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Incomes, Expenditures and Nutrition Outcomes in Rural Kenya: Evidence on Intra-Household Resource Allocation

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Abstract

Nutritional problems broadly fall into two categories: those resulting from insufficient intake of food relative to nutritional needs and those resulting from excessive and unbalanced intake of food or a particular dietary component. For Kenya, undernourishment is one of the challenges facing many rural as well as urban households. Acute malnutrition afflicts 35% of the population in the arid and semi arid areas and chronic malnutrition is as high as 45%.

A growing body of literature suggests that men and women allocate income under their control in different ways. The implications of intra-household bargaining for nutritional outcomes depend largely on the bargaining power of men and women within the household. The purpose of this paper is to examine intra-household income distribution, expenditure on food and non food items and its implications for household food and nutrition security. Special attention is placed on the impact of paternal and maternal income on caloric consumption and child anthropometric outcomes. The major hypotheses to be tested here are: increase in household income would increase expenditure on food and hence increase in per capita calorie intake in households and; there is unequal distribution of food within the household as a result of low income under the control of women. Therefore, an increase in women's income would contribute to equitable food distribution and increase per capita calorie intake.

Data from a household survey containing detailed gender disaggregated information on resource ownership as well as food and anthropometry are used in the analysis. The analysis dwells on shares of household budget spent on food and non food commodities, followed by individual nutrient intake and anthropometric analysis. The two stage least squares regression is used to analyse the determinants of nutritional status. Pearson correlation coefficient is used to determine the relationship between income and nutrition outcomes as well as caloric intake within the household.

Keywords: Kenya, income, nutrition