

NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN IN THE SUPER REGIONS

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ABSTRACT

Background: In the 2006 State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo grouped the country's 16 regions into five big regions or what is known as "Super Regions". These are the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle, the Metro Luzon Urban Beltway, the Central Philippines Super Region, the Mindanao Super Region, and the Cyber Corridor. The move is to boost economic development, focusing on the industry which each region specializes in. A study needs to assess the nutritional status of vulnerable groups of children, 0 to 10 years old and adolescents 11 to 19 years old in these regions to determine the needed investment to protect the human capital for the projected regional economic development. **Objectives:** (1) to measure weight and height and (2) to assess the nutritional status of these children and adolescents. **Methods:** Locally trained professionals in each region collected the anthropometric measurements of the subjects (weight and height/recumbent length) using standard anthropometric assessment techniques. Calibrated Detecto weighing scales were used to measure the weight while microtoise were used to measure the height of the two year-olds and older or the infantometer for the recumbent length of the less than two year-olds. All collected data were edited in the field and brought to the office for thorough editing and checking of inconsistencies. Cleaned data were encoded and organized for processing. Anthropometric measurements were assessed using the International Reference Standards established by the NCHS-WHO. **Results and Conclusion:** Malnutrition is a serious problem in the Super Regions. Although the prevalence declined at the national level, significant numbers of the Filipino population in these Super Regions especially the vulnerable age groups, are still affected. The magnitude and severity of underweight, underheight and thinness are of public health concern. Prevalence of overweight is not considered a major public health concern, however it should not be taken for granted particularly in the light of the emerging lifestyle-related and risk factors such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases and hypertension in later life especially among children. **Recommendations:** Survey findings call for priority actions that should be undertaken to improve the nutrition situation of children and pre-adolescents/adolescents. Since malnutrition is a multi-faceted problem involving poverty, vulnerability to illness, unproductivity, inaccessibility to food, safe water and better health services among others which brings social and economic costs that hinder development. Thus, there is a need to: (1) increase investments in nutrition to implement and sustain nutrition intervention programs; (2) strengthen collaborative efforts between and among government agencies and the private sectors to maximize resources; (3) intensify campaign for breastfeeding; (4) complement status of women with other nutrition intervention programs

and other poverty measures; and (5) review existing health and nutrition programs and integrate the emerging problem of double burden of malnutrition especially among children.



Research and Development

