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# A Multi-Sector Nutrition and Food Security Initiative in Myanmar Increased Access to Nutritious Foods and Improved Maternal and Child Nutrition Before and During Two Protracted Crises

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# Background and Context



- **Five-year multi-sector program in Myanmar:**
  - January 2017 to February 2022
  - Goal: To improve food and nutrition security among vulnerable households with women and children in the 1000 days window
  - Reached 12,244 households with pregnant women or children under two
  - 7 townships in Magway (Dry Zone) and Ayeyarwady (Delta) regions
- **Two protracted crises:**
  1. COVID-19 Pandemic (early 2020)
  2. Political conflict and instability (military coup February 2021)
- **Multiple studies were conducted in the project:**
  1. Quasi-experimental study to assess intervention impact (before the crises began)
  2. Situational assessment after a year of COVID-19
  3. Food security assessment 7 months after the military coup

## Program Interventions



Practical training on nutritious foods production with organic inputs and climate-smart technologies



Asset transfers of agriculture inputs to increase access to nutritious foods



Improved knowledge and skills on essential nutrition and hygiene actions



Increased access to community-level nutrition services for pregnant and lactating women and children under 5

# Methods

## Program Impact Assessment

### *November 2018-October 2019*

- Quasi-experiment with 3 rounds of data collection
- 950 households (475 intervention and 475 control)
- To assess impact of program interventions on household food security, household food production, and dietary patterns of women and children

## COVID-19 Situational Assessment

### *January 2021*

- Cross-sectional comparative assessment
- 600 female program participants
- To assess COVID-19 related risk and response perceptions and risk mitigation behaviors, as well as household food production and dietary patterns of women and children

## Food Security Assessment

### *August 2021*

- Cross-sectional comparative assessment
- 378 female program participants via phone
- To assess impact of disruptions from the pandemic and coup on household food security, household food production, and dietary patterns of women and children

## Results from Quasi-Experiment Pre-COVID and Coup

### For Program Participants Compared to Control...

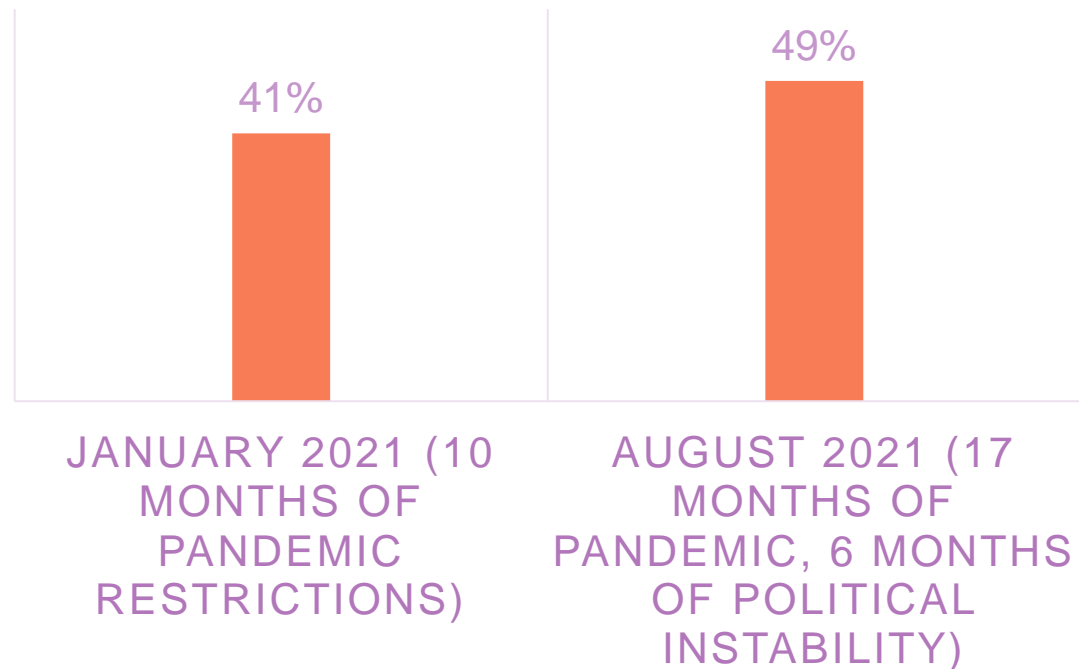
- Significantly larger increase in Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W; from 28% → 75%)
- Significantly larger increase in children's consumption of eggs, Vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables, and other fruits and vegetables
- Larger improvement in Minimum Adequate Diet for children 6-23 months (not significant)



*Household Food Security (HFIAS) increased from 70% to 76% for program households, but dropped from 70% to 55% for control households*

# Impact of COVID and Coup on Household Ability to Meet Food Needs

## HOUSEHOLDS CHALLENGED TO MEET FOOD NEEDS



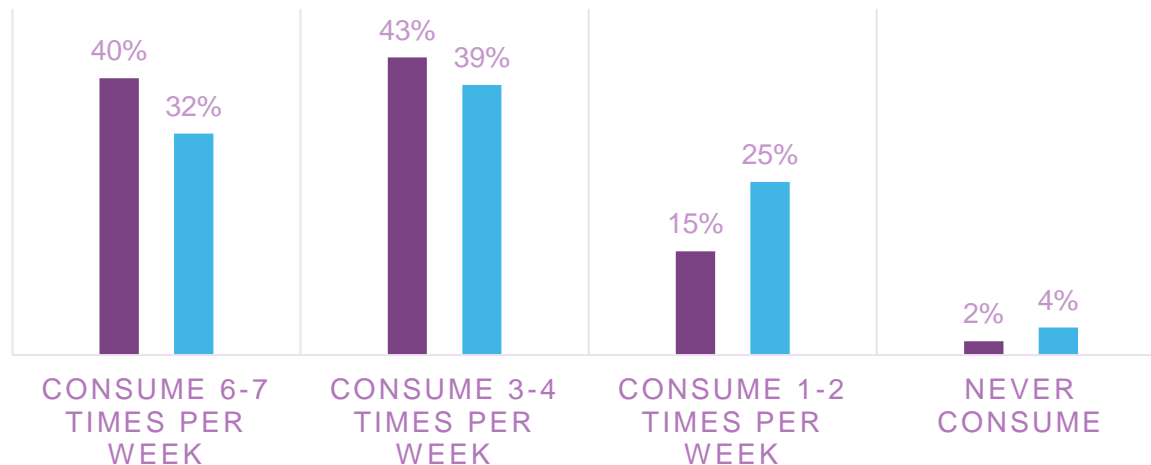
- January 2021 – 41% reported problems getting enough food for the household
- August 2021 – 49% reported problems getting enough food for the household

# Household Food Production Provides Access to Nutritious Foods during Crises

## 7-MONTH GARDEN PRODUCE CONSUMPTION TRENDS FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACTIVE HOME GARDENS

■ January 2021 (10 months of pandemic restrictions)

■ August 2021 (17 months of pandemic, 6 months of political instability)



- January 2021 – 75% of households with home garden
  - 83% of those families consumed garden produce 3-7 times per week
- August 2021 – 62% of households with home garden
  - 71% of those families consumed garden produce 3-7 times per week
- *At baseline in 2018 – 35% of households had a garden*

## Household Food Production Associated with Higher Consumption of Nutritious Foods for Mothers and Children

- Children 6-59 months in households with a garden had significantly higher vegetable consumption than children in households without a garden
- Women in households with a garden consumed more vegetables (not significant) than women in households without a garden
- Women and children in households with a garden had higher dietary diversity (not significant) than women and children in households without a garden
- Women and children in households rearing poultry had significantly higher egg consumption than in households without poultry





## Conclusion

- Program interventions supported improved nutrition outcomes for mothers and children and improved household food security
- Adopting the behaviors promoted by the program helped mitigate the negative impact of conflict and disaster on children's nutrition
- Mothers may be sacrificing food quantity and quality during the crises
- Recommend strengthening low-cost, climate-smart household/community food production and localized food systems

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