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Research Issues in Child Health and Child Care

Proceedings of a workshop
held in Accra, Ghana,
22–26 September 1986

Proceedings



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17995

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Editor: Fiona Mackenzie
Associate Editor: Kodwo Ewusi



*Jointly organized by
the International Development Research Centre
and the Institute of Statistical, Social and
Economic Research, University of Ghana*

ARCHIV
MACKENZIE
no. 2

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Postal Address: P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Ont., Canada K1G 3H9

Mackenzie, F.
Ewusi, K.
University of Ghana, Institute of Statistical, Social and Educational
Research, Legon, Accra GH
IDRC, Ottawa CA

IDRC-266e

Research Issues in Child Health and Child Care : proceedings of a
workshop held in Accra, Ghana, 22-26 September 1986. Ottawa, Ont.,
IDRC, 1988. viii + 118 p. : ill.

/Child care/, /health/, /child mortality/, /West Africa/ -
/research methods/, /organization of research/, /vital statistics/,
/human nutrition/, /women's status/, /primary health care/, /health
indicators/, /measurement/, /research needs/, /data collecting/,
/conference reports/, /lists of participants/, references.

UDC: 613-053.2

ISBN: 0-88936-523-7

A microfiche edition is available.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily
reflect the views of IDRC or ISSER. Mention of proprietary names does
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Abstract

This workshop brought together West African health scientists and social scientists to discuss methodological and conceptual issues in the study of infant and child health and mortality, and to identify new research needs. Health and social scientists from the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone attended the workshop. Emphasis was placed on evaluation of research design and procedures for analyzing the determinants of child health rather than on the presentation of findings. Discussions and papers focused on four central themes: conceptual frameworks more appropriate to local contexts, questions of scale and measurement, the search for indicators of child health, and directions for future interdisciplinary research. This publication is intended to serve as a record of the proceedings of the workshop and to promote further communication and interaction among researchers working in the area of infant and child mortality and health.

Résumé

Cet atelier réunissait des spécialistes de la santé et des sciences sociales de l'Afrique occidentale qui ont discuté de problèmes méthodologiques et conceptuels liés à l'étude de la santé et de la mortalité du nouveau-né et de l'enfant, et qui ont cerné de nouveaux besoins en matière de recherche. Des spécialistes des sciences de la santé et des sciences sociales de la Gambie, du Ghana, du Nigéria et de la Sierra Leone y participaient. On a mis l'accent sur l'évaluation de la conception de la recherche et sur les procédures d'analyse des déterminants de la santé des enfants, plutôt que sur la présentation des conclusions de travaux de recherche. Les discussions et les communications ont porté sur quatre grands thèmes : paramètres conceptuels mieux adaptés au contexte local, questions d'envergure, la recherche d'indicateurs de la santé des enfants et les orientations futures de la recherche interdisciplinaire. Cette publication a pour objet de faire le compte rendu des délibérations et en même temps de promouvoir la communication et les interactions entre les chercheurs dans le domaine de la mortalité et de la santé des nouveau-nés et des enfants.

Resumen

Este taller reunió a científicos del campo de la salud y las ciencias sociales para discutir cuestiones conceptuales y metodológicas en el estudio de la salud y mortalidad infantiles y para identificar nuevas necesidades investigativas. Asistieron al taller científicos de la salud y las ciencias sociales de Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria y Sierra Leona. Se hizo más énfasis en la evaluación del diseño y los procedimientos investigativos para analizar los determinantes de la salud infantil que en la presentación de los resultados. Las discusiones y documentos se centraron en cuatro temas: marcos de trabajo conceptuales más apropiados para los entornos locales, cuestiones de escala y medición, búsqueda de indicadores de salud infantil y pautas para la investigación interdisciplinaria futura. El propósito de esta publicación es el de registrar las sesiones del taller y promover una mayor comunicación e interacción entre los investigadores que trabajan en el campo de la salud y mortalidad infantiles.

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The Determinants of Infant and Child Health and Survival in Sierra Leone: A Research Proposal

Fatu Yunkella

Against a background of considerable doubt as to the reliability of previous assessments of infant and child mortality in Sierra Leone (for instance, the IMR was variously estimated as 227/1000 from the 1974 census, compared to a figure of 183/1000 from a survey conducted by H.B.S. Kandeh in four districts), a research proposal is outlined with the following objectives: to obtain levels of mortality in Sierra Leone and regional, urban-rural, and socioeconomic differentials; to deduce the principal causes of death; to establish the major determinants of infant and child mortality; and to relate the findings to prescriptions for change.

A questionnaire to be administered at the household level to mothers aged 12-50 years is to be the basic tool for the collection of data. The sample of 5000 households represents about 1% of the population and is to be distributed among Freetown (13.3% of the sample households), other district headquarters (9.3%), other urban centres with a population over 2000 (9.3%), and rural areas (68.1%).

The questionnaire, divided into modules, includes demographic information (date of birth, education, religion, ethnic group, occupation, husband's background); respondent's background; community size; maternal history; nutrition; health status and causes of death; and community level factors (type of settlement, accommodation, ecological environment).

The IMR and CMR will be measured by the direct method of computing data on deaths in the 2 years previous to the survey and through indirect means. Infant and child mortality will be estimated on the basis of children ever born and children surviving. Multivariate techniques will be used to analyze the determinants of infant and child health.

Infant and Child Health in The Gambia: Overview of a Research Proposal

M.S. Jeng and M. Yamuah

Infant mortality rates, estimated at 160 per 1000 live births from data collected during the 1983 census, remain high in the Gambia. In fact, mortality differentials for infants range from 92/1000 for the capital, Banjul, to 205/1000 for Basse Local Government Area, according to 1983 data. Against this background and attempts by the Primary Health Care program introduced in 1980/81 to improve health, the Department of Statistics is planning a midintercensal national demographic and health survey for 1988.

The overall objectives of the survey are to provide an estimate of the total population and its demographic and health characteristics; to provide data for the estimation of births, deaths, migration, and population growth rates; and to analyze, interpret, and publish the data to assist planners, policymakers, and researchers.

A questionnaire is proposed as the basic methodological tool for the survey. Questions will focus on the health and mortality experiences

of infants and children, their mothers' socioeconomic status, and children ever born. Specific questions will concern age of mothers, marital status, ethnicity, nationality, education, economic activity, data on births in the previous 24 months, survival status of births in the last 24 months, proximity of mother's residence to a health centre or clinic, place of delivery of births in last 24 months, number of children ever born and number dead, birth interval, breastfeeding habit, immunization, nutrition status, and use of health centres or clinics. If the draft questionnaire proves to be too bulky, basic information only will be obtained from the entire sample, and a subsample will be identified for in-depth data collection. The initial questionnaire with retrospective questions will be followed by a multiround survey to be repeated at 6-month intervals for 2 years, through which direct measurement of infant and child mortality will be obtained.

A sample size of 5% of the women (i.e., 12,500 to 13,000) in the reproductive age group would be covered within selected clusters. They will be drawn from the entire country and selection will be based on a systematic sampling procedure with probability proportional to size. The list of settlements compiled during the 1983 Population and Housing Census would provide the sample frame.

Population, Food Production, and Nutrition in a Northern Savannah Village of Ghana

G. Benneh

In Ghana, nutritional surveys have been carried out that examine nutritive values of food eaten in different parts of the country and the effect of hunger and malnutrition on the health of the population. No attempts have been made to relate nutrient deficiencies to the methods by which the staple foodcrops are produced. Studies of the ecology of rural African nutrition have shown, however, that food intakes depend largely on what can be grown on the farms, the level and pattern of farming being dependent on environmental factors such as the landform and soil, and socioeconomic pressures.

The objective of the research summarized here was to examine land-use patterns, farming techniques, and dietary habits of farming households in Manga Bawku, a village in northeastern Ghana, and to determine the extent to which food requirements were satisfied by home production.

The survey was carried out between July and December 1969. First, household data collected by means of a questionnaire included the number of males, females, and children making up each of 36 compound units. Data on members of compound units who had migrated from the village were gathered. Information on the techniques of farming and dietary habits were also obtained by this means. Second, a land-use map was prepared with a chain and prismatic compass. In connection with this, farmers were interviewed to find out the cropping sequence on their fields. The output of crops from the fields was calculated by using yields per acre of millet and guinea corn obtained from the 1970 Ghana Sample Census of Agriculture. The number of calories and amount of protein derived from the total output of millet and guinea corn from each production unit were then calculated using food consumption tables. Third, a detailed dietary survey was carried out in three compounds. From these data, daily per capita calorie intake was calculated.