

Striving Towards One Health: Collaborative Strategies for Optimizing Nutrition Status of Children 6-23 Months in Lugaga-Wamuluma, Vihiga, Kenya

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Abstract

This study focuses on determining whether smart agriculture can enhance nutrition status of children 6-23 months within the rural farming community of Lugaga-wamuluma of Vihiga, Kenya. Globally, children 6-23 months account for the biggest burden of malnutrition in underfives. In Vihiga county malnutrition rates are quite high with stunting, underweight and wasting estimated at 17%, 9.2% and 4.8% respectively. The research aims to determine whether smart agriculture independently can have an effect on nutrition status of children 6-24 months. The key objectives included, assessing the dietary intake and practices of the target individuals and agricultural practices in their households. A cross-sectional study design was employed with simple random sampling technique used to select a sample of 253 children between the ages of 6-23 months. Questionnaires were used to collect data on dietary intakes and agricultural practices, whilst anthropometric assessment was done to collect data on nutritional status of children. SPSS was used in data analysis. The results showed that: 68% of households reported that they have limited access to food which are diverse and nutritious, 40% of children who are under five are experiencing stunted growth due to access to food. To add on this data, only 28% of households had access to basic healthcare services, worsening the health status within the community. Their agricultural practices though enhanced, most households still sold their nutritious harvest and cash generated used to purchase other household item. Collaborative efforts between Non-governmental Organizations, farmers, local authorities and members of the community emerged as the critical strategies for addressing these shortcomings. This can be achieved through community-based initiatives such as establishing community smart gardens and nutrition education programs and significant improvement to be made in promoting dietary diversity and improving health outcomes. This study concludes that, integrating multiple nutrition-specific and nutrition sensitive interventions strategies is vital in achieving sustainable improvements in health and nutrition within the rural farming community of Lugaga-wamuluma.

Empowerment of this communities to make informed decisions around food will make tangible progress towards achieving one health more so of the vulnerable population.

Keywords: One health, Nutrition specific, Nutrition sensitive, Stunting, Nutritional status