



Team of researchers from Bayero University Kano receives grant to compare feeding practices of mothers of stunted and non-stunted children

In March 2015, a team in the Department of Community Medicine of Bayero University Kano led by Professor Zubairu Iliyasu received a research grant for a new research project to compare the feeding practices of mothers with stunted and non-stunted children. The grant was awarded by ORIE, a DFID-funded consortium of UK and Nigerian organisations [<http://www.heart-resources.org/tag/orie/>]. ORIE (Operations Research and Impact Evaluation) undertakes nutrition research and evaluation to generate evidence on the operationalisation, cost-effectiveness and impact of a major DFID-funded six-year programme to implement and scale-up nutrition interventions in Northern Nigeria, called WINNN (Working to Improve Nutrition in Northern Nigeria) [<http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-201874/>]. ORIE also invests in strengthening the capacity of nutrition researchers working in Northern Nigeria, by providing funding to enable researchers to design and undertake their own research project with the ongoing support and guidance of a group of experienced international researchers. BUK was one of three successful bidders in a competitive bidding process in late 2014, which attracted thirty-three applications.

The project will generate valuable research findings on infant and young child feeding practices

The BUK team is comparing the feeding practices of mothers with stunted and non-stunted children under two years of age in four Northern states: Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi and Zamfara. It will recruit just over 1500 children to the study across the four states in two equally-sized cohorts, one with infants

6-9 months old, the other with young children 18-24 months old. The division of the sample into two cohorts will allow for the examination of child diets and feeding practices during two crucial phases: (1) the first six months of life, when breastfeeding should be exclusive; and (2) the transition phase when complementary foods are introduced. Half the children in each cohort will be stunted, the other half non-stunted. The study will use mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to explore such issues as the age at which complementary foods are introduced, what foods are given and how they are prepared, and how food is given to the child. Survey data will be collected, including socio-demographic information about the child's mother, father and household, the child's feeding history and the child's current diet when healthy and when sick. Local views and beliefs on child feeding will be explored by conducting key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Data collection activities started in September 2015. Findings are expected to be disseminated around the end of 2016.

The research findings will be extremely important in a context in which around half of all children under five are stunted. Inappropriate feeding practices such as non-exclusive breastfeeding and inadequate complementary feeds are believed to contribute to the high levels of stunting, along with household poverty, low uptake of child immunisation, and poor hygiene and sanitation. The study will highlight good feeding practices which support healthy child growth and development in the Northern Nigeria context. The research findings will be used to strengthen the implementation and scale-up of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling programs in the Northern region. →

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The team will use a targeted dissemination strategy to ensure that the research findings are widely communicated and taken up by programme implementers and policymakers. The dissemination plan includes activities targeted at three kinds of audiences: (1) the general public, through the incorporation of messages on beneficial feeding practices into radio programmes which are widely listened to throughout the North; (2) policymakers, healthcare workers, nutrition officers and other key stakeholders, through dissemination workshops to be held in each of the four states; and (3) the scientific community, via presentations at scientific conferences and at least one article in an international peer-reviewed journal. Context-specific evidence like this, generated by high quality research, is essential to underpin the Scaling-up Nutrition agenda in Nigeria.

Developing new research skills

The grant is accompanied by support activities, including ongoing informal support and guidance and formal training provided by ORIE's researchers. These support activities are designed to strengthen data collection and analysis and to provide a forum for trouble-shooting as and when problems arise. The formal program includes training in qualitative and quantitative research methods, the use of specialised software packages for data analysis, and general research skills such as writing research grant applications and scientific papers, and using electronic literature.



Right Members of the BUK Department of Community Medicine participate in qualitative research training course.

ORIE and WINNN

ORIE is an independent component of the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) funded Working to Improve Nutrition in Northern Nigeria (WINNN) programme. WINNN is working to improve the nutritional status of 6.2 million children under five years of age in five states of northern Nigeria. ORIE is carrying out research to determine the impact of WINNN and generate important research on key evidence gaps regarding solutions to undernutrition in northern Nigeria.

The BUK team

Professor Zubairu Iliyasu, Professor of Community Medicine at Bayero University and Consultant Public Health Physician at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital is the Principal Investigator. The other team members are: Dr Abubakar Sanusi, Dr UM Lawan, Dr AU Gajida and Dr AM Jibo (all from the Department of Community Medicine). Please direct any queries about the research to Professor Iliyasu at ziliyasu@gmail.com. For more information on ORIE please contact Dr. Vincent Ahonsi on vincent.ahonsi@orie-ng.org.

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ORIE is run by a consortium of UK and Nigerian organisations. In the UK: Oxford Policy Management, Institute of Development Studies, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Save the Children UK; in Nigeria: Food Basket Foundation International, University of Ibadan. ORIE works in partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria.

For any further information about ORIE please email orienigeria@orie-ng.org or see the website heart-resources.org/tag/orie