

# Nutritional status of pre-school children residing in Western Rajasthan

Aditi Upadhyay and Vimla Dunkwal

Rajasthan being a state of northern India is well known for its hyper arid partial irrigated agro-climatic zone. Along with vivid cultural practices this zone is a place arid horticulture which is suitable for cultivation of arid foods. Arid foods are nutrient dense foods especially micronutrients. Despite of such advantageous foods pre-school malnutrition is still prevailing in Rajasthan. A multi-staged cross-sectional study carried out in Bikaner east (a legislative constituency of Bikaner district situated in western Rajasthan) to estimate the prevalence of malnutrition among pre-school children (24-71 months) studying in private and government schools of the district. Results revealed that out of 200 children belonging to private schools, 21 per cent were suffering from stunting, 55 per cent were wasted and 63 per cent were underweight. While children from government school (200) reported 49 per cent underweight children, 18 per cent stunting and 31 per cent were wasted. Obesity and overweight was also evident among the subjects. Dietary assessment showed that children were consuming adequate amount of milk and milk products, cereals, roots and tubers but daily intake of fruits, green leafy vegetable and pulses was found to be low. Nutrient intake of iron,  $\beta$ -carotene, calcium, zinc and vitamin C was found to be low as compared to the daily nutrient recommendation for the age group. This implied that children may have micronutrient deficiencies which could be a serious issue. Results also points out the conclusion that rural influence, lower socio-economic condition, higher birth order, lower birth interval, maternal health, literacy level of parents, agricultural diversity and faulty feeding habits have adverse effects on nutritional status of children. Strategies should be implemented to educate parents and other child care givers to efficiently utilize the available food resources and nurturing practices to improve the nutritional status of their pre-school children.

**Key Words :** Pre-schoolers, Malnutrition, Obesity, Stunting, Wasting, Underweight, Nutrients

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