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***Cultural and Economic Factors Affecting Diet and Nutrition in Children in Khwisero, Kenya***

The purpose of this research project is to identify economic and cultural factors influencing food availability and diet in Khwisero, Kenya. Information gained in the study was used to explain malnutrition rates of children including stunting, wasting, and Kwashiorkor. Research was performed in Khwisero, Kenya for one month while working with Engineers Without Borders. A three-day dietary analysis was obtained by recording all food and drink consumed by the researcher. Information on economic and cultural factors influencing diet and nutrition were obtained through nine household interviews and extensive informal conversation with community members. The dietary analysis showed deficiencies of vitamins A, E, C, B12, potassium, zinc, iron, calcium, niacin, and magnesium. Foods rich in these nutrients are not widely available to Khwisero residents due to poor farming practices and high poverty rates. Cultural beliefs and traditions about diet and nutrition have impacted types of foods grown and consumed, as some foods are valued higher than others. Kwashiorkor was established as the most commonly found symptom of malnutrition among primary school children caused by a protein deficiency. Population and food availability was found to be the cause of the disease, as protein content in the diet was sufficient given proper caloric intake. Education of women, better farming practices, and culturally shifting cooking and eating habits may be beneficial in improving diet and malnutrition rates in Khwisero.