

## INSIDE THE CITY. AN OVERVIEW OF THE POSTER SESSION

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**SUMMARY** The aim of the poster session was to review the information currently available on urban nutrition and health in Latin American and to evaluate the expertise of associated working groups. A total of 71 posters from ten countries were presented covering a wide range of innovative topics. Details of the topics covered according to the different target groups within the framework of research and intervention are described.

The contributions were separated into two groups: 1) Description and analysis of nutritional and health situations (n=54) and 2) Description and analysis of nutritional interventions (n=13).

The posters session reflected the fact that both traditional descriptive studies of pre-school children and consumer-oriented surveys dominated nutritional research in urban areas. A great deal of valuable information is now to hand which allows a greater appreciation of the complex nutritional situation currently existing in the urban areas. However, in order to further identify appropriate strategies for nutritional interventions, additional information in the following areas would prove invaluable: new risk groups; longitudinal dynamics of magnitude and causes of malnutrition; effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

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- Description and analysis of nutritional and health situations (n=54).

- Description and analysis of nutritional interventions (n=13).

The majority of presentations focused on a description of the nutritional situation based on cross-sectional surveys.

The largest group studied were pre-school children where the emphasis was on the measurement of anthropometric data and body composition. These studies are particularly influenced by the views of the public health system which are widely accepted as a result of countries studies conducted in rural areas. It is generally accepted that nutritional problems in rural communities appear first in the most vulnerable groups; fast growing pre-school children as well as pregnant and breast-feeding women. However, preschool children may not necessarily be included in the most vulnerable groups within urban households. New risk groups are increasingly acknowledged which is reflected by studies on schoolchildren, labourers, and the elderly (Gross and Monteiro, 1989).

Far less attention was given to women and surprisingly only three posters dealt with breast-feeding. It is widely acknowledged that mothers in the urban environment breast-feed their children for less time than those in rural areas (SchGrch and Favre, 1985).

The second largest group was influenced by food security, describing food consumption at the household level, and often linking food intake to socio-economic data.

Urban nutritional studies increasingly focus attention on non-communicable diseases. The prevalence of obesity in low income households in urban communities reflects the fact that food behaviour may be as important a contributing factor as low income. This leads to the conclusion that, unlike rural areas, unequal distribution rather than lack of resources seems to be more relevant in urban areas. This fact is confirmed by one poster which reported that in Mexico City each household wasted, on average, more than 800 g of food per day. The fact

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TABLE 1  
TOPICS COVERED BY POSTERS ACCORDING TO DIFERENT TARGET GROUPS

Situacion analysis	< 5	School	Women	Labor.	Adults	Elder.	All	Total
Food intake	2	2	1	1	-	2	8	16
Micronutrients	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	5
Breastfeeding/bottle	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
	8	3	-	-	1	2	-	14
Biochemmical	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
Non communic. disease	-	1	-	-	5	2	1	9
Socio-economical	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	5
Subtotal	15	9	3	1	7	6	13	54
<b>Intervention</b>								
Feeding programmes	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Subsidized food	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Nutr./health education	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Feeding programes	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Iron	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Psychological backing	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Family support	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Combination	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Nutrit. surveillance	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Subtotal	6	2	1	-	-	1	3	13
Total	21	11	4	1	7	6	16	67

Target groups: <5-Pre-school children; school-Schoolchildren; Women-Women in age of motherhood; labor.-Labourers; Adults-Individuals from 18 years on; Elder-Elderly; All-All age groups/all household members

that the amount of wasted food has increased during the last decade indicates that inequality is increasing rather than decreasing.

About one fifth of the posters dealt with interventions, half of which described intervention programmes and the remaining half reported the impact of such programmes. Pre-school children feature prominently in the intervention part of the Poster session.

It is worth noting that extensive experience has been gained in Chile, where governmental and non-governmental agendas focus on feeding programmes. In the past it was often difficult to reflect the relationship between supplementary feeding and nutritional status. Today, however, it is suggested that supplementary feeding programmes are affective in preventing growth failure, protecting against negative affects of diarrheal diseases on child growth and improving educational performance, in later years (ACC/SCN 1992). Knowledge is also acquired by putting households with malnourished children in touch with those enjoying a healthy nutritional status thereby utilizing positive experiences in the same low income communities. Generally, however, many programmes prefer to channel efforts towards a more holistic intervention strategy.

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descriptive studies of pre-school children and consumer-oriented surveys dominate nutritional research in urban areas. A great deal of valuable information is now to hand which allows a greater appreciation of the complex nutritional situation currently existing in the urban areas. However, in order to further identify appropriate strategies for nutritional interventions, additional information in the following areas would prove invaluable:

- new groups;
- longitudinal dynamics of magnitude and causes of malnutrition;
- effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

#### REFERENCES

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