not been possible within the country. Because there is only a small budget allocated for government nutritionM related activities, most nutrition programs are financed through humanitarian funding. The very few government policies that do exist within the country to support and promote child nutrition are poorly

implemented and barely monitored and there is minimal community involvement, in the monitoring and implementation of programs in country.

Djibouti

The country maintains a positive stance on the issue, and seeks out assistance in combatting it where needed. Several international organizations have developed programs and assistance for the under-five population in the country. The WFP has been a leading contributor of food and health assistance in Djibouti, especially with children. Other organizations have helped the country become self-sufficient by providing aid in various sectors. These efforts have contributed to the decline of malnutrition throughout the country.

Kenya

As one of the many countries affected, Kenya has prioritized addressing and lower child malnutrition within the country. On February 10th 2016, the government declared a national drought emergency and created a drought response plan that is expected to run from November 2016 to July 2017. The response plan is concentrated on food security, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, agriculture and education. The government has also established an intergovernmental committee which specialize in technology to coordinate emergency drought responses within the country.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

1991	Famine is declared in Somalia.
1998	UNICEF makes malnutrition the main focus of its 1998 “State of the World’s Children” report.
2002	Residents of Ethiopia face famine threat as result of drought. Expected to affect over 15 million residents.
2005	Food aid in Niger is misdirected, according to aid agencies a large number of children have died due to the crisis.
2011 - 2012	The region is affected by a severe drought- often labeled as one of the worst droughts to occur in 60 years. An extreme food crisis then followed this drought. Famine was declared in the area.
2011	Foreign food aid such as the World Food Program as well as journalists are expelled from Somali territory to provide aid and resources.
2013	The first “Nutrition for Growth Summit” is held in London in 2013. New commitments for nutrition specific projects and nutrition sensitive projects, were pledged by various organizations and countries.
2015	The “17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development” is taken up by countries all over the world in a pursuit to improve people’s lives by 2030. Goal no.2 – Zero Hunger- specifically focuses on ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and the promotion of sustainable agriculture (namely the priority of the WFP).

2016	The UN states that “more than 50,00 children in Somalia face death due to the ongoing drought”.
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RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition

Adopted on 16 November 1974 by the World Food Conference convened under General Assembly resolution 3180 (XXVIII) of 17 December 1973; and endorsed by General Assembly resolution 3348 (XXIX) of 17 December 1974.

Resolution 50/109

On the report of the Second Committee (A/50/617/Add.11). About the World Food Summit Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December 1995.

Resolution 2010/1

Health, morbidity, mortality and development in 2010.

Resolution 44/25

Convention on the Rights of the Child Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The 1992 International Conference on Nutrition

FAO and WHO created the first global conference with the goal of primarily addressing the world's nutrition problems, the International Conference on Nutrition. Representatives from 159 countries and the European Community, 15 United Nations organizations and 144 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated. Intense preparation actions were undertaken throughout the world; these were completed in the time leading up to the conference. Governments were required to prepare reports on the food and nutrition situation in their countries. They were also required to submit reports on what they believe are the influencing factors of the nutritional status of groups that are considered vulnerable to nutrition problems. One of the most significant outcomes of the conference is the development of National Plans of Action for Nutrition (NPAN's). The NPAN embodies that specific country's priorities and strategies for the reduction of malnutrition.

The 1996 World Food Summit

The eradication of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa is typically expressed as a long-term development goal which can only be reached through completing difficult yet manageable and reasonable targets. Many of these “targets” were created during the numerous international conferences and summits held in the 1990's however the most essential for malnutrition being the 1996 World Food Summit which undertook the goal of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015. The goal was embarked upon by governments and leaders who attended the World Food Summit, and it was also renewed in the UN Millennium Summit Declaration of September 2000.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Creation of an Organization

The creation of a food reserve/an organization that distributes food globally. This solution would require the effort and participation of multiple UN agencies and member states. This organization will be responsible for examining the type of food that is given, ensuring that the issue of malnutrition is directly addressed and not just that of hunger (as they are different). The organization would include a system of communication for countries or people who feel that their right to food is being denied.

Direct Intervention

A program that offers suitable quality and intensity of nutrition interventions, targeted at the first 1,000 days from pregnancy until age two can be one of the most effective ways to combat child malnutrition and ensure the child's health. Intervention addresses the underlying and immediate causes of under nutrition such as dietary intake and preventing/curing disease, because it is imperative that malnutrition is identified and taken care of early on.

Research and Development to Increase Agricultural Yields

Increasing and intensifying investment into agricultural research and aspects such as the most effective way to ensure the creation of agricultural policies and programs that prioritize nutrition---focused policies. Also, research into the production of more food, which if done can contribute to the lowering of food prices, making food more accessible to the poor. As well as threats that climate change pose to crop yields, and how to prevent or combat these threats.

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APPENDIX OR APPENDICES

Familiarize yourselves with UN sources as they play an extremely important role in this topic of debate – they are useful and informative sources for hunger and malnourishment statistics. Also included, are relevant organizations which have a focal point of global malnutrition:

UN World Food Programme: <http://www.wfp.org/hunger>

UN Food and Agriculture Organization: <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>

The State of Food Insecurity in the World: <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en/>

Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research: <http://aci-ar.gov.au/>

AIFSC ONE Campaign: <http://www.one.org>

Bioversity International: <http://www.bioversityinternational.org>

UNICEF: <http://www.unicef.org/>

Food and Water Watch: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/>

Food First: <http://foodfirst.org/>

Heifer International: <http://www.heifer.org/>

IFAD: <http://www.ifad.org/>

Norman Borlaug Institute: <http://borlaug.tamu.edu/>

Food Tank: <http://foodtank.com/>

World Food Prize: <http://www.worldfoodprize.org/>

Food and Water Watch: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/>

The World Vegetable Center: <http://avrdc.org/>

Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition: <http://www.barillacfn.com/en/>

99 organizations involved in fighting global malnutrition:

<http://mswonlineprograms.org/poverty-hunger/>