

Model United Nations at University of California, San Diego presents
On Saturday November 1, 2014

Combatting Malnutrition in Lesser Economically Developed Countries

World Health Organization



TritonMUN X



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Most Esteemed Advisors and Honorable Participants,

As the Chair of the World Health Organization Committee, I, Emily Lu would like to welcome everyone to another conference hosted by University of California, San Diego. I am a second-year majoring in Physiology and Neuroscience from Revelle College of UCSD. Over the past five years of my Model UN career, I have attended nine international conferences, six of which I have served as a student officer and Secretary General. Every year, our conferences continue to diversify and progress with the participation of many schools. It is difficult for me to put in words how privileged I feel to witness students coming together from different places to resolve current issues and to demonstrate to the United Nations how possible solutions may still be created despite the daunting issues that we face.

As this conference takes its next step toward a new level of success, we hope delegates can cherish this unique opportunity to participate in active debates, aiming to solve issues of utmost importance. During the Model United Nations program, we have seen students explore their future careers and build long-lasting friendships. Therefore, enjoy this experience and make an effort to be the force that can lead to change. Remember, your voices are the future's best seed of hope.

Sincerely your chair,

Emily Lu

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I. Background

As our part of the world is rejoicing over daily opulence of nutritional supplements and healthy nourishments, developing countries are overwhelmed with the burden of malnutrition and malnourishment. According to most recent data from Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), more than 925 million people are malnourished and approximately two-thirds of the undernourished people reside in Asia. Another estimation of 200 million children aged less than five years old struggle from severe symptoms of malnutrition; and with an increase in food shortages and famine, this number continues to skyrocket. A devastating majority of 95% of the malnourished population are in LEDCs¹. With an estimation of more than 925 million people struggling from such deprivation, the paramount purpose in the creation of the World Health Organization is to achieve an improvement in the access to healthy food by turning the targets of aid toward those that are truly in need².

The cultivation of food began during the Neolithic Revolution. This period of transition changed the source of food from hunter-gathering to the cultivation of crops. Mankind's relationship with food has constantly been changing, from the time of cultivation to the time of the Green Revolution during the 1940s, when increased

¹ NCBI Pub Med. National Library of Medicine, 22 Feb. 2007. Web. 15 June 2014.

<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17484360>>.

² "925 million in chronic hunger worldwide." Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. N.p., 14 Sept. 2010. Web. 14 June 2014.

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/45210/icode>.



industrialized agriculture production was established. Unfortunately, today water, soil, and air pollution have contaminated vital minerals found in soil leading to more seeds of discontent and farms of misery. The prevailing application of food genetic engineering, agribusiness, monoculture, herbicides, food preservative chemicals and pesticides contribute to the crisis of malnutrition in Lesser Economically Developed Countries (LEDC) including Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan, which are currently still facing these problems. Genetically engineered food may seem to be improving availability of food; however, foods that are modified do not deliver more nutrition. Malnourished people suffer from a deficiency of many nutrients and focusing on providing particular engineered food does not provide a balance of nutrients. Because such products are not nutritionally enhanced, LEDCs are at risk of severe malnutrition. Although it would be ideal to prevent malnutrition in every country, it is critical to allot high priority statuses to LEDCs for access to aid.

In order to combat malnourishment, the consumers must have food containing sufficient variety, quality and quantity to meet our bodies' daily needs. The dearth of adequate nourishment such as dietary fiber, water, or protein hinders the potential development of children as well as adults, forcing them to experience the burden of chronic diseases, starvation, and even obesity. Foods that contain few nutrients do not provide as much nutrition, which leads to lowered immunity and increased vulnerability to possible obesity and hunger for consumers. In addition to capricious climate changes, intensity of flooding, droughts and climate patterns have been changing and deteriorating the harvest of crops in an ever-increasing rate. With the access to food declining



dramatically particularly in Sub-Saharan African and South Asia, an increase of malnourishment has a great impact on illnesses such as infectious diseases and diarrhea. As one of the primary causes of poor development and low birth-weight babies, malnourishment influences the chronic health conditions of the mother as well as the infant. Deficiencies in crucial minerals and vitamins such as vitamin A and zinc are perilous to the human race.

World agriculture produces enough food for the population. However, the paramount conflicts that the LEDCs face include insufficient land to grow the crops and inadequate income to purchase the products necessary to grow those crops. Poorly managed economic systems are also another main cause of malnutrition and malnourishment in Lesser Economically Developed Countries. The management and operation behind those systems in each country have authority over the income and resources. Standard economic representation is based on the exchange of goods and the products that people produce. Unfortunately, because of improper and unproductive management of such economic systems, government officials often take initiative to benefit themselves rather than aiding the people of their country. This leads to high food prices, negatively affecting many food-importing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. With the significant rise in food bill, many households substitute nutrient rich food with cheaper processed food or a reduction of the number of meals. In addition to the decrease in micronutrient intakes, inadequate dietary intake may also cause diseases. Harmful effects on the framework of the entire system then result in the failures in economic organization of societies. With not enough income to purchase diverse and nutritious food, the people do not have the



consumer power they need to take control over their own lives.

Regarding the areas with soaring demands for nutrient rich foods, production of food crops such as maize and livestock have negative consequences because safety regulations on water and farm chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides have failed to be properly implemented. With the presence of farm chemicals and unregulated water, many developing countries do not have access to safe nutritious goods. Furthermore, serious micronutrient and protein deficiencies are still widely common in LEDCs, exacerbating the crisis of malnutrition². Take the key issues in Afghanistan that are being discussed for instance. Reports from the Food and Agriculture Organization have stated that Afghanistan has the highest rates of infant and child mortality in Asia. Children in Afghanistan are suffering from the lack of safe drinking water and this has prevented them from having access to healthy water. Thus, with both the accessibility of safe consumer products and high cost of nutritious goods at crisis, the investment in cooperating with agribusiness in order to offer consumers inexpensive and insubstantial organic products still remains a great challenge.

By placing fair-trade as the principle achievement, more concentration on nutritious plant sources with available food processing technologies should be considered. Take VitaGoat, a food processing system, for instance. Because many developing countries are unable to afford the high cost of electricity and lack reliable supply needed to produce high-quality nutrition, a micro-enterprise development is needed. This efficient system can produce a variety of aqueous and dry foods without the use of electricity or water,



allowing LEDCs to have such products processed³. By using fuels that are locally available such as wood or biomass, nutritious food can be cooked and grinded. Examples of inexpensive, locally available, easily grown and cultivated foods such as soya, papayas, cassava, millet, sorghum, peanuts, and ground coffee include beneficial contents of fiber, diverse types of fat, micronutrient and protein. Sponsored by many organizations including one of the grant programs of World Bank and World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH), the project of implementing VitaGoat system has been proven successful in Chad. In 2004, the VitaGoat was installed in the city Doba of Chad and government representatives have indicated that VitaGoat easily produced higher valued products with available local commodities. This showed many other African nations positive changes brought by such investment.

Sustainable strategies for improved nourishment and nutrition can begin with measuring the quality of people's diet, promoting programs that can supply nutrients for those in need, and establishing alliance at national and international levels to assist and support organizations. Because of the crucial need to combat starvation and obesity, delegates should search for adequate, global and comprehensive implementations to ameliorate and combat the worsening malnourishment and malnutrition, especially in countries with low economic stability and a scarcity of crucial human resources.

³ "Foods and Malnutrition." *Malnutrition Matters Food Technology Solutions*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 June 2014. <<http://www.malnutrition.org/foods-malnutrition.php>>.



II. United Nations Involvement

The following organizations have been greatly involved in many actions taken to combat malnutrition by representing the United Nations.

World Health Organization (WHO): WHO is the World Health Organization of the United Nations. This organization is “the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.”(WHO) During the 21st century, “health is a shared responsibility, involving equitable access to essential care and collective defense against transnational threats”⁴ which is the responsibility WHO is taking hold of.

WHO achieves its goals through focusing on these topics:

- Growth Assessment and Surveillance (GRS)
- Reduction of Micronutrient Malnutrition (MNM)
- Nutrition in the Lifecourse (NLU)
- Nutrion Policy and Scientific Advice (NPU)⁵

⁴ "WHO | Socioeconomic Inequality in Malnutrition in Developing Countries." *WHO-Past Issues*. World Health Organization, 2011. Web. 13 Jan. 2011.

<<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/4/07-044800/en/index.html>>.

⁵ "About WHO." *World Health Organization*. N.p., 2014. Web. 15 June 2014.

<<http://www.who.int/about/en/>>.



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): As United Nations' global development network, the UNDP has collaborated and supported many countries in meeting its needs. However, its collaboration with Lesotho demonstrated that there are many times when efforts from NGOs or other development programs may fail to be implemented due to the nation's unique religion, culture and dietary preferences. Lesotho, a landlocked nation in South Africa, is a country that pays the utmost respect to its domestic grazing animals. Thus, when the UNDP stepped in and proposed the project of controlling grassland use in order to optimize commercial productivity, a plan that placed economic gain above Lesotho's long existing culture, the plan was met with resistance from the people⁶. This incident shows that tradition and cultural rules can influence the effect of a project intended to combat malnutrition and success is not always the outcome. This is something that delegates should take into consideration when formulating solutions to the problem of malnutrition.

FAO: The Food and Agriculture Organization is one of the United Nations agencies that takes leadership in defeating widespread hunger and malnourishment. As an impartial forum, its major aim is to have all nations negotiate and debate on projects and regulations such as the distribution of agricultural inputs that improve harvests and introduction of safety standards for food industries. Through different methods, FAO aid developing countries and those that are still in the process of modernizing in many

⁶ Ferguson, James, and Larry Lohmann. "Development" and Bureaucratic Power in *Lesotho*. N.p.: n.p., 1994. Print. Vol. 24 of *The Anti-Politics Machine*.



aspects of agriculture and nutrition. Founded in 1945, FAO has put a lot of emphasis on developing rural areas, where 70 percent of the world's hungry and poor people reside. With the help from FAO, many LEDCs such as Chad, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have benefited from the organization's effort in ensuring good nutrition.⁷

GAIN: Established in 2002 at the Special Session of UN General Assembly on Children, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition is a Swiss foundation with headquarters in Geneva and Regional Offices in New Delhi, Washington D.C, Cairo, and Johannesburg which activates "public-private partnerships and provides financial and technical support to deliver nutritious foods to those people most at risk of malnutrition." (GAIN – About GAIN) With the cooperation of food producers, the nutrition foundation's Business Alliance concentrates its efforts on alleviating malnutrition in all parts of the world including the Caribbean, Latin America, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa. "GAIN's goal is to reach more than one billion people with fortified foods that have sustainable nutritional impact."⁸

Soil Association: "The Soil Association is the U.K.'s leading campaigning and certification organization for organic food and farming. It was founded in 1946 by a group of farmers, scientists and nutritionists who observed a direct connection between

⁷ "About FAO." *FAO: FAO Home*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 13 Jan. 2011. Web. 3 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.fao.org/about/en/>>.

⁸ "About GAIN." *GAIN - Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition*. GAIN, 2010. Web. 3 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.gainhealth.org/about-gain>>.



farming practice and plant, animal, human, and environmental health.”⁹ (Goodall, page 290) This association is not sponsored by any Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), but rather, it is an alliance supported by charity and donations that advances their organization’s organic farming plans.

Each organization has a different leadership priorities and plays a different role in public health. World Health Organization monitors the health situation by setting standards and providing technical support, whereas the Food and Agriculture Organization helps eradicate malnutrition and food insecurity by proposing efficient food systems. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, on one hand, aims to increase access of unavailable nutrients in particular which are necessary for people’s diets. The Soil Association, on the other hand, works to transform highly processed food to organic food that is minimally processed and maintains the nutritional value crucial for the human body. With so many organizations working to fight malnutrition, positive outcomes are possible.

⁹ Goodall, Jane, Gary McAvoy, and Gail E. Hudson. "TAKE ACTION WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS." *Harvest for Hope: a Guide to Mindful Eating*. New York: Warner, 2005. 290. Print.



III. Bloc Positions

Western Bloc

Crisis on malnutrition and malnourishment can be a typical issue faced in LEDCs; fortunately, federal nutrition programs in the United States combat this less severe problem by providing undernourished and low-income families with nutrient rich foods. Findings show that the total amount of food surplus in United States is capable of satisfying every undernourished child in Africa. With the potential to help other nations to reach its full potential, the United States has been taking leadership in increasing its official development aid by approximately 10 percent a year since the year of 2000. Together, through cooperation from multilateral organizations such as FAO, UNICEF, and World Bank, investment in nutrition of “sharing knowledge and lessons learned with other donors; committing to multi-year programs; and finally liberating assistance from domestic politics” are all being launched. (Hunger 2011 - Our Common Interest: Ending Hunger and Malnutrition)

Eastern Bloc

Vice Agriculture Minister Zhang Baowen of China stated that, “about 120 million Chinese people suffer from malnutrition and the country’s poverty problems are still pressing.” (China.org.cn) China had taken a series of institutive action to control the



current issue; however, with challenges of population inclination, dearth of water and land resources, and desertification and erosion, it is an arduous task to manage concrete measures on eliminating these problems. With the assistance of FAO and Cooperation Programme on Highly Pathogenic and Emerging Diseases (HPED), China has reduced the amount of malnourished citizens from 15 percent to 10 percent of the population. Institutions have also been made to give children primary access to nutrient rich foods, including formula milk powder and yogurt. Recently, a regional project with the participation of China and Mongolia will be enacted in the near future to control the Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) and Transboundary Animal Diseases (TAD).

The situation in India is characterized by two major factors. The four consecutive years of rainfall which caused damage to the food crops and the subsequent escalation in food prices which stretched villagers' burden beyond their limits. Dr Vandana Agarwal, a nutrition specialist from UNICEF explains that, "because of the increase in food prices, a mother cannot buy an adequate quantity of milk, fruits and vegetables. As a result, their diet relies on the staple, wheat chapattis." However, relying on chapattis alone is not enough. An estimation of 80% of children and mothers in India lack access to food adequate to meet their nutritional needs. (BBC NEWS) According to FAO, "the Government of India requested FAO's assistance in preparing a strategy for extending the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in the country aimed at developing crop,



livestock, (and to a lesser extent) fish production.”¹⁰ (FAO Countries) There are a few malnutrition affiliated action plans in progress that are still being implemented and those include the Pilot Project for Developing National Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System in India, Apple production, and a development of a technical capacity base specifically for implementing organic cultivation and promoting the value of organic nutrient rich foods.

Middle Eastern Bloc

As a member of two provincial economic organizations, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Afghanistan is in the state of major reconstruction struggling to combat malnourishment, striving for aid from various organizations to promote national food security and develop alternative nutritious food production methods. Afghanistan has been receiving assistance from FAO in the sector of malnutrition since 2004, which involves capital funding for goals targeted at household food productivity through has improved livelihoods of its population. Although Afghanistan and some international financial institutions and respective donors have made a commitment to renovate the field on agriculture, the issues on malnutrition and malnourishment is still in need of dire attention. According to UNICEF reporting, malnutrition is the leading cause of skyrocketing mortality rate amongst women and children. Afghanistan, a country with

¹⁰ "FAO - Countries." FAO. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 13 January. 2011. Web. 3 Jan. 2011. <www.fao.org/countries/55528/en/ind/>.



highest maternal and infant mortality in the world is also facing stunted mental capacity and physical development amongst children. Since soybean crops were never grown on Afghan soil before, the Nutrition and Education International (NEI) organization held the experiment which was proven to be successful. Thus, the cheapest crops currently produced on Afghan soil are the soybeans. Nutritional needs are one of the many significant problems that are continued to be addressed.

Similar to other LEDCs, malnutrition is common amongst all cities of Pakistan and malnourishment is a key factor of the increasing mortality rate. About 24 percent of population is severely undernourished and 37.5 million people are not having access to adequate nourishment. Malnutrition is derived from a variety of deficiencies such as protein, iodine and iron. Many of the people have lost everything during the floods, especially in the rural areas. Shortages of food, safe drinking water and poor living conditions are where many of the problems come from. Children in regions of Afghanistan such as the Tharparkar District have almost no immunity to fatal diseases such as diarrhea, tuberculosis, pneumonia or acute respiratory infections which are caused by the lack of proper diets. The Government of Pakistan has been holding a few projects targeted to regulate the high prevalence of malnutrition; however with low daily income, poverty remains a big threat to the community.



African/Latin American Bloc

In Lower and Middle Shabelle areas of Somalia, approximately 10,000 children are suffering from malnourishment and are at the verge of facing death. Meanwhile, prices of nutritious aliment such as imported rice, local maize and vegetable oil sold in market towns of Merka, Afgoi and Jowhar in Shabelle regions continue to accelerate. Seasonal rainfall and heavy fighting situations are two of the contributing factors of the high percentage of acutely malnourished children. The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Christian Balslev-Olesen has pronounced his opinion to urge all parties involved in this issue to minimize the vexations of the Somalians and implement the most fundamental access.

IV. Questions to Consider

1. What are some possible solutions that can help combat malnutrition?
2. How are malnutrition and hunger different and how are they related?
3. Why is malnutrition so widespread in least developed countries (LEDCs)?
4. How can nutritious food be provided under circumstances of economic instability and severe climate changes?
5. How can food processing technologies combat malnutrition?



6. What kind of programs should be established in order to meet the demands of nutrient rich food?
7. How should NGO's or UN programs deal with cultural customs that impede the implementation of conventional nutritional development programs?"

V. Suggested Sites

- I. TritonMUN Website: <https://sdmun.herokuapp.com/tritonmun>
- II. UN Main Website: <http://www.un.org/>
- III. WHO Website: <http://www.who.int/en/>
- IV. UNICEF Website: <http://www.unicef.org/>
- V. CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- VI. CNN Website: <http://www.cnn.com/>
- VII. FAO: <http://www.fao.org/countries/en/>
- VIII. GAIN: <http://www.gainhealth.org/>
- IX. 2011 Hunger Report: <http://www.hungerreport.org/2011/>
- X. Programme Against Malnutrition (PAM): <http://www.pam.org.zm/>
- XI. Nutrition & Education International: <http://www.neifoundation.org/>



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⁹ Goodall, Jane, Gary McAvoy, and Gail E. Hudson. "TAKE ACTION WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS." *Harvest for Hope: a Guide to Mindful Eating*. New York: Warner, 2005. 290. Print.

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TritonMUN X

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TritonMUN X

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