

Long-Term Impact of Health and Nutrition Status on Education Outcomes for Children in Rural Tanzania

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This paper investigates the long-term effects of malnutrition presented by individuals during early childhood on subsequent education attainment of young adults living in a rural area of Tanzania. The data used are of an exclusive long term panel data set collected in the Kagera Health and Development Survey. Infants born in the early Nineties are traced and interviewed in 2004. To perform the main objective of the work, any attrition due to family or environmental characteristics is removed by differencing among siblings. Additionally, a broad investigation on weather conditions during infancy is conducted, in order to attain the instruments to face the existing endogeneity proper of the health variable.

By comparing the anthropometric measures of a Tanzanian preschooler with those of a child in a wealthy reference country, estimation results show that malnutrition and poor health experienced during early childhood have long term effects on her human capital growth. More precisely, improving child health status, she would have an additional 28% probability of completing primary education. This result emerges if the two districts laying on the western board, where the refugees escaped from the genocides of Burundi and Rwanda in the early Nineties, are excluded from the analysis.
The possibility of a strong connection between nutrition and schooling in developing countries is of growing importance; the analysis presented in this work makes progress in sorting out such a casual relationship.