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INFLUENCE OF HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY ON DIET AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN KABARNET DIVISION, BARINGO DISTRICT, KENYA

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Abstract

Food security is a problem in both arid and semi-arid areas. The pre-school children in rural and urban households, the study area included are among the vulnerable groups. This study was aimed to determine the influence of household food security on diet and nutritional status of pre-school children in urban and rural households in Kabarnet division Baringo district. The objectives of the study were to establish: household food security and the associated factors, diet and nutritional status of the pre-school children in Kabarnet division Baringo district. Two surveys were done using a cross-sectional study design. A random sample of 320 households with pre-school children aged 3 to 5 years (36-60 months) were studied in Rural Ewalel Location and Urban Kabarnet Location households in the division. Questionnaires were administered through interviews. SPSS computer software version 11.0 for windows 2000 and Epi Info version 6 were employed for data analysis. Food composition tables were used to establish adequacy in nutrient intake of the study children. The results indicated that most (70.6%) households were food secure immediately after harvest while only 10% were food secure three months later. On average, the pre-school children had dietary intakes below the Recommended Dietary Intakes for energy, proteins, vitamins A and C in both surveys; further the Recommended Dietary Intakes were lower when food stocks had been depleted. The results revealed a high level of malnutrition in the division especially in the second survey as shown by stunting, wasting and underweight of 34.3%, 11.7% and 32.0% respectively. Nutritional status of the pre-school children was significantly affected by dietary intake, symptoms of disease, household food security and education level of the mother or caregiver at $p < 0.05$. There was a significant ($p < 0.05$) influence of household food security on diet and nutritional status of pre-school children in Kabarnet division. Sustainable interventions to improve household food security and child nutrition in Kabarnet division should be broad based to include reducing poverty by increasing household incomes accompanied by improvements in the education of the population.