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Farmers’ and academia’s views”

## Endogenous knowledges and practices in child feeding among caregivers in northern Benin

CHÉRIF ISSIFOU<sup>1</sup>, WALIOU AMOUSSA HOUNPKATIN<sup>2</sup>, IRÈNE MÉDÉMÈ MITCHODIGNI<sup>3</sup>, BRIGITTE KAUFMANN<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*University of Abomey-Calavi, Chérif Issifou, Benin*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Abomey-Calavi, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences,*

<sup>3</sup>*University of Abomey-Calavi, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences,*

<sup>4</sup>*German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), Germany*

### Abstract

Inadequate results of governmental and non-governmental child nutrition programmes are also related to limited knowledge of mothers’ knowledge and practices. In the context of developing countries with poor socio-economic situation and low empowerment of women, appropriate endogenous knowledge and practices would be very important for improving child nutrition. They are appropriate because they are adapted to the local context and can be easily adopted by mothers. The aim of this study was to describe endogenous child feeding knowledge and practices among caregivers in North Benin.

Checklist-based individual interviews (24) were conducted with caregivers from the Fulani, Baatombu and Gando ethnic groups in Banikoara and Nikki communities. These interviews focused on endogenous knowledge and practices related to child feeding. In addition, focus groups (4) were organised with caregivers to discuss in more detail issues that emerged from the individual interviews. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and then content analysed using MAXQDA software.

Five main themes on endogenous knowledge and practices of child feeding were found: Breastfeeding, complementary feeding, weaning, child care and hygiene. In the first month of breastfeeding, the caregivers use herbal teas to fight illnesses of the child and help him/her grow well. In addition, there are various methods to increase the mother’s milk production using foods and herbal products to help the baby get more breast milk. In complementary feeding, they use fortified foods that are enriched with other foods or plants. To make weaning easier for the children and to avoid negative effects, the caregivers use different methods, such as mixing certain foods with breast milk or applying herbal ointments to the breast. Five diseases recurred among the children, namely stomach ache, diarrhoea, malaria, cough and fever. Herbal tea treatment was used for each illness.

The caregivers have interesting knowledge and practices that could be relevant, affordable and accessible for improving child nutrition and rearing at the local level. It seems important to analyse their effectiveness in order to integrate them into nutrition education materials and make them useful for other mothers in the fight against child malnutrition.

**Keywords:** Caregivers, child feeding, endogenous knowledges and practices, herbal tea

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**Contact Address:** Chérif Issifou, University of Abomey-Calavi, Chérif Issifou, Zogbadjè, Abomey-calavi, Benin, e-mail: ic.issifou@yahoo.com