

**OPERATIONAL
RESEARCH
SNAPSHOT**

**Characteristics & Treatment Outcomes of
infants under 6 months with acute malnutrition,
North-East Nigeria**

Malnutrition among infants under six months remains a critical public health issue, especially in conflict-affected regions like North-East Nigeria.

Despite their risk, this age group is often excluded from standard malnutrition protocols, which typically focus on children aged 6–59 months. Stabilization centers supported by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have been treating these infants, but little is known about their clinical characteristics and outcomes.

This study aimed to describe the clinical profiles, treatment outcomes, and factors associated with mortality or defaulting in this vulnerable group in conflict-affected northeast Nigeria.





A retrospective cohort study analyzed infants under six months admitted to MSF inpatient and ambulatory feeding centers in North-East Nigeria (2019–2022), focusing on mortality, defaulting, and associated predictors.



The results showed that: Of 940 inpatient cases, 13.3% were cured, 72.9% referred to ambulatory care, 6.5% left early, and 4.2% died. Short hospital stays were strongly linked to mortality.



Among 561 ambulatory cases, 80.9% were cured, 16.2% defaulted, and 1.1% died. Defaulting was associated with male sex, displacement, and severe undernutrition (low weight-for-length z-score).



Policy and Practice

Outcomes (stabilization + recovery) among < 6 m infants appear acceptable in this humanitarian setting, but mortality and defaulting remain key challenges.

Short inpatient stays (<10 days) may signal heightened mortality risk; closer monitoring and ensuring adequate stabilization before discharge are crucial.

Male infants, internally displaced infants, and those with more severe anthropometric deficits may require intensified follow-up or targeting.

High default rates in ambulatory care warrant further qualitative inquiry and strengthened community tracing and support.

Original Study: Amat Camacho, Nieves et al. "Characteristics and treatment outcomes of malnutrition among infants aged less than 6 months in North-East Nigeria (2019–2022)." *Maternal & child nutrition* vol. 20,4 (2024): e13676. doi:10.1111/mcn.13676

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