

Abstract

# Malnutrition Among Under Five Children in Iraq, 2002 - 2016

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Hasanein Malik; F Lami

**Corresponding Author:**

Hasanein Malik

## *Abstract*

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**Background:** In Iraq, the long-standing war and civil unrest had negatively affected food security, water quality, sanitation and environmental conditions that contributed to decline in the nutritional and health status of children.

**Objective:** The objective of this study is to assess the trend of different types of malnutrition among <5years children in Iraq, 2002-2016.

**Methods:** We used data from four Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 2, 3, 4 and 5). Three WHO malnutrition indicators were assessed: stunted growth (z-score of height for age= -2.01), underweight (z-score of weight for age=-2.01) and wasting (z-score of weight for height= -2.01).

**Results:** The prevalence of stunting decreased from 24.2% in 2002 to 16.6% in 2016. Severe stunting was 8.7% in 2002 and 6.7% in 2016. Male: female ratio was 1:1 in 2002 and 1:1.3 in 2016. The highest prevalence was among children aged 12-23 months in 2002 (28.9%) and among those aged 48-59 months (30.1%) in 2016. The prevalence of underweight decreased from 16.9% in 2002 to 5.9% in 2016. Severe underweight was 2.7% in 2002 and 1.7% in 2016. Male: female ratio was 1.1:1 in 2002 and 1.4:1 in 2016. The highest prevalence was among children aged 12-23 months in 2002 (24.4%), while in 2016, it was among children aged 0-11 months (24.8%). The prevalence of wasting had slightly increased from 7.3% in 2002 to 7.8% in 2016. Male: female ratio was 1.2:1 in 2002 and 1.3:1 in 2016. The highest prevalence was among children aged 12-23 months in 2002 (10.0%), while in 2016, it was among children aged 0-11 months (13.0%).

**Conclusions:** In spite of the tremendous challenges that faced Iraq during 2002-2016, the decline in the prevalence of stunting and underweight reflects better-provided health services. All types of malnutrition are still there and intensified multidisciplinary efforts are recommended.

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