



MALNUTRITION: NIGERIA'S SILENT CRISIS

A MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATION

SCRIPT

SHORT VERSION
(15 MINUTES)

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SHORT VERSION: 15 MINUTES

The presentation starts with a black screen.

► **Slide 1: Click Forward** (pause in silence while the picture comes on; hold the picture for about 5 seconds)

► **Slide 2: Click Forward** (pause in silence until the picture fades away)

► **Slide 3: Click Forward**

As we look back across the decades in Nigeria, we have witnessed some remarkable achievements.....

► **Slide 4: Click Forward (music starts)**

More children are surviving..... with child deaths dropping from 22 percent of children under 5 in 1980, to 13 percent in 2013.¹

Our economy is growing.....with income rising from about 150,000 Naira per person to 350,000 Naira per person in 2011.²

And we are better connected.....with about 115 million subscribers, or about 68 per cent of the population, using cell phones today.³

WE...are a nation on the move!

But there is **one** challenge where we are sadly behind.....

► **Slide 5: Click Forward**

.....**MALNUTRITION** in mothers and children, which continues to impose a staggering cost to the nation—despite having the solutions.

► **Slide 6: Click Forward**

Today, malnutrition contributes to the deaths of an estimated half a million children under the age of 5 **each year** in Nigeria..... ..or about 1 out of every 2 child deaths.⁴

► **Slide 7: Click Forward**

So what has the experience on nutrition programs taught us over the years?

► **Slide 8: Click Forward**

Well, the story starts in the 1000 day window of opportunity between pregnancy and a child's second birthday.....this period becomes the “best shot” at helping a child reach his or her potential.....and sets the stage for life.⁵

Let's take a closer look at just how critical this period is...

► **Slide 9: Click Forward**

Starting in the womb, before birth, the fetus is at risk if the mother lacks essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients needed for brain, bone, and organ development. Many pregnant women in Nigeria suffer from anemia during pregnancy, which can cause health problems for the baby.

Once the baby is born—from birth to the first 6 months—early and exclusive breastfeeding without adding any other foods or liquids is the very best way to ensure a healthy baby.

And after the first 6 months of life, adding sufficient quantities of nutritious solid foods along with continued breastfeeding is absolutely necessary to make sure that the child grows correctly.....most stunting happens in **this** critical period.

► **Slide 10: Click Forward**

(Pause during gong sound)

.....THERE IS NO GOING BACK

The cost of malnutrition during this 1000 day window is almost always irreversible...

► **Slide 11: Click Forward**

- damage to the brain, leading to poor educational performance and lower IQ,
- poor growth and development, and...remarkably...
- this early deprivation increases a child's risk of developing chronic diseases as an adult.

► **Slide 12: Click Forward**

Chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, all requiring medical attention later in life.⁶

► **Slide 13: Click Forward**

Another huge challenge is that malnutrition in children can happen and persist for years.....and we **can't** always see it.

These two little boys are both from the same villagecan you guess how old each boy is?

(Pause)

Both boys are the same age.....they are both eight years old.....but, they show very different levels of development.

The little boy on the left is stunted. This means that he has short stature for his age due to chronic malnutrition. And it's unlikely that he will ever catch up and reach his full height, or his full potential like his taller village playmate on the right.

► **Slide 14: Click Forward**

The invisible nature of chronic malnutrition also sets up a pattern that we see happening generation after generation.

This Intergenerational cycle of growth failure...

► **Slide 15: Click Forward**

...starts with a malnourished woman. When mothers are malnourished or stunted, they are at greater risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. They also have a greater risk of delivering an infant with low birth weight.⁷

► **Slide 16: Click Forward**

.....like this baby girl here, who is at higher risk of illness and death, and at higher risk of delayed emotional and intellectual development, and....

► **Slide 17: Click Forward**

.....also more likely to suffer from growth failure in those important, early developmental years which....

► **Slide 18: Click Forward**

...in turn lead to low weight and stunting in the teen years.....those **teen years** that are critical for growth and development, and the time when adolescents gain almost 50 percent of their adult body weight, and 20 percent of their adult height.⁸

► **Slide 19: Click Forward**

And that takes us back to the malnourished woman.....

► **Slide 20: Click Forward**

And the cycle of poor nutrition perpetuates itself generation after generation

► **Slide 21: Click Forward**

Turning now to our Google Earth Satellite map, we're going to zoom in on Nigeria and start our tour in the bustling city of Abuja. Here we are looking into the National Stadium located on the eastern side of the city.

As we move toward the Central Area, we get a sense of how much Abuja has grown. Although people often think that **here**, in the seat of power, malnutrition is not really a problem.....they are wrong. Recent reports show that one out of five children in Abuja are stunted.⁹

TELEPORT

Panning over to Lagos, we're going to focus our attention on the slum area of Mushin, a densely populated area which is home to over half a million people.

Full of informal settlements and poor living conditions.....malnutrition affects the lives of most families, with more than one-third of children stunted.¹⁰

Although the rate of malnutrition definitely increases with poverty, it is **not** a problem that is unique to the poor.

TELEPORT

If we move to Ikoyi—one of the wealthier locations in Lagos—we can see some of the big houses and luxurious swimming pools. It's easy to assume that wealthy families do not suffer from malnutrition. How could there be malnourished kids in **this** neighborhood? Yet, 13 percent of children born to the **richest** families in Nigeria also suffer from stunting.¹¹

TELEPORT

As we continue our tour, we learn that there is no part of the country that is immune to malnutrition.

TELEPORT

Here we are along the river in the Niger Delta Region, where the land is rich in petroleum.... and many families rely on fishing or farming for their nutritional needs. But the area's abundant supply of natural resources is not enough to ensure proper nutrition for those living in this area.

Malnutrition is a major problem in the Delta, especially among children, where we find that one out of every five children are stunted.¹²

TELEPORT

And finally, we discover that malnutrition exists even in places where agriculture is the main livelihood.

Like here in Northern Nigeria—an agricultural hub, where a lot of the country's produce is grown. A large part of the North can support year round production making it a steady supplier of food for both the North and other parts of the country. Yet, despite the abundance of food, including nutrition-rich fruits and vegetables, malnutrition is widespread here as well.

(Pause)

The other bad news, is that if we look back over the years, we don't seem to be making progress very quickly.

► **Slide 22: Click Forward**

For more than a decade...

► **Slide 23: Click Forward**

...the rate of chronic malnutrition or stunting has stagnated at around 40 percent, with little improvement across the years.¹³ And while we do see some improvement in the most recent survey in 2013...

► **Slide 24: Click Forward**

...still, more than one third of children across the nation are stunted.¹⁴

► **Slide 25: Click Forward**

In this map of the regions, we have a bird's eye view of stunting levels across the country. We can see that even in the areas with the lowest rates, such as the South South and the South East, nearly 1 out of 5 children are stunted. And in the North West and the North East, about **HALF** of all children are chronically malnourished.¹⁵

► **Slide 26: Click Forward**

According to the World Health Organization's recommendations, after the 6th month of life, children must be fed a variety of foods to make sure they receive all the nutrients they need.¹⁶

► **Slide 27: Click Forward**

But, a national survey shows that 2 out of every 3 children are not receiving the right foods.¹⁷ Many are eating only starches like cassava and rice, and they are not eating those vitamin rich fruits and vegetables, or animal source foods like meat, fish and eggs—that provide the body's basic building blocks.

► **Slide 28: Click Forward (TRENDALYZER)**

Let's now turn to our trend graph, or bubble chart, and focus on the rate of exclusive breastfeeding over time in Nigeria, and compare that to Ghana.

► **Slide 29: Click Forward**

On the left axis, we have the percent of infants under six months who are exclusively breastfed. This axis goes from zero to eighty percent.

► **Slide 30: Click Forward**

On the bottom axis, we have time, which goes from 1994 through 2013.

► **Slide 31: Click Forward**

In 1994, both Nigeria and Ghana had about 7% of infants who were exclusively breastfed, which is very, very low.

Let's play this forward now and watch what happens over the course of time in each country.....and we see right away....that the percent...

► **Slide 32: Click Forward**

...of children exclusively breastfed in Ghana starts to go up dramatically.....and it goes higher.....and then even higher.....

► **Slide 33: Click Forward**

...until by 2013, 63 percent of infants, or almost 2 out of every 3 infants in Ghana, are exclusively breastfed...¹⁸

► **Slide 34: Click Forward**

... while in Nigeria, only 17% of infants, or about 1 in every 6 infants, are exclusively breastfed.¹⁹

(Pause)

So what did Ghana do achieve this?

Well...since the early 1990s they have implemented a mix of policies, and community and facility-based interventions to promote exclusive breastfeeding. And the government never stopped making it a high priority over the decades!!

If Nigeria could scale up its successful programmes and policies, and mobilise a similar combination of political will, **we too** could make more rapid progress in this area.

(Pause)

We know we can do this because...

► **Slide 35: Click Forward**

We **know** what makes a difference!

Four well-tested sets of interventions can protect mothers and children...beginning with.....²⁰

► **Slide 36: Click Forward**

Making sure that babies are put to the breast in the first half hour after birth and are breastfed exclusively for the first six months without **any** other foods or liquids, not even **one** drop of water!

(Pause)

► **Slide 37: Click Forward**

And secondly, that mothers start giving a variety of healthy foods after the first 6 months of life, in sufficient quantities, along with continued breastfeeding through 2 years or beyond.

► **Slide 38: Click Forward**

Thirdly, making sure that mothers and children have access to the right amount of foods ...

► **Slide 39: Click Forward**

....andthe right variety of foods.

► **Slide 40: Click Forward**

So that all family members are consuming essential vitamins and minerals regularly.

► **Slide 41: Click Forward**

And lastly, making sure that parents and caregivers get the information and support that they need to feed their children in the best way possible.

(Pause)

► **Slide 42: Click Forward**

Research tells us that nutrition is a “best buy” in today’s financially strapped environment... because investments in nutrition pay for themselves.

► **Slide 43: Click Forward**

Healthy nutrition during the 1000 day window produces a lifetime of benefits for individuals, families, and nations. [And that includes producing stronger football players!!]

► **Slide 44: Click Forward**

Healthier children complete more years in school and have better performance, which leads to increased personal income and can add at least 10 percent to lifetime earnings.²¹

► **Slide 45: Click Forward**

Since healthy nutrition in the 1000 day window can increase educational performance, well-nourished children grow into a more productive labor force as adults.....and that can mean a boost in GDP growth by as much as 11 percent annually for the country.²²

► **Slide 46: Click Forward**

And if we look at the cost-to-benefit ratio— the cost of key nutrition interventions compared with the benefits—investment in nutrition produces returns up **to twenty-five** times greater than the initial investment.²³

► **Slide 47: Click Forward**

In other words, for every 100,000 Naira spent on key nutrition interventions...

▶ **Slide 48: Click Forward**

...we would generate 2.5 million Naira in economic returns. So scaling up nutrition interventions can go a long way toward generating broad-based wealth in Nigeria.

▶ **Slide 49: Click Forward**

Malnutrition is a national problem.....

(Pause).....finding solutions must be a shared responsibility.

▶ **Slide 50: Click Forward**

We have the evidence.....and we know what works.

▶ **Slide 51: Click Forward**

We ask that you speak out and help us advocate for reducing malnutritiondrawing attention to the urgent nutritional needs of pregnant women and their unborn children... and supporting mothers in proper breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding practices.

▶ **Slide 52: Click Forward**

We ask you to ensure that key nutrition interventions are integrated into development strategies across all sectors, including finance, planning, agriculture, education, women affairs and social development, environment, and water.

▶ **Slide 53: Click Forward**

We ask that you help us coordinate programs and policy efforts for nutrition among the different ministries and stakeholders..... One first step is to support the National Committee on Food & Nutrition headed by the National Planning Commission to ensure that all nutrition interventions support and reinforce one another.

▶ **Slide 54: Click Forward**

And lastly, we ask you to help mobilize more funds for nutrition interventions.....

We need EXPLICIT budget line items devoted to nutrition in the Health budget, in the Agriculture budget, and in state budgets if we are truly serious about making a difference with malnutrition.

We can't afford to lose **any** opportunities.

▶ **Slide 55: Click Forward**

By investing in simple, cost-effective interventions....

► **Slide 56: Click Forward**

- We can ensure that every child reaches his or her full potential;
- Reduce illness and deaths in mothers and children;
- And help ensure stronger economic growth in the future.

► **Slide 57: Click Forward**

By staying positive and working together....

(Pause until next set of words come on screen)

.....we can **build** on our past achievements

(Pause until next set of words come on screen)

We can **stop** the silent crisis of malnutrition.....and scale up interventions for those most in need.....

(Pause until next set of words come on screen)

And we can **wipe out** malnutrition in Nigeria once and for all.

► **Slide 58: Click Forward**

(Stay silent)

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