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A Comparative Study of Physical Growth and Nutritional Status in Santal Children of Ghatsila and Bolpur

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ABSTRACT A cross sectional study was made on 123 Santhal children of Ghatsila in Jharkhand and 105 Santal children of Bolpur in West Bengal (aged 6 to 10 years) to assess and compare the physical growth and nutritional status. Growth pattern of height, weight, BMI and mid-upper arm circumference was determined. It was observed that growth pattern of Santal boys or girls are similar between Ghatsila and Bolpur. However, the growth curves of height remained at lower level in boys (10th percentile) and girls (5th percentile) in both the regions compared to NCHS reference. The poor growth was also evident in Santal children of two regions by lower percentile value of weight-for-age (5th percentile) and MUAC-for-age (5th percentile) compared to NCHS reference. But the percentile of BMI-for-age was higher in Santal children of Bolpur (both boys and girls at 25th percentile) compared to that of Ghatsila (both boys and girls at 5th percentile) according to NCHS reference. Prevalence of undernutrition, though very high, was found to be similar between Santal boys and girls of two regions, and in between Santal children of Ghatsila and Bolpur. However, the percentage of severe stunting (grade III) was higher in Santal girls of Bolpur (38.09%) than that of Ghatsila (5.18%). In Santal boys, the severe undernutrition in terms of BMI was higher in Ghatsila (70.77%) compared to that of Bolpur (45.24%). The severe underweight and stunting were higher in Santal girls of Bolpur compared to the boys of same region. A poor growth rate and high prevalence of undernutrition were observed in the Santal children of two surveyed regions. Prevalence of undernutrition was higher in girls of Bolpur compared to boys.