

NSSP/PSF Research Seminar
Quantitative Analysis of Determinants of Maternal and Child Malnutrition in Nigeria
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Abstract: While many studies have confirmed significant variations in the level of malnutrition across rural-urban settings, geopolitical zones and broad agroecological bands in Nigeria, the key determinants of child and maternal malnutrition within the above-mentioned zones have remained largely unmet. Using data from the 2003 Demographic and Health Survey, this study sought to identify household and community characteristics and regional-specific risks that affect malnutrition in children 0-36 months and women of reproductive age in households in rural and urban Nigeria. It also developed a set of typologies of vulnerability to malnutrition and assesses how current nutritional strategies and interventions address these determinants. Key socioeconomic determinants examined include household economic status, women's education, employment and decisionmaking, and access to safe water and sanitation. Major proximate determinants included were maternal nutritional status, infant feeding practices, and maternal antenatal and birthing care. While there were some variations in the nature of the determinants across rural-urban divides, geopolitical regions and agroecological zones, many of the determinants were common across these domains. However, the level of the determinants and their relative effects differed significantly across regions and zones. Current levels of determinants appear linked more to policy implementation challenges than to lack of or deficient components of policies to effectively address them. Understanding the nature, level, and relative effects of the determinants across the regions and zones provides directions for designing context-relevant, effective program and policy responses for addressing malnutrition. To substantially improve nutrition conditions of mothers and children, especially in rural Nigeria, strengthening or redesigning current policy and implementation processes in key areas is critical.