



## Children's Dialogue on **NUTRITION**

### REPORT



### Agortime-Ziope Area Programme

#### **Facilitators**

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#### **Submitted To:**

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 16, 2024, we successfully mobilized 20 children aged 12-17 years to participate in a focus group discussion aimed at exploring their understanding of good nutrition and generating ideas for improving child nourishment.

During the discussion, it became clear that a significant majority—90% of the participants—indicated that financial support for their families directly impacts their ability to access nutritious food. Many of these children reported having gardens and farms where they source their food. However, they often rely on staple foods, and when financial resources are limited, they resort to eating raw ingredients.

One poignant contribution came from Lornlornyo, who shared her personal experience: *“I am the fifth child in my family. All of us eat the same food morning, afternoon, and evening. In my home, once you turn three years old, Akpele with raw pepper becomes your daily meal. At times, I eat this for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I often feel weak at school, and whenever the doctor checks my blood, he tells me that I am anemic and need to balance my diet. My mother explains that she doesn’t have money for other ingredients, so she prepares some herbs for me. I’ve been drinking these herbs, but I haven’t seen any improvement. I realize that if my mother had the money to buy additional foods to supplement the Akpele, I would grow healthier and enjoy more nutritious meals. Unfortunately, I feel uncertain about my future as the quarterly health reviews become increasingly concerning. Thankfully, whenever I face health issues, the government health insurance helps cover the costs.”* Lornlornyo's story encapsulates our findings: providing financial support to parents will enable them to purchase and grow more nutritious food, ultimately allowing children to enjoy healthier meals.

## 1.1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

During the workshop, participants were welcomed, and both staff and volunteers introduced themselves along with the objectives of the session. The CESP officer shared essential online safety tips for children and young people (Slide 2). Participants were encouraged to share their own ideas and experiences regarding online safety, fostering an engaging discussion on the topic. The workshop successfully created a collaborative environment where participants felt comfortable contributing their thoughts and insights.



**Participants during the introduction session**

## **1.2 EXPLORING KEY CONCEPTS TO OUTLINE THE WORKSHOP**

The facilitator then explained Slide 4 to the participants, as the activity took place in a community without access to electricity. Key terms, specifically "Nutrition" and "Malnutrition," were clarified for the children using both English and Ewe to ensure understanding. The facilitator also presented statistics on poor nutrition intake in our country and discussed its resultant effects, including stunting, wasting, and overweight conditions.

## **1.3 EXPLORING PARTICIPANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF GOOD NOURISHMENT**

Using the pictures that were chosen by the participants as a benchmark, the participants shared their appreciation or understanding of good nourishment.

William, who picked picture two, spoke up first. *"When I look at this picture, I see a child who can't button his shirt because his tummy is too big," he said thoughtfully. "I wonder what could have caused that. I believe it's malnutrition. The child isn't eating well, and that's making his stomach grow big."*

Next, Priscilla, a 12-year-old, added her perspective. *"I want to add something to what William said! Picture number six shows us that regular exercise is important for staying healthy and strong. We should exercise at least once a week before starting our day!" She smiled as she shared, "Every time I walk to school, I see it as exercise, and I never get tired of it because it helps me become strong and healthy!"*

Then, Prince, a curious 14-year-old who chose picture five, chimed in. *"I haven't seen this food before, but I notice there are some leaves in the bread! I usually eat bread with porridge in the morning, but bread with leaves sounds interesting! It might help the bread digest faster. I know that leaves are good for us! In my community, we have kontomire, lettuce, and cabbage, which are all great sources of vitamins."*

Finally, Love, who was 13 years old, shared her thoughts about picture three. *"The vegetables shown here are common in our community, but they become scarce during the harmattan season. Eating these vegetables makes us strong and gives us energy!"*

The children's conversations were filled with excitement and curiosity about nutrition. They learned that good food helps them grow strong and stay healthy while also understanding the importance of exercise and eating a variety of foods.



Participants during the introduction session

### 1.3.1

#### Summary of Most important Contributions

1. **Malnutrition Awareness:** William highlighted that a child in picture two struggles to button his shirt due to a big stomach, which he believes is a sign of malnutrition caused by poor eating habits.
2. **Importance of Exercise:** Priscilla emphasized that regular exercise is essential for health and strength, suggesting that walking to school counts as a good form of exercise.
3. **Nutritional Benefits of Leaves:** Prince noted the presence of leaves in bread from picture five, recognizing that leaves provide important vitamins and can aid digestion.
4. **Seasonal Availability of Vegetables:** Love pointed out that while certain vegetables are common in their community, they become scarce during the harmattan season, yet eating these vegetables is crucial for energy and strength.

Overall, the children discussed the significance of good nutrition, regular exercise, and the benefits of incorporating a variety of foods into their diets for better health.

### 1.4 PARTICIPANTS' IDEAS TO IMPROVE THE NOURISHMENT OF CHILDREN

Through brainstorming, the children identified several key factors for improving the nourishment of their peers. Notably, 90% of the participants emphasized that their parents need financial support to prepare nutritious meals for them, both for school and at home.

1. **Financial Support for Healthy Food:**

- **Direct Assistance:** The Government and NGOs to provide money for our parents to purchase nutritious foods, ensuring they can afford fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

## 2. **Education on Nutrition:**

- **Workshops for Parents:** Conduct workshops focused on the importance of nutrition, teaching parents how to prepare balanced meals on a budget.
- **School Programs:** Implement nutrition education in schools to teach children about healthy eating habits and the benefits of various food groups.

## 3. **Family Involvement in Meal Planning:**

- **Cooking Together:** Promote cooking as a family activity where children can learn to prepare nutritious meals, fostering a positive relationship with food.

## 4. **Access to Fresh Produce:**

- **Community Gardens:** Initiate community gardens where families can grow their own fruits and vegetables, reducing reliance on store-bought items.

### 1.5 Closure

The session was closed by thanking the participants and acknowledging their valuable contributions and ideas. The facilitator reminded them that their input would influence the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris.