

ABSTRACT

Evaluating the Nutritional Status of Ugandan Children

by

Margaret Kabahenda¹

Childhood malnutrition is a global problem. Food insecurity, poverty, and illiteracy threaten household food availability leading to malnutrition, which in turn lowers productivity. Uganda has high rates of poverty and illiteracy in rural areas and high rates of childhood malnutrition. Thus, there is a need for interventions that empower communities and individuals to monitor and improve the nutritional status of young children.

In Summer 2001, we conducted a nutrition intervention in western Uganda. Through cooking classes and discussions, rural women (subsistence farmers) were empowered to better utilize indigenous foods and ensure that young children are provided with nutritionally adequate diets. A follow-up study conducted in Summer 2002 revealed that our intervention was effective in improving awareness about appropriate child-feeding practices among the intervention participants, their friends, and spouses. However, most focus group participants indicated that they did not have adequate access to food. Food consumed was often limited to what was produced in the household. This limited food supply is likely to place children at greater risk for malnutrition, especially micronutrient deficiencies.

The proposed study is designed to assess the nutritional status of young children in order to characterize the types of nutritional deficiencies that are prevalent. Given the socio-economic context of our targeted population, this data will help us in developing more targeted nutritional messages. This data will also provide a baseline for evaluating the intervention. Spot observations and interviews (structured and unstructured) will be used to determine which food preparation techniques will be the focus of our intervention.

¹University: University of Georgia, Department of Foods and Nutrition.
Hosting Institution: Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC), *Uganda*.
Current Status: Field work not complete.