YOUTH'S NUTRITIONAL STATUS AND FOOD SECURITY IN LOCAL-LEVEL SURVEY PILOT AREAS

Charina A. Javier, Cheder B. Sumangue, Cristina G. Malabad, Ma. Lynell V. Maniego, Marina B. Vargas, and Charmaine A. Duante

Background:
The Filipino youth, 15-24 years old, are at a critical period characterized by a shift from adolescence to adulthood. While the youth make up about 19.5% of the population (PSA, 2016), they are often not a priority in program development such as in health and nutrition.

Objectives:
This study looked into the socio-demographic profile and nutritional status of youth and food security status of their households in six local-level survey pilot areas. It also determined the factors affecting the nutritional status of youth such as gender, educational attainment, occupation, wealth and food security status.

Materials and Methods:
Secondary data analysis was done using the Local-level Food, Health and Nutrition Survey (LFHNS) conducted by the Department of Science and Technology - Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI) in 2016-2017. The LFHNS areas were Taguig City, Davao Occidental, Biliran, Aurora Province, Occidental Mindoro and Batanes. Descriptive statistics was done to analyze the socio-demographic profile, nutritional status of youth and the food security status of their households. Statistical analysis entailed chi-square test to determine whether occupation of the youth affects their nutritional status and logistic regression to determine the odds of being undernourished.

Results and Findings:
About 15% of youth in the study had low body mass index (BMI) while 10% had high BMI. Majority (70%) belonged to food insecure households. Among working youth, the most common types of employment were service work, farming, forestry and fishery work, and laborer and unskilled work. Females were more likely to have low BMI than males (OR=0.7). Stunting among 15-19 years old were more likely among those who have no grade completed (OR=22.5) and elementary education (OR=8.7) compared to those who were college graduates, those who belong to poor (OR=3.2) and middle-class households (OR=2.0) compared to rich and those belonging to food insecure households (OR=1.7).

Conclusion and recommendations:
About 1 in every 4 youth was malnourished. Majority belonged to food insecure households. Adolescence and early adulthood can be considered the second window of opportunity for intervention and break inter-generational cycle of poverty and malnutrition.