

ASSESSING THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO LIVE UNDER MINOR IRRIGATION SYSTEMS OF MIHINTHALE DS DIVISION IN ANURADHAPURA

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Abstract: This study was conducted to assess nutritional status of primary school children aged 5-10 years in Mihinthale DS Division, Anuradhapura. A sample of 100 subjects was selected from all primary schools through multi-stage sampling. Anthropometric measurements were performed using standardized procedure on primary school children. Anthropometric indices such as BMI were generated. Information on socioeconomic characteristics of households and dietary patterns of children were gathered by an interview schedule, which includes a food frequency questionnaire. According to WHO classification, children shows a considerable risk for being underweight (47%), wasted (4%), overweight (8%) and obese (5%). The prevalence of severe malnutrition is higher among most students in the area due to low income and high costs of food and other goods. Among the tested individuals, 51% of children from farm families in the tank cascade systems in Mihintale were at high risk for malnutrition (underweight (47%), wasted (4%)). After analyzing the completed questionnaire and information provided by the students, 14% of them have identified nutritional diseases like vitamin A deficiency, night blindness and iron deficiency. Most of the primary school children suffer from nutritional issues such as being underweight and malnutrition in Mihinthale DS Division. Therefore effective long term food security program may need from governmental as well as non-governmental organizations targeting the primary school children such as school level nutrition related clinics, food providing programs.

Keywords: Anthropometric measurements; BMI; Nutritional status; Malnutrition