

## ABSTRACT

The conflict situation in Sri Lanka has continued for the past sixteen years. A vast number of people were forced to leave their native places due to conflict and live in displacement for many years. The living conditions in displacement can reflect on the health status of the displaced people. Specially women and children are more vulnerable in such situations.

The effect of displacement on the health status of the displaced people has not been studied in detail in Sri Lanka. Knowing the facts relating to the health and well being of children in a conflict situation is the foundation for effective policy development and action.

This study attempted to find the effect of displacement on the health status of the children under five years. It was a welfare centre based descriptive cross sectional study. The study design consisted of three components: data collection by interviewer administered questionnaire, anthropometric measurements (weight, height) and morbidity pattern. The study sample comprised of 400 children under five years of age in welfare centres of Vavuniya district.

Over half (51 percent) of the displaced children under study were subjected to moderate or severe stunting. This includes 17 percent who are severely stunted. Another 28 percent of children are stunted to a mild degree.

About one third of the children in the study sample were subjected to moderate and severe level of wasting. Among them 4 percent were wasted severely. And another 41 percent of the children were wasted to mild degree.

72 percent of the children in the study sample were subjected to moderate and severe underweight. Among them 23 percent were underweight severely. And another 21 percent of the children were underweight to a mild degree.

About one third of the children in the study sample had delayed mile stones development of all four types, which were analysed (fixing the head, sitting without help, walking without help, call the father and mother).

The most commonly presenting psychological symptom was temper tantrum, which was present in mild form in 55.8 percent of the respondents and moderate and severe form in 4.5 percent of the respondents. Nightmares were also common, occurring in 47.8 percent of the respondents in mild form and 3.8 percent in moderate or severe form.

The children in the study sample were affected mainly by RTI, diarrhoea, scabies, malaria and fever. The leading causes for hospitalization among these children by recall and hospital records were diarrhoea, RTI, malaria and fever.

This study recommended to implement a systematic sustainable nutrition supplementation programme and to resettle these families without delay.