Drivers of anaemia persistence among children and women of reproductive age in the Sahel

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The Sahel faces high undernutrition and anaemia prevalence for decades, despite the substantial investment in nutrition programming. Aim: to identify drivers of the anaemia burden among children and women of reproductive age (WRA) in Sahelian countries, through a systematic mapping review.

Methods

Evidence was gathered from publications identified by a search syntax in scientific databases, hand-searches of grey literature, and citation tracking. Studies published in English or French up to December 2022 and including data from the Sahel were considered for publication after full-text screening against predetermined eligibility criteria. Drivers were coded according to the UNICEF/Young conceptual framework of malnutrition1-3. Twenty-one publications focused on anaemia drivers (n=9 children; n=7 WRA and n=5 both populations) were analysed.

Results

Each major category of undernutrition drivers was reported by approximately two-thirds of the publications.

Livelihood systems | disease | insufficient health services & unhealthy environment

Insufficient household food security | inadequate health and social care environment | environment and seasonality

Conclusion

- There is a need for research and public health prioritisation of issues identified as critical in the Sahel, (e.g., food insecurity, environment, seasonality, conflicts and shocks) → underlying and basic/systemic drivers.
- More robust evidence may sustain a recommendation for implementing Interventions covering these topics in the Sahel, to improve the health of children and WRA, namely decreasing the anaemia prevalence.