ASSESSMENT OF SELECTED FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICIES:
THE OPT REVISITED

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BACKGROUND

Malnutrition among Filipino children persist, hence the value of nutritional assessment procedures is underscored. In the Philippines, this is carried out at the local level during the annual Operation Timbang or OPT.

OBJECTIVES

The study described how the OPT is carried out in selected barangays and determined the facilitating and hindering factors in the conduct of OPT.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews were used to collect primary data. Documents pertinent to OPT were examined. A total of 10 FGDs were conducted at the barangay level and 30 key informants were interviewed in Ifugao, Western Samar and Taguig City.

RESULTS

The OPT Plus is a routine activity and joint effort of the community workers and barangay officials, with OPT as a more recognizable term compared with OPT Plus. Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) and Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNSs) generally followed the OPT guidelines in the conduct of the OPT except for the use of spot map, problem tree and feedback of results to the respective local nutrition committees. Strong support from local chief executives; commitment of barangay, teamwork and parents’ cooperation, awareness of [the value of] OPT and availability of resources facilitate conduct of OPT. Work overload, absence of permanent key staff, uncooperative parents and physical challenges hindered its smooth conduct.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The OPT is a vital resource that local government units can use for tracking local nutrition situation and assessment of nutrition-in-development programs. Enhancing quality of the OPT data is foremost. Continuous training of BHWs and BNSs on OPT is recommended in addition to a full appreciation course for the Municipal/City Nutrition Committee members and local health workers. An examination of the formula for estimating the number of 0-71 months old children is recommended in order to arrive at robust malnutrition prevalence rates.