

Reducing Malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa

The issue of malnutrition has risen to striking levels in diverse parts of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Every society thrives on the impact of the younger generation, but when this class becomes endangered, it is difficult for such a society to have future growth and development.

In Africa, malnutrition is one of the biggest challenges people face, especially in the Sub-Saharan region. This has led to a decrease in development of the nations affected.

“While the number of stunted children has fallen worldwide since 2000, it has risen in every region of Africa.”

[Brian Keeley, UNICEF](#)

What is malnutrition?

Malnutrition is not necessarily the lack of essential nutrients in the body. As Lizzie (2018) puts it, it is the condition that results from a nutrient deficiency or overconsumption. Following this, it is possible to have surplus foods, yet become malnourished. *“It’s possible to be overweight or obese from excessive calorie consumption, but not get enough vitamins and minerals at the same time,”* [Lizzie says](#).

Malnutrition is mostly seen in children, as they require more essential nutrients to help them grow. Although it is not always seen as the major cause of deaths, it contributes to more than one-third of all children’s deaths. In 2001, it was linked with 54% of deaths of children in developing countries. This is not good news, as the nations affected with this condition will experience a fall in their economic development.

Malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa has increased between 2010 and 2016. With this trend, it is not possible for this part of the world to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) of ending [hunger by 2030](#). The rate of undernourishment skyrocketed from [181 million in 2010 to 222 million in 2016](#).

People consume more processed foods at the expense of minimally processed or fresh foods.



Photo by [Dazzle Jam](#) from [Pexels](#)

Major causes of malnutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa

Being that Sub-Saharan Africa is mostly affected by an increasing [malnourishment rate](#), there are some factors that tend to keep the rates high. Amid all factors, the major cause of undernourishment or overconsumption is poverty.

When there is a lack of funds in any home, it becomes difficult to cater for basic needs, thereby causing the family eat whatever they can grab. Other major causes of malnutrition include:

1. **Insufficient access to food:** When there is little or no access to [good food](#) with a balanced diet, the child suffers from many conditions, because the body is unable to defend itself.
2. **Poor health services:** When a society lacks adequate healthcare facilities, it becomes difficult for the children to receive proper medical attention. In addition, they might have a shortage of healthcare workers

who would have enlightened them on healthy eating habits.

3. **Lack of safe water:** Water is a very essential element in the growth of a child. When a community lacks access to clean and safe water for drinking and cooking, harmful organisms and germs can attack the body.
4. **Inadequate child and maternal care:** The child and mother are very important people in society. In the early stages of childbirth, the mother, alongside her child, requires proper care for a healthy growth. When this stage in their lives is affected, the child becomes unhealthy.
5. **Over-dependence on staple foods:** Staple foods are [foods](#) eaten routinely and constitute a dominant portion of the diet. Some include rice, potatoes, and cassava. When a child continuously eats these foods without creating space for a balanced diet, he or she becomes malnourished.

Strategies to reduce malnourishment in Sub-Saharan Africa

While malnourishment is an increasing challenge among many African nations, these are best ways to [reduce the spread](#) to the barest minimum:

1. **Adopt the power of technology:** The world is going digital, hence, it is important to harness the power of technology in hastening the production of foods across the nation. Being that the human population is increasing rapidly in Africa, there should be strategic measures put in place to ensure that the environment is balanced.
2. **Prioritise a comprehensive cross-department nutritional policy:** The government of every nation should implement policies to help boost the agricultural sector and ensure an adequate supply of food and water. Without strict measures such as this, more people will find it difficult to have access to good food.
3. **Make it easy for people to have access to foods with a balanced diet:** When a society has a surplus supply of nutritious foods, the rate of malnutrition will decrease. Thus, it becomes easy for the people to have enough variety in their food to meet their daily feeding needs.
4. **Have long-term goals for the national supply of food:** Instead of reacting to food emergencies, society should have long-term plans for making food available. When food emergencies take place, people find it

difficult to get the essential diet that they need. Out of a rush, they eat “*anything*” to survive and this will lead to either undernourishment or overconsumption.

5. **Develop broad partnerships to ensure shared goals:** When the government makes policies and laws, public and private corporations should embrace partnerships and seek ways to reach out to people by enlightening them.

Conclusion

Being that malnutrition keeps rising in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is important to take decisive actions. More delays will lead to further deaths in the nation. Better nutrition in children will improve the socio-economic development of the regions affected.

Following these strategies carefully, it is possible to reduce undernourishment in children. This past [decade of sustainable development](#) has shown us that researchers have put a lot in place for a brighter future. Visit the [THRIVE platform](#) to stay updated on forthcoming trends.

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