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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



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BOOK REVIEWS

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM NUTRITION IMPACT EVALUATIONS?

Publisher : The World Bank
Washington DC

Year : 2010, Pp.88

Malnutrition makes children more susceptible to illness and strongly affects child mortality. Beyond the mortality risk in the short run, the developmental delays caused by under nutrition affect children's cognitive outcomes and productive potential as adults. Micronutrient deficiencies – of vitamin A, iron, zinc and iodine for example – are also common and have significant consequences. High levels of child malnutrition in developing countries contribute to mortality and have long term consequences for children's cognitive development and earnings in adulthood.

An estimated 178 million children under age five in developing countries are stunted (low height for age) and 55 million are wasted (low weight for height). Recent impact evaluations show that many interventions have had an impact on children's anthropometric outcomes (height, weight and birth weight), but there is no simple answer to the question "What Works?" to address the problem. Similar interventions have widely differing results in various settings, owing to local context, the causes and severity of malnutrition, and the capacity for programme implementation.

Progress in reducing childhood malnutrition in developing countries has been slow. More than half of these countries are not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving the share of children who are malnourished by 2015. The food price and financial crises are making achievement of this goal more elusive.

Impact evaluations of World Bank supported programmes, which are generally large scale, complex interventions in low capacity settings, show equally variable results. The findings confirm that it should not be assumed that an intervention found effective in a randomized medical setting will have the same effects when implemented under field conditions. However, there are robust experimental and quasi experimental methods for assessing impact under the difficult circumstances often found in field settings.

The medical literature points to the need to intervene during gestation and the first two years of life to prevent child malnutrition and its consequences. The relevance and impact of nutrition impact evaluations could be enhanced by collecting data on service delivery, demand side behavioral outcomes, and implementation processes to better understand the causal chain and what part of the chain is weak. It is also important to better understand the distribution of impacts, particularly among the poor and to better document the costs and effectiveness of interventions.

Radha, R.

CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Authors : Daniel Hoornweg and
Mila freire

Publishers : The World Bank,
Washington, DC

Year : 2011 Pp. 306

Cities concentrate wealth, people and productivity while consuming much of the world's energy and producing much of the world's greenhouse gas emission. This concentration makes cities and their population are more at risk to natural disasters and to long-term changes in climate, yet cities also offer vast opportunities to respond to these challenges. Changes in migration, land use and spatial development will increase vulnerability, especially in developing countries, and rising sea levels will affect millions of people living in coastal cities. Adaptation, migration and increased resilience to climate change are therefore imperative for cities.

The links between cities and climate change were the subject of the 5th Urban Research Symposium held in Marselle, France, in June 2009. The eight papers selected and updated for cities and climate change: *Responding to an Urgent Agenda* reflect the core of the analytical discussion and policy implications discussed at the symposium, combining comprehensive analysis and theoretical insights with examples of best practices from around the world. These include a framework to include aspects of poverty in the discussion of cities and climate change; new perspectives on the knowledge and measurement of climate change; urban infrastructure, institutions

and governances, and economic and social issues and specific case studies comparing experiences of cities in both industrialized and developing countries. The book also includes a summary discussion of the main research themes and abstracts of additional selected papers from the symposium.

For policy makers and governmental administrators, *Cities and Climate Change: Responding to an urgent agenda* offers robust analysis and thoughtful review of potential policy options. Researchers and academics studying climate change and cities will appreciate the book's state-of-the-literature review, data, and case materials. Students studying the issues, as well as general interested readers, will find the book an excellent all-around resource.

Thirumanidevi, A.

FINANCING HEALTH CARE IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**Best practices and remaining challenges**

Authors : John C. Langebrunner and
Aparnaa Somanathan

Publishers : The World Bank
Washington, DC

Year : 2011, Pp.328

Rapid changes in the economic, demographic and epidemiological profiles should be monitored in many East Asian and Pacific countries for improved planning and for integration of health financing policies with needed delivery system reforms. Most countries in East Asia and the Pacific allocate relatively less from public spending for health