

ABSTRACT

Introduction/Background:

Malnutrition in Uganda directly or indirectly contributes to about 60% of child mortality, making it one of the most contributor to childhood mortality in the country. Malnutrition problems are high rates of chronic malnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies, especially of Vitamin A and iron. The Ministry of Health, Uganda (MoH, 2012) recommends exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of an infant's life for optimal growth, health, survival and development. Nutritionally adequate, safe, and appropriately-fed complementary foods should be introduced at the age of six months to meet the developing needs of the growing infant while breastfeeding continues up to a year. It's upon the increasing cases of malnutrition that has placed children at a risk of morbidity and mortality that several interventions have been put in place at both health facility and community level to curb malnutrition. However, little evidence exists to show the utilization of the community based nutrition interventions amongst caretakers and their children 0-59 months but if they are utilized, malnutrition could be prevented.

Main objective: The study was aimed at establishing the factors influencing the uptake of community nutrition services among children 0-59 months and their caretakers in the communities of Buluguyi sub county Bugiri district in order to forge ways of improving the nutrition of children 0-59 months and their caretakers

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study which incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methodologies was carried out in order to provide data on the population under study.

Quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaires; 384 caregivers with children 0-59 months were interviewed and data analyzed using SPSS 20. A multi stage sampling technique was used where by villages were used as the primary sampling units and households were the secondary sampling units. The findings were categorically summarized using frequency tables, and have been presented in form of pie charts and tables.

Qualitative data from KIs and FGDs collected was triangulated to document the uptake of community nutrition services among children 0-59 months and their caretakers

Findings: Most of the participants (34.4%) were aged between 26-32 years followed by those between 19-25 years of age at 32.4 %.Utilization of community nutrition services was at 60.9% and 99.5 were aware of the community nutrition services and their benefits to them. The village health teams were the major source of information to the caretakers with children 0-59m. Of the 39.1% who did not utilize the community nutrition services, long distance from home to the health facility at 86.5%, language barrier at 59.1 and inadequate information at 43.0% were the major challenges. The feeding practices 65.5% started breast feeding with in the first hour of birth, 51.5% newborns received some feeds before breastfeeding was initiated.

Factors that were significantly associated with community nutrition utilization were religion, Islam in particular, education above primary education, and awareness of the benefits of community nutrition services.

Conclusion: Community nutrition in Uganda has continued to be a subject of public health concern and the progress in reducing the levels of malnutrition in women and young children have not improved and may be difficult to achieve the millennium development goals. Community nutrition utilization which is a critical maternal and child health care services although the utilization was at 60.9% awareness levels was at 99.5%. Thus awareness not necessarily transforming into utilization of the community nutrition service. Main source of information for the nutrition services came from Village Health Teams. 65% of the mothers started breastfeeding within the first one hour of giving birth. A clear indication that majority of the mothers attended antenatal care at least the four recommended visits. However although majority of mothers initiated breastfeeding within one hour, most of the children did not exclusively breastfeed as foods were introduced before the recommended 6 months, thus lowering their immunity and heightening the risk of malnutrition, diarrheal diseases, reduced physical and mental development.

Given the high level of awareness (99.5%), of community nutrition services in Buluguyi Sub County, a fairly smaller proportion of the respondents did not utilize the services. This due to several hindrances/barriers ranging from health system and social cultural/ individual related factors.

Majority of the respondents 86.5% reported long distances to the health facility being 6 km and above which is contrary to the recommended 5km the walking distance to health facilities yet in the findings distance was not a significant factor associated with community nutrition utilization. Factors that were significantly found to be associated with community nutrition utilization included education level of the mothers, religion specifically Islam and awareness of the benefits of community nutrition service