ABSTRACT

An Examination of the Combined Effects of Maternal Characteristics, Environment, and type and availability of Treatment Programs on the Prevalence of Diarrhea amongst Infants in Uganda

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Recent research identifies Diarrhea as among the leading causes of morbidity and mortality among children in developing countries. Some estimate that approximately 20% of all deaths amongst children are directly related to diarrhea. (Gorter, et.al., 1998) In 1993, the World Health Organization estimated that in some sub-Saharan countries more than 50% of the deaths of children are due to diarrhea. Studies show that the risk of exposure to the causes of diarrhea is strongly related to both environmental characteristics, and to the socioeconomic characteristics of mothers. Indeed, infant mortality itself continues to be used as an indicator of standard of living, and environmental conditions (Yankauer, 1990). This is especially true for children below the age of 2 years. Studies indicate that the characteristics of the primary caregivers, the cleanliness of the environment, and the availability of treatment, are all significant factors in the prevalence of diarrhea amongst infants in a population. While these patterns are frequently documented in research, few studies have examined, in detail, the separate and combined effects of mother’s characteristics, environment, and the availability of health care.

The present study examines the interrelationship of socioeconomic characteristics of mothers, selected environmental factors, treatment options, and the prevalence of diarrhea in Ugandan infants. The research utilizes data from the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (DHS III) (USAID, 2004). This study elaborates the specific conditions and circumstances that account for variation in the health of children and how these relate to the characteristics of the mothers and well as the environment.