

## OP 5

### Impact of socioeconomic crisis on household food insecurity and nutritional status of children under five years in selected MOH areas of Jaffna District: A preliminary study

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**Introduction:** The economic crisis has impacted the household economy leading to childhood malnutrition causing long term effects on health, brain developments and human capital of the country.

**Objective:** The study assessed the proportion of children aged 6-59 months with faltering weight trajectory in the previous six months and the association of that with food insecurity.

**Methods:** Community-based cross-sectional study in children aged 6-59 months in four Medical officer of Health (MOH) areas was done in December 2022. Sample was selected using stratified cluster sampling. Previously validated Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFAIS) and Household Hunger Scale (HHS) assessed food insecurity. Data was collected using Kobo collect tool, Child Health Development Record was observed, and anthropometry was measured by trained data collectors. Chi-square and univariate logistic regression were applied to assess the significance of factors related to the HFAIS and HHS. Significance was considered at  $p < 0.05$ . Ethical clearance was obtained from Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians.

#### Results

A total of 220 children from four MOH areas (2 urban and 2 rural) with 130 (59.1%) from urban areas were considered. Monthly household income was less than the estimated living wage for 2022 in 119 (54.1%). Underweight, stunting and wasting were seen in 10.6%, 6.25% and 9.1% respectively. Mean HFAIS score was 2.38. Moderate to severe food insecurity was seen in 24% (n=54). Moderate to severe hunger was seen in 17 (7.7%) of the households. In the past four weeks 14.1% (n=31) said they went to sleep hungry due to food scarcity and 25% (n=55) worried that the household would not have enough food. The Weight for age trajectory from last 6 months to current weight showed flattening or growth faltering in 11.4% (n=25). Weight faltering/flattening was associated with high HFAIS score of 3.26 when compared to the normal growth trajectory group (2.53). Moderate to severe food insecurity was significantly associated with maternal education ( $X^2=37.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), area of residence ( $X^2=15.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and income ( $X^2=11.1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Weight faltering/flattening during the last six months was seen in this region associated with higher food insecurity scores and hunger. Households with moderate hunger had an association with maternal education level, area of residence and family income.

**Keywords:** Economic crisis, food security, undernutrition, Jaffna

## OP 6

### Awareness of autism spectrum disorder among final year medical students and public health midwives

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**Introduction:** Early identification of the autism spectrum disorder is vital because early intervention is associated with a better prognosis for the child. Basic knowledge is vital for early diagnosis.