**Severe wasting among children below 24 months disaggregated by maternal level of education in Low Income African Countries**

By Rachael Nagaddya, 21st August 2025.

WHO indicates that undernutrition not only causes half of the deaths of children under five years but, it also may lead to wasting, which is detrimental to cognitive ability consequently prejudicing school and work performance. [Studies](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40723-023-00114-7) show that parental factors such as level of maternal education could contribute to the health of children under the age of five years. Maternal education levels can affect child health through the mechanisms or pathways channels. Through the mechanisms channel, education contributes to increase income by enabling mothers to be in the labour force which could provide better choices in terms of the affordability of care and increased prospects of better care. While in the pathways channel, a child’s health can be impacted directly through maternal health literacy.

Knowledge and gains from both channels can translate into the correct nutritional choices being made in the early years of children’s lives, which nutritional choices have been found to affect not only physical but also mental development. However, maternal education has a down side of keeping her absent from her children due to school and/or work demands. But overall, maternal education has far better reaching benefits to a child’s health. This is evident from the JME data visualised below where in most SSA countries, there is a higher percentage of severely wasted children below 5 years born to mothers that have attained no education or primary school education at best.