Refugee Children in India: A Comparative Study

J Bazroy, P Panda, AJ Purty, B Philip

Abstract
A cross sectional survey was conducted to compare parent background, child rearing practices, nutritional and morbidity status of under-five children in two study populations located in Tamilnadu, India - a Tamil Refugee camp from Sri Lanka and a local Fishermen community. A total of 125 and 136 under-five children were contacted in the Refugee camp and the Fishermen community respectively. The literacy status of the Refugee camp parents (fathers = 92.8%, mothers = 89.6%) was higher than the Fishermen community parents (fathers = 77.2%, mothers = 72.0%). Mothers of the Refugee camp practiced significant longer duration of breastfeeding and earlier food supplementation. More than 90% of the under-five children were fully immunised and about 35% of them were found to be malnourished in both study populations. Fishermen community had significantly more number of children with pallor, lymphadenopathy, dental caries and respiratory infection. Under-five children of the Refugee camp have a better health status than the local Fishermen community which possibly is due to higher literacy status and better child rearing practices by the Refugee camp mothers. (HK J Paediatr (new series) 2005;10:101-108)

Key words: Fishermen; Refugee; Under-five children