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Topic: Community health and nutrition programs

Title: DIETARY DIVERSITY OF THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROGRAM IN THE URBAN SLUMS OF NAIROBI, KENYA: A PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS/TEACHERS IN CHARGE

Presentation Type: Poster

Introduction: Approximately 66 million school going children in developing countries are chronically hungry. Hungry children are undernourished, fall ill often, attend class less frequently and have impeded learning ability. School feeding programs (SFP) provide educational and nutritional benefits. The aim of this study was to determine the dietary diversity and factors (from the perspective of school principals/teachers in charge) that influence the SFP in urban slums of Nairobi, Kenya.

Methods: A total of 78 principals/teachers in charge of the SFP at primary schools were interviewed in this cross sectional descriptive study. Data collection tools included an evaluation questionnaire and an observation checklist that assessed factors such as the structure and management of the program, availability of infrastructure and related items, and dietary diversity of the SFP basket.

Results: Over 95% of the children enrolled participated in the SFP. The mean dietary diversity score of the SFP was 3.97 with significant differences between formal and non-formal schools ($p=0.035$). Majority (82%) of the schools served their first SFP meal very late in the day (12:00 – 14:00 pm). The schools largely depended on donors for SFP ingredients and lacked essential infrastructure. Half of the participating schools did not have vegetable gardens and the participants generally lacked knowledge about agricultural practices.

Conclusion: Supporting the schools in providing a more varied diet and improving infrastructure will increase diet diversity of children. Implementing nutrition education and promoting agricultural production in these schools are potential areas for focus.