



Nutritional Status Assessment of Internally Displaced Children in “Dream City”- Iraq

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Abstract: Malnutrition is one of the major public health challenges in developing countries especially those experiencing security instability. Not much is known of the nutritional status of displaced children in Iraq. The objective of this study was to assess the nutritional status of internally displaced children in Dream city-Salaheddin-Iraq to provide a validated baseline information for further humanitarian responses to help those children. The “Dream city” in Salaheddin governorate was chosen for it represents a large collection of displaced families. A total of 788 children (less than 5 years) was surveyed. Height, weight and mid-upper arm circumference were measured. Under-nutrition was found in 19.2% of them according to body mass index, and 19.5% when using mid-upper arm circumference index. The prevalence of wasting was 14.6% and severe wasting 6.9%. There was a significant association between under-nutrition and number of the children in the family, age of the child, and father’s and mother’s education. A noticeable percentage of children were hardly consuming meat, eggs or fruits (only once or none per week). About one child in every five displaced children is undernourished. The percentiles of different anthropometric measurements for height, weight, body mass index, and mid upper arm circumference for those children were below the standard measurements reported by WHO and NCHS growth charts for the corresponding age.

Keywords: Nutrition, Assessment, Children, Internally Displaced, Dream City, Iraq

1. Introduction

Conflict will inevitably cause loss of lives, physical injuries, widespread mental distress, a worsening of existent malnutrition (particularly among children) and outbreaks of communicable diseases, especially among internally displaced and refugee populations. It also reduces people’s personal security and restrict their access to food, medicines and medical supplies, clean water, sanitation, shelter and health services. [1]

Iraq currently has about four million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 10.8% of its population and 10% of IDPs

worldwide. [2] The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) assault into Iraq displaced an estimated 480,000 persons from Al Anbar governorate in the first half of 2014. [3, 4] During June and July of 2014, a further 505,482 persons were displaced, mostly from Mosul, Iraq’s second city, [5, 6] and further numbers from military attacks in Salaheddin area. Some of the displaced live in rented houses or are staying with host families while others live in “critical shelters”. [7, 8] those are among the most vulnerable of the displaced. Only 8% of IDPs are housed in organized camps, with an estimated 2.5 million living outside of camps. [9, 10]

In response to the massive displacements from the ISIS assaults; the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

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