

An Attempt to Improve Nutrition in Children Under Five Years of Age Through Diversification of Food Intake via the Introduction of Newly Cultivated Crops and New Recipes in Mzimba, Northern Region, Malawi

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[Abstract]

Background:

In the highland region of northern Malawi, St. Mary's Hospital and the Japanese NPO ISAPH, in collaboration with the local government, launched a nutrition improvement initiative in 2018 under the framework of the Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa (IFNA). The project aimed to reduce stunting by promoting child nutrition and dietary diversity through farm coaching, cookery demonstrations, and growth monitoring.

Methods:

A total of 120 and 143 children were selected at baseline, and 133 and 78 at endline, respectively. Nutritional status was assessed using height and weight measurements. Caregivers were interviewed to gather dietary intake data, which was used to calculate dietary diversity scores.

Results:

In Manyamula, the prevalence of stunting decreased from 37.5% to 26.3%, although the change was not statistically significant. In contrast, stunting increased in Edingeni. The Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD) score in Manyamula showed a statistically significant improvement.

Discussion:

The intervention appeared to reduce the influence of previously identified risk factors, and culturally sensitive approaches—such as the active involvement of fathers—proved effective. This project suggests that a community-based, multi-sectoral nutrition model has potential for nationwide scale-up in Malawi.