

## Free School Meals for Nine Million Nigerian children

Nigeria is the biggest country in Africa. Its population is 198,000,000, says the UN. It has the biggest population but 42% of its children don't have enough to eat, says UNICEF. However, nine million primary schoolchildren get a free school meal every day. This is thanks to President Buhari's Home Grown School Feeding Programme. The programme started in 2016 and gives hot meals to nine million children in 26 of Nigeria's 36 states. Children get hot meals every day in 56,000 schools. This is the largest programme in Africa.

Nigeria wants a country of healthy young people. Its population is growing very fast. By 2050 Nigeria's population will be bigger than the US (400 million people). So free food in schools will help children be healthy.

In Nigeria many children drop out of school. They stop going because they are poor and hungry. The dropout is very bad. About 30% of children drop out of primary school. Teachers hope that because of the school meals children will want to be at school. They also hope more children will want to go.

They also hope there will be more jobs. Now, 95,000 cooks make the meals for the children. Each meal costs 25 cents. About 150,000 farmers grow food for the school meals programme. In 2019 the programme will grow from nine million to 15 million and there will be 300,000 jobs for farmers and cooks.

But it is difficult. Is there enough money to pay for all the school meals? There are 24 million children in primary school in Nigeria and 10 states do not have any schools with free meals for children.

However, it is not only schools. It is not only Nigeria. Children in Burkina Faso and the Sahel also need food. Because of political difficulty 150,000 children can't go to school. They have left their villages. 130,000 don't have much food. They are very hungry. They need food, water, health care and protection and they need a home. The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Organisation Des Nations Unies pour la Coordination de L'Action Humanitaire) is making a plan to offer \$100,000 to look after 900,000 people in the region.

### New words for this article

Population	the people in a country
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
home grown	made in Nigeria
drop out	leave school and stop education
population	the number of people in a country

### Comprehension Questions

- 1 How many people live in Nigeria?
- 2 How many children don't have enough to eat?
- 3 When did the school food programme start?
- 4 How many schools are in the programme?

4	56,000
3	2016
2	42%
1	180,000,000

**Comprehension questions**

**Answers**