

Determinants of Nutritional Status of Children in Rural India: NFHS 2005-06 Results

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**DETERMINANTS OF NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF
CHILDREN IN RURAL INDIA: NFHS 2005-06 RESULTS**

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in as early as 2006, had cautioned that the slow progress in reducing nutritional problems among children would mean that several key Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets set for 2015 may now be missed. The one goal that concerns us in this paper is the achievement of reduction of under-5 child mortality by two-thirds by the year 2015. Considering the fact that mortality and nutrition are directly related, we try to examine the determinants of nutritional status of a child under-3 years of age using the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2005-06 results.

Nutrition status needs to be differentiated from *nutrient intake* and *nutrient demand* in that the former measures something that has already taken effect- the 'status' of nutrition as opposed to nutrient intake which measures current nutrient intake levels. Nutrition status is determined by variables that range from individual factors (like age, gender etc) and household variables (mothers education, mothers height, family income etc) to community specific variables (like provision of health services, distance from the nearest hospital).

The focus in this paper is on the nutritional status determinants children in rural India. This obviously does not mean that urban children malnutrition is any less important, only that the focus in this paper is on rural India.

We observe that vis-à-vis household factors, parent -factors and child-specific factors are more important for the child. The inner-circle of the child contains the child itself and its mother, and thus it is important to focus on the mother and her child during the first three years of the birth of the child.