

Title

Comparison of the Food and Nutrition Security Status of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Lebanon: the Case of Akkar

Presenter

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Abstract

The conflict in Syria is currently one of the most challenging humanitarian disasters causing serious ramifications on Syrian refugees as well as populations of neighboring countries, including Lebanon. The conflict is affecting refugees and host populations at all levels including their social and economic stability, food security and health status. Despite extensive efforts tackling the vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees, minimal evidence has been published comparing the food and nutrition security status of Syrian refugee versus Lebanon households (HH), and even fewer studies compared the status of Lebanese HH from communities hosting large numbers of refugees to those with low refugee load. To address this gap in the literature, a research study was conducted between October 2015 and March 2016 in the Akkar district, one of the poorest districts in Lebanon that host a large number of refugees due to its proximity to the Syrian borders. A convenient sample of 324 mother-child pairs were recruited from three groups: Syrian refugee HH, Lebanese HH (from high Syrian refugee load communities), and Lebanese HH from low refugee load communities. Socio-demographic characteristics, HH food security status, coping mechanisms, anthropometric measurements, and dietary intake of mothers and children were explored from three communities. Results from this study highlight the alarmingly high levels of severe food insecurity among Syrian refugees; in addition significantly higher levels of food insecurity were observed among Lebanese HHs from high-Syrian-refugee-load communities compared to low-refugee-load communities. Severe and long-term coping strategies were also reported among all groups. Preliminary findings reflect inadequate dietary intakes mostly among Syrian refugee children followed by children from Lebanese HH in high-refugee-load communities. In conclusion, Syrian refugees and direct host communities require social welfare programs and nutrition interventions from humanitarian agencies and governmental entities to help alleviate the risk of nutrition insecurity, particularly among children.