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**Topic:** The first 1000 days, infant feeding, and early childhood development

**Title:** Infant feeding practices in the Saharawi refugee camps Algeria, a cross-sectional study among children 0-6 months of age

**Presentation Type:** Poster

**Introduction:** Breastfeeding and general feeding practices are of great importance to a child's health and development. This study aims at describing the nutrition status and infant breast feeding and feeding practices among children 0-6 months of age, in the Saharawi refugee camps, Algeria.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was carried out in 2010 among 111 lactating mothers with infants aged 0-6 months. Background characteristics among the mothers and infants were collected, together with anthropometrical measures, breastfeeding practices and a 24-hour dietary recall for the infants.

**Results:** In total 13.8 %, 8.2 % and 16.5 % of the infants were stunted, wasted and underweight, respectively. There were 64.9 % who were initiated to breastfeeding within one hour after birth. In total 11.7 % and 21.6 % were exclusively and predominantly breastfed. The most commonly given solid foods were dates (27.0%) and bread (10.8%). Increasing child age gave decreased probability of exclusive or predominant breastfeeding, while initiation of breastfeeding within one hour gave increased probability. Giving birth at home as opposed to in a hospital, and increasing number of children seemed to increase probability of initiating breastfeeding early. Exclusive or predominant breastfeeding seemed to protect against undernutrition.

**Conclusions:** Exclusively and predominant breastfeeding was low among Saharawi refugee infants, in all age groups. The prevalence of wasting and underweight is of public health significance in our population. These findings support the importance of breast feeding and our data suggests that there is need for promoting infant feeding practices in the Sahara refugee camps.