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Economic, political, and social determinants of child under-nutrition in South Asia and Sub- Saharan Africa

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Abstract

It was announced by the United Nations in 2012, that pursuant to their Millennium Development Goals established in year 2000, the goal of reduction in extreme poverty had been met. In spite of this, the rates of reduction in child mortality and under-nutrition, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, are not on track to reach their targets by 2015. This study posits that although measures have been taken to alleviate this situation, some key economic, social, and political factors may have been overlooked in these attempts. If these factors can be isolated, policy changes might be undertaken to improve these circumstances and reduce the long-term negative impact of under-nutrition on child development and health.

This paper will utilize a database constructed by the authors using secondary data from the World Bank database, Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations, the Demographic and Health Surveys and the World Health Organization along with indicators of political will. Factors explored as possible determinants of child under-nutrition include agricultural production, government expenditures, food prices, poverty, over population, lack of access to clean water, urbanization, gender parity in primary education, and governmental effectiveness. A mixed effects model will be utilized in a panel data setting with controls for the geographic region (South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa). The objective is to establish public policy and macroeconomic determinants of changes in child under-nutrition in order to isolate factors that can be successfully addressed through policy levers.