

BASELINE SURVEY FOR THE HEALTH SYSTEMS TRUST'S INTEGRATED NUTRITION PROGRAMME IN KWAZULU-NATAL AND THE EASTERN CAPE

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Background

In 1995, the Department of Health initiated the Integrated Nutrition Programme (INP) to address and prevent malnutrition with the vision of optimal nutrition for all.

In 2003, the Nutritional Intervention Research Unit (NIRU) of the Medical Research Council (MRC) conducted a baseline survey (situation assessment) that was aimed at identifying gaps and therefore informing areas for intervention by the HST community development unit.

Objectives

The study assessed health service practices related to nutrition; determined whether linkages existed between the community, health facilities and relevant sectors; measured the nutritional status of preschool children and their caregivers; and whether nutrition records and information were available and accessible.

Description

The study had a cross-sectional design and was conducted in two districts in both the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The sample population included preschool children, their caregivers and households in the four districts. The study found that: most mother/caregivers were socio-economically deprived, while many households were food insecure; maternal, child, and women's health was compromised due to inadequate access to PHC facilities; diarrhoea was the leading health problem for children under 5 years; caregivers were knowledgeable about many essential aspects of health and nutrition, but there was a gap between utilization of this knowledge and actual practices. Nurses reported staff shortages and workload as their biggest problem; the functioning of the INP was the sole responsibility of PHC nurses because inter-sectoral involvement, community participation and support from nutrition directorate or dieticians were insufficient or non-existent.

Conclusion

This baseline study (nutrition situation analysis) provided HST with information to be utilized and incorporated in the planning and implementation of their community based integrated nutrition project in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

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