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Out of the Dark: Food Insecurity among Female Sex Workers and their Children in Kenya

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Keywords

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Abstract

Background

In 2021, moderate food insecurity was reported in 68.5% of the population in Kenya, and 25.7% reported severe food insecurity. Female sex workers (FSW) and their children are among the most vulnerable and this study aimed to identify rates of food insecurity among mothers and families.

Methods

A convenience sample in urban and rural settings in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu were gathered over a 4-week period in February 2022. Using the globally validated Food Insecurity Experience Scale respondents were asked to report their experience with food insecurity before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results

A total of 293 respondents met inclusion criteria for analysis (Nairobi = 97; Mombasa = 97; Kisumu = 99). 100% of participants and their children reported moderate to severe food insecurity. On average, one woman had three children to care for and feed. Within the last 4 weeks, 91% of families reported not eating due to lack of money or resources. Of these respondents, 26% reported this occurred more than 10 times in a month. In the same 4-week period, 76% of families reported not eating for an entire day with 22% of these families stating they did not eat for an entire day more than 10 times.

Conclusions

Food insecurity is prevalent among all female sex workers and their families who participated in this study. This data will be used to present to development partners such as FAO, WFP, and UNICEF to highlight the need for access to resources and programs among this most vulnerable population.