

Double burden of malnutrition in Rwanda: Systematic review of Rwandan Demographic health Survey, 2005, 2010 and 2015

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Background: The double burden of malnutrition has become a global public health issue, particularly in Rwanda, where prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years old is remaining high while overweight and obesity among children under five and women of reproductive age is increasing overtime, as risk factors for non-communicable diseases. The majority of interventions aiming at addressing malnutrition in Rwanda are focusing on under-nutrition while overweight and obesity are becoming a public health threat. Therefore this abstract aims at showing the trends of undernutrition and overweight-obesity in Rwanda in order to help policy makers and programme manager to tackle both forms of malnutrition.

Methods: The systematic review of three recent Rwanda demographic health surveys conducted from 2005 to 2015. The data were disaggregated by socioeconomic status of households: household wealth index, level of education of the mother and place of residence.

Results: The review showed that the prevalence of stunting among children under five years decreased overtime from 51% in 2005 to 44% in 2010 and to 38% in 2015. However, Rwanda is still classified as a country with high prevalence of stunting rate. Place of residence, level of education of the mother and household wealth index were associated with stunting among children under five years old. The prevalence of stunting among children whose mothers were not educated (47% vs 19.3%), those who reside in rural areas (40.6% vs 23.7%) and those whose families were poorer (48.6% vs 20.9%) were higher.

Regarding overweight and obesity among children under 5 years old and women of reproductive age, the prevalence were increasing overtime from 7% to 8% among children under 5 years old and from 12% in 2005 to 16% in 2010 and 21% in 2015 among women of reproductive age. The recent RDHS 2015 showed that among educated women the prevalence of overweight and obesity was higher compared to women with a low level of education (26.5% vs 16.1%), Overweight and obesity were most prevalent among women in highest wealth quintile than in the lowest wealth quintile (36.4% vs 10.7%). The prevalence of women with overweight and obesity living in urban areas was higher compared to than those living in rural (36.8% vs 20.7%). In Rwanda, the STEPS survey showed that obesity is a risk factors of No communicable diseases such cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancers.

Conclusion and recommendations:

The findings from this review indicate that both types of malnutrition are a public health concern in Rwanda. However, addressing overweight and obesity in public health policies and interventions is lacking and efforts to tackle malnutrition are focusing on under-nutrition. The promotion of healthy diets and physical activities are needed.

Key words: Stunting, overweight and obesity, double burden of malnutrition

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