

## Geopolitical factors affecting childhood nutrition: Iraqi case

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### **Introduction:**

In Iraq, child's health had deteriorated over four turbulent decades starting from the huge and rapid degradation of the country infrastructure by the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), the Gulf War in 1991, and the economic sanction. (1) (2) This unique situation forced the United Nations to issue Security Council resolution 986 on 14th April 1995 and then Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate the implementation and execution the Oil For Food Program (OFFP). (3) Later, an evaluation of the MOU was carried out through the Multiple Indicators Clusters Surveys (MICS) by establishing a baseline data in 1996, and monitoring the changes in 2000, 2006, 2010, and 2018. (4) The Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) survey was carried out too to assure the reported data of MICS. (5) Publishing on this problem is scarce; therefore, it was the imputes to carry out this study. This work was done to study the effects of geopolitical factors on childhood nutritional status. A review of the MICS reports 1996-2018 (4) and the CFSVA report was done. (5) Under 5 years malnutrition trends were graphically presented. Malnutrition (stunting, wasting, and underweight)

defined by -2SD were declining over the years. Also, -3SD indicators showed these downward trends. These findings are shown in figure (1). This dramatic decline in malnutrition indicators appeared in the 3rd round of MICS (2006), i.e. improvement in health status. This decline could be explained by the change of the regime and wealth redistribution after the end of sanction. Income level increased, with wide trading exchange that allowed the availability of different food stuff, medicines, health services, and improvement in communication (social media, smart phones, etc...). Findings in MICS 4 (2010) could be explained by the escalating violence. Several articles documented the negative impact of violence on nutritional status. The increment in malnutrition indicators means deterioration in health status. In 2016 and 2018, all malnutrition rates declined. Wealth redistribution, enhancement of the country security situation, and increased awareness about proper nutrition for children and pregnant ladies played a role in this decline. In conclusion, geopolitical factors are one of the major determinants of childhood malnutrition.

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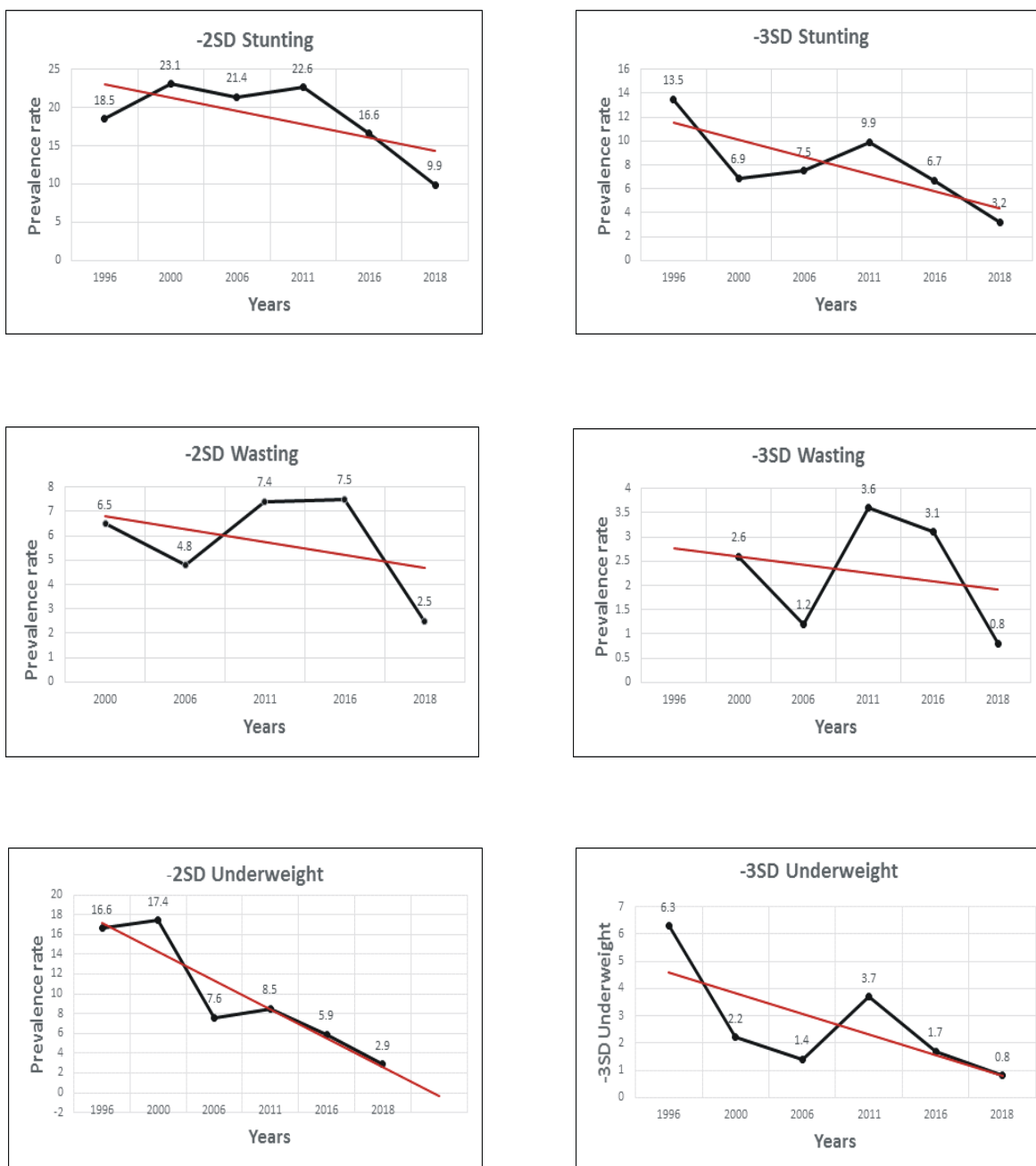


Figure (1): Trends of malnutrition indicators in Iraq 1996-2018.

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