SickKids Centre for Global Child Health - Chronic Child Malnutrition Project Placement

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Abstract

I completed a 16-week practicum at the SickKids Centre for Global Child Health where I was a part of the stunting team led by Dr. Nadia Akseer under the research portfolio of Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta. Linear growth stunting, or low height-for-age, is a visible and easily measurable physical manifestation of chronic malnutrition. Children who are stunted have higher rates of mortality and morbidity, as well as experience suboptimal cognitive and motor development. At the time of my placement, one of the team's main projects was a mixed-methods study involving an in-depth evaluation of policies, programs, and factors that have contributed to the decline of under-5 stunting in Ethiopia from 2000-2016. I worked on a variety of components of the manuscript for this study. These included narratives for country demographics, background statistics as well as migration and remittance trends. I also contributed to a literature review on factors that have contributed to a reduction in stunting in Ethiopia in relation to an adapted version of UNICEF's conceptual framework for malnutrition. In addition to the manuscript, I conducted a multivariable analysis of the 2016 determinants of under-5 wasting in Ethiopia. Wasting, or low weight for height, is a form of acute malnutrition and is also a risk factor for mortality. I applied a hierarchical analysis to wasting indicators such as disease, household wealth, maternal education and access to health services. I used Ethiopia's 2016 Demographic and Health Survey data and additional data sources provided through various Ethiopian government ministries. Overall my practicum was a rich interdisciplinary learning experience which allowed me to develop my quantitative and qualitative research skills. I also gained a deeper understanding of global health research processes and the multi-sectoral nature of combating child malnutrition.