

# Dietary Diversity and Nutritional Status of Children 6-23 Months in Makindu Division, Makueni County, Kenya

Nduku, Kasimba Salome

## Abstract:

Overpopulation, ecosystem destruction and loss of biodiversity, all associated with urbanization and changing lifestyles have led to dietary simplification. Childhood under nutrition remains a public health concern especially in the developing world. This could be partly because the diets offered to infants and young children are not diversified. The main objective of this study was to ascertain food consumption patterns, dietary diversity and nutritional status of children aged 6 to 23 months in Makindu division, Makueni County. Cross sectional analytical study design was used on a study sample of 263 child mother pair. A researcher administered questionnaire was used to collect demographic socioeconomic characteristics, food consumption patterns and dietary intake, anthropometric measurements and morbidity data and health seeking behaviour. Seven day food frequency questionnaire and a 24 hour recall were used to collect data on food consumption patterns and dietary intake. Observation check list and focus group discussion guide were also used to direct discussions to help ascertain food consumption patterns and dietary diversity. SPSS version 17 was used to analyze data in descriptive and inferential statistics. Data on anthropometry were analyzed using ENA for SMART, 2011. Dietary intake data were analyzed using Nutri-survey for windows, 2007. Chi-square test was used to establish associations between consumption of different food groups and demographic and socioeconomic status of the households, food consumption patterns and dietary intake of children and morbidity patterns and health seeking behaviour of mothers /caregivers' among their children illnesses. Association between dietary diversity and nutritional status was analysed by regression analysis. Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyse continuous data. P Value of < 0.05 was considered significant. Results of 24 hr recall revealed inadequate dietary diversity score of 2 food groups as opposed to a minimum of 4 food groups according to WHO guidelines. Food consumption patterns were found to be poor. Majority of children 79.1% consumed foods -made from maize on daily basis. Stunted children accounted for 21.6% lower than the national figure of 35%, underweight was 12.9% and wasting 7.6%. This poor nutritional status was attributed to inadequate dietary diversity. Main illnesses reported were cough 51%, fever 57%, diarrhoea 22%, vomiting 9%, common cold 27% and skin infection 7%. Socioeconomic statuses were found to influence health seeking behaviour. The study found a significant relationship between dietary diversity score, underweight and stunting  $P = 0.001, 0.024$  respectively. This study recommends as a policy to the Ministry of Agriculture . to promote production of diversified food crops which are drought resistant and also enlighten people on the importance of dietary diversity. The study suggests a similar study in the same location but during the harvest season to compare the dietary diversity score in relation to the nutritional status of the children