

ABSTRACT

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Physical growth deficiency of underprivileged young children has been a common observation in Jordan. Micronutrient deficiencies, a problem endemic in many less developed regions in the world and for which new tools for prevention and amelioration are available, have been suspected in Jordan. In some earlier domestic studies reported in the early years of 1990s, growth stunting of Jordanian children could be explained only partially on grounds of inadequate dietary zinc and iron intakes. Based on those early studies, the likelihood of finding a vitamin A deficiency (VAD) problem in Jordan had been overlooked since the East Mediterranean region is well recognized with its substantial vegetable production. In one following cross-sectional study conducted during the year 1997, a coexistent sub-clinical vitamin A deficiency (VAD) was suggested. Sub-clinical VAD and a general trend of low serum retinol concentration (SRC) were detected in preschool children in some relatively privileged districts. Two other major studies followed in 1999. Both have highlighted the endemic coexistence of sub-clinical VAD, iron deficiency anaemia (IDA), and growth stunting among the deprived sectors of Jordanian children.

Upon arrangement with the Badia Development Programme (BDP) at Jordan's Higher Council for Science and Technology, this survey was launched. It focused on investigating the physical growth deficits and nutritional status of children in Jordan's north Badia . As an under-privileged, under- populated region, north Badia had been for years recognized by the authors as an area with high vulnerability to childhood malnutrition. Their hypothesis assumed finding a link between nutritional deficits and child's dietary intakes of certain micronutrients, mainly vitamin A , iron, and some other micronutrients such as vitamin E, zinc and ascorbic acid. Among the prime objectives of this cross-sectional survey were checking up the consumption pattern of VA foods and measuring specific biochemical parameters in the north Badia - population of children in the pre-pupertal age period.