Sudan: Child Malnutrition, Anti-Vaccination and Children’s Health

Child Malnutrition

Background

Malnutrition affects a staggering 795 million people globally which is one for every seven people. Malnourishment is also extremely prominent in children which is common in many developing nations for children 1-5 years of age. Around 159 million children in the world are impacted by this epidemic and this statistic continues to increase. This is a very concerning matter seeing that the highest consumption of nutritious vitamins, minerals, and produce should be obtained as a child because it plays a dominant role in one’s growth for the rest of their lives. Malnourishment commonly results in stunted growth which stands at shocking 21.9 percent of all children under the age of 5. Malnutrition is defined by the World Health Organization as lacking adequate or proper nutrition due to under eating, excessive eating, wasting etc. The most typical indicators of malnutrition in children is insufficient access to vital nutrition and produce, lack of health care options, severe poverty, and lacking maternal nurturing and care. It is important to note that malnourishment is not simply undereating however it is a large spectrum of situations including overeating leading to obesity and many other life risking diseases like strokes and heart failure. In addition, one may be undernourished if their mother was undernourished while pregnant because the same condition will be passed on to the infant and most times affects one’s mental health the most seeing that it is underdeveloped. Over 49 million children suffer from wasting meaning their underweight for their height. Not only affecting children directly, but a large population of malnourished children can also have many negative affects to a country and its economic standings.

UN Involvement

With this widespread issue in need of dire attention and aid, The United Nations has made several significant and impactful actions to help combat this large obstacle. The UN has put in action The Scaling Up Nutrition movement (SUN) which was created in 2010. This organization’s main goal is to eradicate malnutrition by 2030 and they have achieved many milestones thus far. UNICEF has called up several UN organizations such as The World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, and several more, to joint- collaborate in form sustainable initiatives in an attempt to establish reliable food systems and methods for increasing nutritional intake. These Sustainable Development Goals consist of supplementary food additives to be highly distributed in several developing nations. Also goals for improved medical care for undernourished children is set to be planned through the United Nations. SDG’s also focus on way to improve poverty rate, seeing that poverty is an underlying cause of malnourishment, which will create a ripple effect and improve child malnutrition. Ways to improving poverty and getting higher nutrition foods through more trade which will boost the economy, the GDP, and hopefully provide more nutritional food options. In addition, UNICEF has taken actions to improve breastfeeding and nurturing with the Global Breastfeeding Advocacy Initiative. This initiative helps ensure resources to be accessible for mothers and

obtain vital knowledge about the proper protocols and programs to improve healthy practices for breastfeeding.

Country Policy

Child malnutrition in Sudan strikes as the most severe and the worst among all countries. In fact, 80 percent of the children in Sudan have stunted growth due to malnutrition. With tens of thousands of disease outbreaks that hamper healthy child nutrition, Sudan stands with a dire need for action. With this stance, Sudan's government and its citizens are desperate for help and accept any aid or relief from United Nations or NGOs. UNICEF is in direct contact with Sudan and its needs and is planning to enforce long-term development programs. UNICEF has also helped Sudan obtain more information about their population's standing on nutrition. Therefore, they can see their most prevalent areas of vital improvement that must take place such as the need for improved nursing methods by mothers. Also, one of Sudan's WHO representatives stated in a conference in 2017, "This food crisis and the impact it is having on people's health is not going away," Sudan has been given a spotlight attention for malnutrition however sustainable programs that can help eradicate this issue is essential. With large improvement to be made, Sudan is desperate for relief from child malnutrition.

Solutions

The need for a sustainable framework to be enacted upon to end child malnutrition is imperative. With the many actions currently taking place, Sudan would like propose solutions that can combat this global issue holistically. The first solution is to establish agricultural programs in developing nations with a strong focus on areas of conflict. Seeing that many areas of conflict struggle to get adequate access to nutritional foods for a plethora of reasons, Sudan wants to ensure that high nutritional produce can be grown locally. Through partnership with the NGO, One Acre Fund, systems can be initiated to enable sustainable produce to be grown in many varying areas. One Acre Fund has provided valuable contributions for improving agriculture in poverty-stricken areas in Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, etc.) In this solution, techniques will be used to make conducive planting grounds to provide successful and produce packed with essential nutrients. The second solution Sudan proposes is to provide children and mothers with medical aid and care to prevent diarrhea, malaria, and measles which cause malnutrition in children and mothers. Doctors Without Borders' volunteer nurses and doctors can also provide treatment for the severely malnourished children through drips that insert key vitamins and minerals into the child's system. In addition, expecting mothers can obtain vital information about breastfeeding and their own nutritional health which plays a large role in their child's life. This information will be taught in seminars that spread awareness and emphasize the significance of proper nutrition for children and how to ensure this. Lastly, Sudan aims to boost the distribution of Plumpy'Nut which is a high nutritional paste that effectively combats child malnutrition in several countries. With Plumpy'Nut's proven success Sudan wants to globalize its distribution so that all children in impoverished areas have access to this catalyst. With its long shelf life and low cost Plumpy'Nut can change the lives of many.

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Anti-Vaccination and Children’s Health

Background

Vaccinations have continually developed and been tested upon since the first vaccination created by Edward Jenner in 1796. Recently in the past 100 years, an anti-vaccination movement has evolved which is comprised of parents who strongly resist various vaccinations for their children. Parents apart of the “Regression in modern medicine” movement firmly believe that vaccines are not only ineffective yet cause detrimental effects to children such as autism. It has been observed through a study at Dartmouth the correlation between low vaccination rates with increasing outbreaks of diseases, the most common being the Measles, Mumps, and Pertussis. Parents have a difficult time looking past the negative aspects of vaccinations and do not take into thought the necessity and how integral they are. With the ability of modern medicine parents have the opportunity to prevent 14 life-threatening diseases such meningitis, polio, and tetanus, from their child by 2 years old. According to the World Health Organization, the Regression in modern medicine is among the top 10 global health threats alongside pollution and other prevalent threats. WHO fears that the influenza pandemic which continually to grow poses a strong threat to the lives of millions of children who lack the necessary vaccinations. Globally, several countries and states currently require for students to be vaccinated in order to be eligible to enroll. Not only are tens of thousands of children being denied protection, their education is being severely restricted. In addition, authorities in Samoa have arrested pro anti- vaccination citizens during a large spread disease which had killed approximately 63 children who in fact were not vaccinated. Globally, 1.5 million children die each year due to preventable diseases such as pneumonia and influenza.

UN Involvement

The United Nations stands firm in their belief that Anti-vaccination propaganda and false information poses a huge threat to global health. The UN continues to spread awareness of the

vital need for vaccinations and the millions of lives that they persistently save. UNICEF spreads awareness through social media platforms such as twitter. On June 28, 2019 in agreement with pro-vaccination parents, “Today, vaccines have almost eradicated that disease and saved millions of children from dying of measles.” This refers to the necessity of vaccines for children to inhibit suffering from polio and measles. In addition to strongly advocating for vaccines, the UN hosts many global discussions regarding methods to increase the declining vaccine popularity. The discussion platforms hosted by the UN emphasize the SDG 3.8 which aims to achieve universal health coverage and promotes the ability of beneficial medicines and vaccinations to be accessible for all people. Programs have also been initiated through UNICEF to ensure that children and parents have the option to prevent their child from diseases, even in rural areas with limited healthcare. With a strong focus on eradicating life-threatening diseases such as polio in all areas, UNICEF, with aid from several NGOs, provides resources, technology, and volunteers to assist families who have a major lack of healthcare.

Country Policy

Anti-vaccination in Sudan has left a negative impact on its citizens and country because every year death rates increase in children due to the stigma of vaccines. The stigma stems from recent cases of children getting sick directly because of vaccines. The country does not require its citizens to be vaccinated, however, Sudan has collaborated with UN organizations such as WHO and UNICEF to enforce much higher rates of vaccinations of child 10 years of age and younger to prevent from several life-threatening diseases such as polio. Seeing their proactive actions, Sudan holds firm in their position towards ensuring vaccinations to be accessible and for all. In previous years, Sudan’s leaders in health organizations have made clear to the Sudan’s citizens the essential need for immunization for their country. This activism is present through many campaigns held which initiated joint measles/ polio immunization programs that boost the nation’s economy, and health prevention all across the country. In 2018, one of Sudan’s representatives, Abdullah Fadil stated regarding the activism, “this campaign at this time is especially crucial in saving lives and preventing that threat.” Sudan views immunization as essential and promotes the distribution and knowledge of them.

Solutions

It is imperative for more attention to be given towards this issue. Therefore, Sudan proposes three feasible solutions to boost the number of vaccinations given globally. The first solution is to build upon the existing immunization program which was initiated by UNICEF. Further success can be achieved through supplementing educational seminars for members of anti vax movement. With a respectful approach, awareness can be spread through teaching on the 3 most significant aspects of vaccines. These aspects include preventing life threatening diseases from killing masses of people, myth busting with facts, and proving vaccines to protect children the most effective way. This information will be spread on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube advertisements. This will beneficially help destigmatize and eliminate false information that is commonly believed such as vaccines contributing to autism. In addition this campaign will inform parents with the high risk of omitting vaccinations puts their children at. Not all unvaccinated infants are at risk because of their parent’s decision, most children are at risk because the lack of access due to poverty, and/or living in a rural, hard to reach area. One of the main issues of reaching remote villages is the transportation of the vaccines. Seeing that vaccines must stay in a cool climate of 36- 46 degrees Fahrenheit, Sudan

proposes to augment the amount of vaccine carriers, and cold boxes. This can be done through a partnership with NGOs, such as Doctors Without Borders, to catalyze the availability of properly conditioned vaccines and eliminate the barrier of reaching children in rural areas. This solution will give parents access to the basic vaccines, so they can choose for their children and ensure their safety. Sudan hopes to upscale the amount of vaccines through spreading awareness and inhibiting barriers.

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