

学 位 論 文 要 旨

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題 目	Nutritional Status and Health of Vulnerable Populations in Rural Southern Laos with Special Focus on Ethnic Minorities (ラオス南部農村部に居住する栄養学的脆弱集団（特に少数民族）の栄養状態と健康)

The current study focused on the nutritional status as well as the relationship between health and nutritional status of vulnerable populations in southern Laos. Special focus was given to ethnic minorities. The study subjects were children below 5 years and elderly above 65 years because nutrition plays a key role in the growth of children as well as functional ability of elderly. Laos is one of the poorest countries where the prevalence of illnesses like diarrhea and respiratory tract infections exacerbate undernutrition of children below five years of age. Since children are unable to secure or prepare food for themselves, they are liable to effects of household food shortage. Being the most vulnerable segment of the population, the pre-school children are at greatest risk of malnutrition since their growth demands high intake of calories and proteins which are not always readily available in many households in developing nations. In our study area, the effects of natural disasters on food security may have an impact on children's growth. On the other hand, since many elderly, especially those above 65 years, have limitations in working to procure food for themselves, this puts them at a risk of malnutrition. Malnutrition has implications on the quality of the life (QOL), well-being and general health of the elderly. In Laos, the percentage of elderly people aged 65 years and over is projected to increase from 5% in 2000 to 14% in 2050. With life expectancy continuing to increase, the size of this age group will also grow. Currently, limited data are available on the nutritional and health status of elderly especially among minority populations. With the above background, the current study set out to 1) assess the nutritional status and predictors of poor nutritional status in children from ethnic minority populations, 2) to assess the nutritional status and functional capacity (ADL and IADL) of community-dwelling elderly as well as investigate the predictors of malnutrition among these elderly.

Findings showed that the prevalence of malnutrition in children from ethnic minorities was higher than the results for the overall prevalence of malnutrition in Laos ((71.4% and 72.1% for stunting and 52.4% and 49.2% for underweight pre-post typhoon respectively in comparison to 40% for stunting and 37% for underweight reported for national statistics)). Although household food security in the research area was affected by natural disasters, the nutritional status of the children in the research area remained stable. This is probably because the household members used various strategies like asking for food aid from government and part time work in order to cope with the effects of poor household security. These strategies could have played a role in maintaining the nutritional status of the children. Female children, younger children and children from households with more than 5 family members being at higher risk of malnutrition. The prevalence of malnutrition in elderly from ethnic minorities was significantly higher than that of elderly from ethnic majorities ($p < 0.01$). There was no difference in functional capacity (IADL) between ethnic minorities and majorities ($p > 0.05$). There was no relationship between functional capacity (ADL) and nutritional status. Factors like common diseases, food taboos and lifestyle that predicted nutritional status varied by ethnicity. In conclusion, the nutritional status of both children and elderly from ethnic minorities was quite poor. However, the food acquisition methods used in emergency situations as well as daily functional capacity of the elderly show that they are well acclimatized to their current situation. Since the nutritional status of both children and elderly from ethnic minorities was worse than that of ethnic majorities and factors that affected nutritional status among the elderly varied by ethnicity, there is a need for area-specific services aimed at improving the nutritional status of vulnerable populations in this area.