



**SUCCESS STORY**

**April, 2020**

# **Broken but not shattered: I gave up Hopes of Hassan's Survival after his brother died of Malnutrition-Hajara**

The day 30-year old Hajara Sani , gave birth to her set of twins, Hassan and Hussaini, her joy knew no bounds. Neighbors gathered to cheer and celebrate. The air around the makeshift mud house where Hajara lives with her Husband and grandmother was ecstatic. Here, it is a custom for the people to celebrate such moments.

As days coalesce into weeks, deep within lies a bigger trial for Hajara, enveloping the initial sensation created by good neighbors on the birth of her set of twins, as she continues to watch them emaciate and looking famished. She was high and dry. The silence with which she watch her twin wear away was so thick that you could put your hands through it.

That is how it looks when poverty and hunger makes you think where your next meal will come from. Every day, until the intervention that came and changed life's course for Hajara and her family, she would seat down to watch her kids, concerned and apprehensive.

"Most times I just look at Hassan and Hussaini quietly as they become lean and sick not knowing what to do. Things have been tough for us since we fled Baga to this town as a result of continues attacks by insurgents in 2016" Hajara Said. "My breast milk was not flowing because I was also sick and hardly finds good food to eat"



Pale looking Hajara carrying obviously malnourished Hassan after screening and referral to Nguru stabilization centre. Picture: Amina/CCDRN

This situation is not exclusive to Hajara and her twins, the conflict in the northeast of Nigeria which is in its eleventh year have resulted in mass displacement, severe food insecurity and under nutrition, and have destroyed livelihoods and further debilitated fragile health systems, thereby worsening already precarious situation of affected population. The conflict forced Hajara and her husband out of Baga, a major fishing town in the northeastern Nigerian state of Borno, close to Lake Chad, and lying northeast of the town of Kukawa, approximately 196 km from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State.

Hunger, coupled with lack of finance to meet her medical needs and that of her twins led to the unfortunate death of Hussaini, one of the twins a day after their case was brought to the attention of the Centre for Community Development and Research Network (CCDRN) a cooperating partner implementing the World Food Programme's intervention in Bade LGA.

At sunset Tuesday, 20th August 2019, in an unmarked grave, in a cemetery rimmed by wild grass, the men of Angwan Mallam Yaku-bu, a mud-walled community buried Baby Boy-Hussaini, Hassan's twin brother, a casualty of the Severe Acute Malnutrition which is also affecting hundreds of thousands of children in the Northeast of Nigeria.

No mother will love to watch her child die of preventable causes and circumstance. Hajara has no choice. The Boko Haram conflict that has shattered many families in the northeast, has brutally taken away such choices from Hajara and many other mothers. As for Hassan, the surviving twin, he certainly would have loved to grow up to know and play with his twin brother, but this is not going to happen as he may only hear accounts of what transpired if fate provides him such prospect.

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Baby boy Hassan before the intervention that saved his life



Baby Boy Hassan 6 months after the intervention that saved his life

“Hussaini has not laughed since his brother passed. They share a special bond obviously”. Says Hassan’s grandmother.

Initially, Hajara and her family were not captured under any World Food Programmes Intervention after fleeing from Baga to Ungwan Mallam Yakubu, a hamlet in Bade Local Government Area. She and her set of twins had endured poverty, hunger and malnourishment. Every day was a struggle but now this has changed. She can now take care of her Hassan thanks to support from the World Food Programme via its partners, the center for community Development and Research Network CCDRN who provided support that helped in saving Hassan’s life.

WFP’s partner, CCDRN acted swiftly and referred Hajara and her twin to a stabilization center ran by ACF at Nguru, some 66 KM km from Bade. However, Hussaini, one of the twins would not make it to the stabilization Centre as he passed a day after the referral due to obvious nutrition complications.

“It was not easy for me when I lost one of my twins. I would have loved to see both of them grow as every mother would but God knows best”. She said “again, I felt very happy when help came our way and this has changed both my health status and that of my surviving child. Your intervention saved our lives practically” she added.

WFP’s partner, CCDRN provided the family with generous assistance to cover transportation and other sundry expense. Following their discharge from the stabilization Centre two weeks later, CCDRN enrolled Hajara and her surviving twin-Hassan into the World Food Programme’s Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme, a specialized nutritional assistance which helps to directly treat and prevent malnutrition of children under age five, pregnant women and nursing mothers; thereby reducing the mortality and morbidity risk by providing food/micronutrient supplement for all members of the group.

“When we saw her situation and that of her twins, we knew that we had to act quickly because it was a Severe Acute Malnutrition case. We quickly referred her and provided generous assistance to them on humanitarian ground, though they were not benefitting from WFP intervention at that time. Her husband was a bit difficult because he thought the referral requires money which he obviously does not have” says Amina, CCDRN’s Nutrition Officer who managed the case.

“We were saddened that one of the twin later passed in the process of referral but our timely and swift action saved the other twin and helped the mother to also bounce back after which we enrolled both of them into the WFP Blanket supplementary Feeding Programme . This has improved their health and nutrition status” Amina added.



Amina ((first right), CCDRN Nutrition Officer Delivering some food items to Hajara and her husband at Nguru Stabilization center on behalf of WFP partner-CCDRN where Hassan was treated for Severe Acute Malnutrition. Photo: CCDRN

On a monthly basis, Hajara receives improved corn-soya blend plus (CSB+) while Hassan is provided with corn-soy blend plus plus (CSB++) simply referred to as “Tamuwa” by the local population. It is a nutrition dense therapeutic food loaded with all required nutrients. They are an efficient way to help malnourished children recover from malnutrition.



An obviously healthy-looking Hassan carried by his mother.  
Photo: CCDRN/James

Six months later, this intervention has yielded measurable results. It has brought about a major turnaround in the lives of Hajara and her surviving twin. Hassan whose initial Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) screening was reading 8.3cm as at August of 2019, before his referral and subsequent enrollment into the WFP nutrition sensitive intervention is now reading 11.9cm as at March of 2020.

Hassan’s recovery is almost miraculous and the palpable change in Hajara’s condition was even more fairlike as no one could believe that a child whose MUAC measurement was red is now looking this healthy and plump. Now, Hajara can take good care of her surviving child thanks to the support from WFP.

“We are truly surprised about this boy’s recovery. No one in this community believed he could make it” chirped a neighbor who stood by during the interview with Hajara.

Reliving what transpired in those trying moments, Hajara said, “I gave birth to my twin under a very difficult situation. Eating well then was a serious problem because things were not easy. We were lacking. My husband no longer makes enough from his fishing business, If not for this intervention I had already given up hopes for Hassan’s survival after his twin brother passed away following nutrition complications”.

“Now as you can see, we are looking better than before. When I came for enrollment I was looking sick and emaciated and my breast milk couldn’t flow because I was not eating well enough. Since Hassan also started taking the ‘Tamuwa’- (nutrition supplements), he has recuperated greatly. He is now strong and has not taken ill since then. I remain grateful’ she added.

WFP’s emergency food and nutrition intervention being implemented by CCDRN in Bade LGA has been providing mothers and children like Hajara and Hassan with a life line. Since 2016, WFP has scaled-up food and nutrition support in the Nigerian Northeast in response to the Boko Haram armed conflict - ensuring that affected populations basic food needs are met especially that of pregnant women and children who are mostly at the receiving ends of violent conflict.

Beyond food assistance, CCDRN is also implementing WFPs livelihood intervention in Bade LGA, the intervention which is in its second phase is reaching IDPs and vulnerable host community members across 16 affected communities.

Now, Hajara has been enrolled into the WFP livelihood intervention and she is waiting to benefit from the activities that would follow.



A happy Hajara, and neighbors waving goodbyes to CCDRN Communication at the end of the interview. Photo: CCDRN/James