

Field Report

Nutrition Education Program for Children's Guardians in Dili, Timor-Leste: An Interim Report

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Abstract

Numerous children with undernutrition exist in Timor-Leste, and there is an urgent need to improve this situation. Insufficient dietary diversity affects the nutritional status of children. Therefore, we developed and conducted a nutrition education program for guardians of children in Dili, Timor-Leste. The nutrition education program took place over five consecutive days. In order to establish understanding of children's nutritional status and the need for a well-balanced and varied diet, six goals were established so that participants can be practiced at home. We report results about this program from July 2019 to March 2021. We verbally explained to participants data would be anonymized, and all participants verbally provided informed consent to participate in the program, the study, and its publication.

Forty-five nutrition education programs were conducted during the data collection period, with 218 parents or guardians and 311 children. Each guardian participated in one series over a span of five days. The food intake of the participants' children was biased toward carbohydrates and lacked diversity. The menus devised by the participants on the last day of the program showed a decreased tendency to cook with only one food group and an increased in the percentage of cooking with all three food groups. Positive impressions about the program were received from participants. This program provided participants with lunch, snacks, and transport service, which may motivate participation.

To develop intrinsic motivation among guardians, it is necessary, above all, to create an environment that is conducive to participation, which in turn will lead to the realization of the need for healthy meals. This nutrition education program could be an effective to increase guardian's understanding about importance of diet diversity.

Keywords : Undernutrition, Nutrition Education Program, Guardians, Diet Diversity, Timor-Leste