

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE TITLE	Community led initiative to alleviate hunger among almajiri children
DIALOGUE DATE	Sunday, 15 December 2024 13:00 GMT +01:00
CONVENED BY	Huzaifa Abubakar, Team Lead, Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Youth Network Nigeria
EVENT LANGUAGE	English
HOST LOCATION	Bauchi, Nigeria
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Community Level
AFFILIATIONS	SUN Civil Society Youth Network Nigeria
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55171/



The outcomes from Nutrition Dialogues will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on women and children and young people. Each Dialogue contributes in four distinct ways:

- Published as publicly available PDFs on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal
- Available as public data on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal "Explore Feedback" page
- Available publicly within a .xls file alongside all Feedback Form data for advanced analysis
- Synthesised into reports that cover which nutrition challenges are faced, what actions are urgently needed and how should these be taken forward - particular, in advance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, March 2025.

SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

8

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

3 0-11

4 12-18

1 19-29

0 30-49

0 50-74

0 75+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

0 Female

8 Male

0 Other/Prefer not to say

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

8 Children, Youth Groups and Students

0 Educators and Teachers

0 Financial Institutions and Technical Partners

0 Healthcare Professionals

0 Information and Technology Providers

0 Marketing and Advertising Experts

0 News and Media (e.g. Journalists)

0 Science and Academia

0 Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives

0 Women's Groups

1 Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)

0 Faith Leaders/Faith Communities

0 Food Producers (including farmers)

0 Indigenous Peoples

0 Large Business and Food Retailers

0 National/Federal Government Officials and Representatives

0 Parents and Caregivers

0 Small/Medium Enterprises

0 United Nations

0 Other (please state)

OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

The dialogue event reflected diversity by engaging almajiri students, a marginalized and vulnerable group, residing in a rural area. These children come from varied ethnic backgrounds, highlighting the ethnic diversity within the community. As a group largely dependent on alms for survival, their economic status underscored the wealth disparity, offering insights into extreme poverty. The dialogue, held in Dan Iya Ward, Bauchi LGA, brought attention to rural challenges in addressing food insecurity.

SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

FRAMING

The Stakeholder Dialogue held on 15 December 2024 in Dan Iya Ward, Bauchi LGA, Bauchi State, was framed around the urgent nutrition challenges faced by almajiri children in the region. The dialogue was set against the backdrop of pervasive poverty and food insecurity, exacerbated by socio-economic inequalities and the unique vulnerabilities of the almajiri system. These children, separated from their families, lack the means to earn an income, relying on begging for daily sustenance, which often leaves them malnourished or entirely without food. The introduction highlighted the local context, emphasizing the link between poverty and nutrition deficiencies. Bauchi State experiences seasonal food shortages and high levels of child malnutrition due to limited access to affordable and nutritious food. For almajiri children, these issues are compounded by a lack of oversight and safeguarding measures, exposing them to hunger, neglect, and exploitation. The dialogue aimed to create a safe space where participants could share their lived experiences and propose actionable solutions to mitigate hunger and malnutrition. Facilitators explained the safeguarding and child protection principles guiding the dialogue, ensuring the participants' rights and dignity were prioritized. The focus was on understanding the root causes of food insecurity among almajiri children, such as their dependency on irregular donations, lack of access to nutritious food, and the challenges of living outside parental care. To set the tone, the facilitators introduced the topic, "Community-led Initiative to Alleviate Hunger Among Almajiri Children," stressing the need for collective action. They acknowledged the anxieties within the community about the inadequacy of government support for vulnerable groups, the mismanagement of food donations, and the absence of skills training to empower these children.

DISCUSSION

The discussion topic was "Community-led initiative to alleviate hunger among almajiri children." Open-ended questions included: What do you usually eat in a day? Where do you and your peers usually get your meals? What challenges do you face in getting enough food? What ideas do you have for improving your meals? How can we work together to ensure everyone gets enough healthy food? Participants shared their struggles with food access, including instances of eating spoiled food, and proposed solutions such as government support, direct donation guidelines, and skill acquisition programs.

SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

The participants of the dialogue, almajiri children from Tsangayan Malam Bashar, face significant nutrition challenges due to their vulnerable situation. These children are separated from their families, lack stable sources of food, and do not possess skills to earn an income. Their primary means of obtaining food is through begging, which often yields inconsistent results. Some days they go to bed hungry after only drinking water.

When food is available, its quality is often poor. Children shared experiences of consuming spoiled food after washing or drying it to make it edible. Their limited access to safe, nutritious meals means they rarely eat three times a day, often rationing portions to survive. Additionally, food donations from well-meaning individuals are sometimes diverted by their superiors, further depriving them of essential sustenance.

These challenges are exacerbated by the lack of structured support systems, making the children reliant on charity or irregular donations. Their stories highlight a pressing need for interventions to improve food security and ensure equitable access to nutritious meals.

URGENT ACTIONS

Urgent Actions Identified by Participants

During the community dialogue held on 15 December 2024 at Dan Iya Ward, Bauchi LGA, Bauchi State, the participants—8 almajiri students from Tsangayan Malam Bashar—identified several urgent actions to alleviate hunger among almajiri children. These actions include:

Government-Funded Food Program for Almajiri

The participants emphasized the need for the government to establish a dedicated budget to provide consistent meals for almajiri children. They proposed that this intervention would directly address the issue of food insecurity they currently experience.

Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

To ensure that food donations reach the almajiri children, participants recommended setting up a monitoring system where government-appointed individuals or organizations oversee the allocation and distribution of food. This would help prevent diversion of resources by intermediaries.

Direct Distribution of Donations

Participants suggested implementing guidelines mandating that all food donations be handed directly to almajiri children. They believe this approach would reduce exploitation and ensure that food actually reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Skill Acquisition Programs for Almajiri

The participants stressed the need for vocational training programs tailored to almajiri children. These programs would equip them with skills to generate income and reduce their reliance on begging for survival.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

The views and opinions during the community dialogue revealed some areas of divergence, particularly regarding the causes of hunger and the most effective solutions for alleviating it among almajiri children. While all participants acknowledged hunger as a significant issue, perspectives differed on the responsibility and approach to addressing it.

Some participants, including the almajiri children themselves, emphasized the need for direct government intervention, such as budgeting for their meals and establishing monitoring mechanisms to ensure food distribution reaches them. They believed these measures would address the systemic neglect they face. However, others hinted at the inefficiency of solely relying on government intervention, given past experiences of mismanagement and lack of accountability.

On skill acquisition as a potential solution, there was a divide in opinions. Some participants viewed vocational training as a sustainable approach, enabling the almajiri to become self-reliant in the long run. Others, however, argued that skill acquisition might not address the immediate hunger these children experience daily and questioned its feasibility given their young age and lack of foundational education.

Additionally, while many supported guidelines to ensure donations are handed directly to the children, there was a concern about the practicality and enforcement of such guidelines, particularly in settings where power dynamics and exploitation are entrenched.

Finally, some participants expressed skepticism about the almajiri system itself, arguing that broader systemic reforms are needed to integrate these children into formal education and welfare systems. This contrasted with those who saw the almajiri system as a cultural and religious tradition that should be preserved but reformed with better safeguards and support.

OVERALL SUMMARY

On 15 December 2024, a community dialogue was held at Dan Iya Ward, Bauchi Local Government Area, Bauchi State, to discuss the pressing issue of hunger among almajiri children. The dialogue, conducted with eight almajiri students from Tsangayan Malam Bashir, followed strict safeguarding and child protection principles. This ensured that the rights and dignity of the vulnerable participants were upheld throughout the session. The event aimed to identify challenges faced by almajiri children in accessing adequate nutrition and explore community-led solutions to alleviate hunger.

The dialogue focused on the theme “Community-Led Initiative to Alleviate Hunger Among Almajiri Children.” Thoughtfully designed questions encouraged the children to share their experiences, challenges, and potential solutions. Questions included:

What do you usually eat in a day?

Where do you and your peers get your meals from?

What challenges do you face when getting enough food?

What ideas do you have for improving the meals you and your friends eat?

How can we work together to ensure everyone gets enough healthy food?

The discussions painted a stark picture of the struggles these children face. Many rely on begging for food and often go hungry when their efforts are unsuccessful. One child recounted instances of being given spoiled food, which they washed with water and dried to make it edible. Another shared that when food was scarce, they drank water and slept without eating. They described a survival strategy of dividing limited food portions between day and night, leaving it uncovered to avoid spoilage despite the risk of contamination. The children also highlighted instances where food donations were diverted by their superiors, leaving them further deprived.

Despite these challenges, the dialogue was a safe space where the children spoke openly about their plight and proposed practical solutions. Their recommendations included:

Allocating a government budget for almajiri food.

Establishing a monitoring system to ensure fair distribution and allocation of food.

Developing guidelines to ensure donations reach almajiri children directly.

Providing skill acquisition training to enable almajiri children to earn income and sustain themselves.

From an observer’s perspective, the dialogue was both heart-wrenching and inspiring. While the stories shared underscored the dire reality of food insecurity faced by almajiri children, their resilience and willingness to engage constructively provided hope. The event highlighted the critical need for systemic intervention and reinforced the importance of involving communities and vulnerable groups in finding sustainable solutions.

The atmosphere of the dialogue was reflective yet hopeful. Despite their young age and challenging circumstances, the participants demonstrated remarkable insight and resourcefulness. Their openness fostered a deeper understanding of their lived realities, creating a compelling case for urgent action to address their needs. The interaction also reinforced the value of community dialogues as a platform for amplifying marginalized voices and promoting inclusive solutions.

In conclusion, the dialogue underscored the urgent need for collaborative efforts to alleviate hunger among almajiri children. By addressing systemic barriers, ensuring accountability in food distribution, and equipping children with skills for self-reliance, stakeholders can help create a more equitable and sustainable future for this vulnerable group. The session was a poignant reminder that community-led initiatives, when grounded in the voices of those directly affected, can be powerful catalysts for change.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The community dialogue on 15 December 2024 followed the Principles of Engagement by prioritizing the well-being and dignity of the vulnerable almajiri children participants. Safeguarding and child protection principles were strictly adhered to, ensuring that the children's rights were respected throughout the dialogue. Before the event, facilitators were briefed on the participant list, and special attention was given to potential challenges such as the sensitive nature of the children's experiences and their vulnerability to exploitation. Competing interests, such as the differing perspectives of participants, were addressed by maintaining an open and respectful environment where all voices were heard equally. The dialogue created space for participants to propose solutions, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing their challenges. This allowed the participants to express their needs and concerns openly, ensuring their voices influenced the dialogue's outcomes and the action

METHOD AND SETTING

The community dialogue was convened using an informal methodology, prioritizing open discussions to give the children a platform to share their experiences and challenges. The setting was outdoors, at Dan Iya Ward, Bauchi LGA, Bauchi State, ensuring a safe, comfortable space for the almajiri children to engage. Child safeguarding and protection principles

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

For other dialogue convenors, I recommend prioritizing safeguarding and child protection, especially when engaging vulnerable groups like children. Ensure that the venue is safe and that participants' dignity and rights are respected. Create a comfortable environment where children feel free to share their experiences without fear of exploitation. Facilitators should be patient and sensitive to the challenges participants face, especially when discussing difficult topics like hunger.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS