

Unicef in togo

Sociology, Poverty



The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund or UNICEF was founded by the United Nations General Assembly on December 1946. This program was primarily created to provide healthcare and aid to the children affected and ravaged by Second World War (About UNICEF 2).

By 1953, the UN General Assembly mandated to make UNICEF a permanent part of the United Nations System (About UNICEF 3). The following years saw UNICEF's successful global campaign against famine and diseases. Apart from this, this international organization extended its arms to stop the violence, abuse, and exploitation that affect millions of children every year.

The UNICEF believes that like adults, children too have rights. They are geared to protect these rights and ensure that children are nurtured through various development programs. They focus on nutrition, health, education, and child protection as a way of empowering the youth. UNICEF's resources mostly come from government contributions and donations from private groups and organizations. When it comes to man power, this organization relies on volunteer services.

The UNICEF operates world wide. Their advocacy and campaigns go to over 190 countries (UNICEF Information by Country 1). This organization however, gives special attention to developing countries where children are always threatened by diseases, exploitation, and conflicts. An example of this is in Togo.

The Togolese Republic or Togo, is a nation located in West Africa. The current political turmoil caused more than 10, 000 people to be displaced

while some 35, 000 Togolese seek shelter in neighboring countries. There is also an ongoing economic crisis which is becoming more and more evident as 69% of its population is forced to live belowpovertyline. The crisis is even made worst as the country also face a disturbing decline in health and educational services (Togo Background 1).

These crises make children the first victims of malnutrition, illiteracy, and exploitation. According to statistics about 14% of children under the age of five are suffering from severe malnutrition. Reports also show that they are especially prevalent in the districts of Savanes, Kara, and Maritime where in more than 50, 000 children are acutely malnourished. UNICEF also confirms that about 22 % of children under five are severely underweight (Bonnaud 4). These figures are causing many children to die before they can even reach their fifth birthday.

In order to address this issue, UNICEF deployed health agents to assess the malnutrition situation in several villages. Moderately malnourished children were given vitamin-enriched flour while the mothers were asked to return to health centers for a follow up check up. However, children with severe malnutrition were given intensive therapy. A vitamin-enriched paste and a peanut-based protein were also given as therapeuticfood.

Apart from this, UNICEF also works to eradicate malnutrition by educating Togolese mothers about exclusive breast feeding. Traditional feeding practices in many villages include giving babies a water and porridge diet. This caused severe malnutrition among children. UNICEF's perseverance to abolish this unhealthy practice pushed 7 out of 10 women to switch to breast feeding (Soule 8).

UNICEF's commitment to promote health and wellness in Togo extends beyond their campaign against malnutrition. They are also focused on bringing immunization and disease prevention to protect children from pneumonia, polio, and malaria among many others. Currently, the country has remained polio-free since July 2003, while the immunization coverage against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis are strongly improving (UNICEF Togo 3). UNICEF also made an all-in-one health campaign to prevent the spread of measles and malaria. Vaccines and insecticide mosquito nets were distributed across the country.

UNICEF also pushed for all Togolese communities to have an access to safe drinking water. Hygiene and sanitation were also promoted by through education and forums. Addressing these two factors increases a child's chance to have a healthy and vigorous life.

UNICEF also maintains an active awareness campaign against HIV and AIDS. Its central goal, known as the FOUR Ps include: prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, provide pediatric treatment to children in need, prevention of HIV infection to young people, and protect and support children with AIDS (Monitoring the Situation 2).

With help from the Togolese government, UNICEF created a national youth campaign against this epidemic. The main objective of this forum is to teach the youth about AIDS prevention. Similarly, this organization also aims to decrease and ultimately stop the raising number of children infected by educating the parents.

Child protection is also another major issue in Togo as children in this country face different types of abuses imaginable. These include sexual exploitation, child trafficking, and child prostitution. The city of Lomé for instance, has a history of practicing child prostitution openly. According to reports, 60% of the prostitutes working there ranged from 14 to 24 years old (Archard and Bonnaud 7).

UNICEF works against this abuse by supporting Centre la Providence. Since 2002, UNICEF along with this rehabilitation center help ex-sex workers to have a new live by providing them with medical assistance, education, HIV/AIDS treatment, and psychological care. Vocational trainings are also given as a way of supporting the youth to get back on their feet.

Education is also a looming concern that UNICEF is hurdling in Togo. This is because thousands of children, particularly girls, are not receiving quality education. Because of tuition fees and lack of financial capability, parents opt to bring their children to work fields rather than sending them to schools. Most families also count on their children to help them with field work.

With the help from the government, UNICEF establishes the Millennium Development Goals in Togo. This project aims to provide education to all children by 2015. This organization believes that education will be the young generation's tool to eliminate poverty as well as build other opportunities for the future. More than this, it puts them in a safer environment while they acquire life skills and learn how to make responsible choices.

UNICEF implemented this vision by giving the government their fully support. This is made possible through financial assistance and school supply

donations. At present, the government successfully abolished all fees for primary schooling. This breakthrough now gives Togolese children the chance to have access to all educational levels.

Likewise, UNICEF also opened the doors of learning to little girls by putting an emphasis on gender equality. This group advocates that education is a fundamental right for all children (Monitoring the Situation 1). Educating women allows them to improve their lives as well as the lives of their children.

Hundreds of teachers and educators were given training in order to eradicate female discrimination in schools. Apart from this, UNICEF effectively mobilized community members to help improve the condition of their village schools.

Indeed, UNICEF's programs and development activities brought sweeping changes in the lives of Togolese children. From health and nutrition up to education and child welfare, UNICEF was able to make the children's lives a lot better. Without a doubt this improvement will help the children as they grow up. More than this, it will also push them to make ripples of changes for the future generation.

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