



Background

Proper feeding and health practices during the early stage of child development are essential and can have profound effects on the growth and survival of infants and children. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends mothers worldwide to exclusively breastfeed infants for the child's first six months to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Following this phase, children should be given nutritious complementary foods and continue breastfeeding up to the age of two years or beyond. There is strong evidence that shows support to children under five years old is crucial for better health and life outcomes.

World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF) implemented the Integrated Action for Children's Nutrition (INTERACTION) Project, which aims to ensure that children under five years old are well nourished.

From September 2018 to January 2020, WVDF worked closely with stakeholders and local government units in three municipalities in Eastern Samar and Leyte to rehabilitate malnourished children, educate caregivers on proper feeding and health practices, and improve access to basic and health services.

Project overview

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- 1. Children under five in the target areas have been properly fed to improve nutritional status
- 2. Families, including children, have access to basic health and nutrition services

COVERED AREAS



MUNICIPALITY OF STA. RITA

3rd class municipality in Samar Province Population: 41,519 7 barangays covered



MUNICIPALITY OF DAGAMI

3rd class municipality in Leyte Province Population: 35,147 21 barangays covered



MUNICIPALITY OF TABON-TABON

5th class municipality in Leyte Province Population: 11,204 7 barangays covered

SNAPSHOT OF PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



180 children

rehabilitated and received nutrition support through Positive Deviance/ Hearth



510 caregivers

participated in counselling sessions on proper feeding, child care, and hygiene sanitation practices; received breastfeeding kits; and participated in other activities co-organized by Municipal Health Units



303 community health and nutrition workers

or Community-based Breastfeeding Support Group members trained on proper child nutrition and care practices



I health station

that can cater to 7,000 population fully constructed



35 Community-based Breastfeeding Support Groups

organized and strengthened

repaired and rehabilitated

2 health stations

that can support 19,000 residents

I,198 years received barangay

1,198 children under 5 years of age

received hygiene kits across 35 covered barangays



35 barangays

received equipment for anthropometry and child health assessment

Evaluation objectives

In 2020, WVDF commissioned a team of evaluation consultants to assess how the project contributed to helping children become well nourished. More specifically, the evaluation had the following specific objectives:

- To assess the nutritional status of children in the program area via weight and height z-scores
- To determine the percentage of caregivers with good infant and young child feeding practices such as exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding
- To determine the caregivers' knowledge and caregiving practices including health, hygiene and sanitation practices
- To assess improvements in caregivers' access to basic health care services

Evaluation methods

The study utilized quantitative and qualitative data from primary and secondary sources. For comparative analysis, the evaluation data was compared with the baseline data. The tools and guide question captured information on caregiver feeding and caring nutrition practices, nutrition status, access to and satisfaction on health and nutrition services. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions focused on understanding the facilitating factors and challenges encountered in project implementation and their feedback on the existing health services in the covered areas.



key informant interviews with community leaders and Municipal Nutrition Action Officers (MNAO)

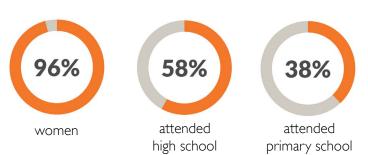


6 focus group discussions with caregivers of children under 5 years old document review, field visits, and validation meeting with stakeholders

EVALUATION METHODS



PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS





6 IN 10 households surveyed reported that they have a regular income

PHP 5,908

average monthly income, which falls below the poverty threshold (PhP 10,481)

¹ 228 respondents were interviewed during the baseline but only 184 were reached in the evaluation. Some of the baseline respondents were not present in the area during the visits, and some of the children also exceeded five years of age at the time of survey.



Key evaluation findings

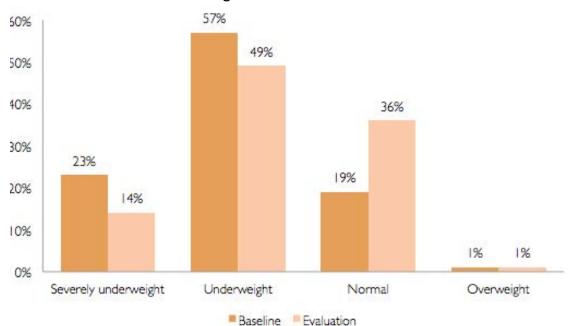
The comparative analysis of baseline and evaluation data shows that INTERACTION Project has made significant strides in improving the knowledge, attitudes and practices of duty bearers and caregivers on proper health and nutrition practices.



Awareness of caregivers and stakeholders on proper child caring

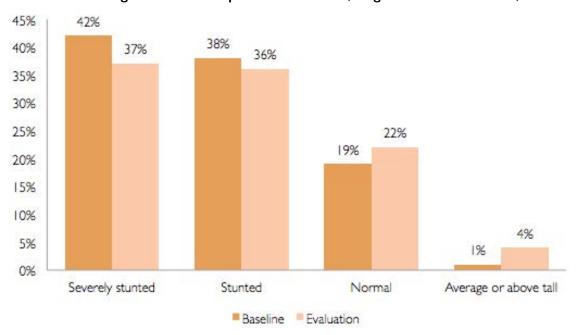
The project has contributed to caregivers' and stakeholders' knowledge and skills in proper caring practices for children. This has helped achieve the reduction of malnutrition prevalence in the covered communities among children 0-59 months old according to survey data. There was also significant decrease in the number of households with malnourished children from evaluation conditions against baseline conditions. Decrease on underweight and stunting prevalence based on the analysis of evaluation survey results against the baseline. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there is significant difference on the status of some variables involving malnourished children during baseline and evaluation.

Prevalence of underweight among surveyed children in the municipalities of Sta. Rita, Dagami and Tabon-tabon, 2018 & 2019



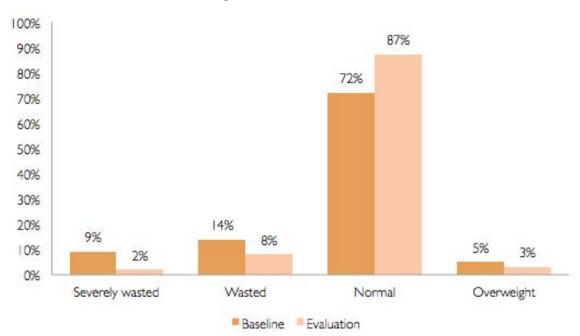
Source: Baseline and Evaluation Survey, 2018 & 2019

Prevalence of children under 5 years who are severely stunted, stunted, normal and tall in selected villages in the municipalities of Sta. Rita, Dagami and Tabon-tabon, 2019



Source: Baseline and Evaluation Survey, 2018 & 2019

Prevalence of wasting among surveyed children under 5 years in Sta. Rita, Dagami and Tabon-tabon, 2018 & 2019



Source: Baseline and Evaluation Survey, 2018 & 2019

One of the facilitating factors that contributed to the significant decreases in the number of children who are malnourished is the implementation of the Positive Deviance/Hearth which allowed for the enrolment of 246 children with 112 children fully rehabilitated to normal weight, recording a success rate of 45%. Survey results registered at least 77% of the caregivers were able to participate in the Positive Deviance/Hearth and 45% were found out to be very satisfied while 55% were satisfied.



Building practices that support proper nutrition of children and infants

The project has helped caregivers to build practices that support proper nutrition of children and infants. For example, the knowledge they developed on food preparation and meal diversity through the Positive Deviance/Hearth was crucial in sustaining their children's improved weight by ensuring that vegetables are incorporated in their dish on a daily basis. The caregivers were encouraged to start their own vegetable gardens in the spaces available at their backyards. This has also helped improve the food supply in the community based on the independent samples t-test conducted comparing household's food supply measured in total number of months during baseline and evaluation conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for baseline (mean = 2.44, standard deviation = 1.49) and evaluation (mean = 2.17, standard devision = 1.28) conditions, t(410)=2.03, p= .000 which infers an improvement in food supply during the conduct of survey.

The project has also emphasized the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding once the child reaches 6 months old. Through the conduct of Infant and Young Children Feeding (IYCF) interventions, the project trained 303 counsellors and volunteers who then took charge of counselling, home visits, and monitoring of 510 mothers and caregivers. The active participation of community volunteers was monumental in building these practices that support proper nutrition of infants and children.



Supporting pregnant women

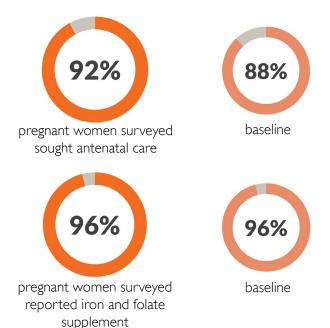
Aside from children, the project also paid significant attention to the nutrition and health needs of pregnant women. Through the Positive Deviance/Hearth, 510 pregnant women received breastfeeding kits and participated in nutrition

WHAT IS POSITIVE DEVIANCE/HEARTH?

Positive Deviance/Hearth addresses undernutrition by rehabilitating underlnourished children using local and affordable means. It empowers the community, teaches mothers with health-seeking behaviors and rehabilitates undernourished children with adequate nutritious meals.

Key positive practices and local solutions are shared with community members through practical education session called 'Hearth' led by a trained volunteer. Undernourished children are fed a nutrient-dense meal during the session that is provided and cooked by the primary caregivers using low cost, local ingredients. The Hearth sessions are followed by home follow-up visits to help overcome barriers caregivers may face in practicing the new positive behaviors at home. **See more information here**.

counselling. This also helped in monitoring the iron intake and folate supplements among pregnant women in all covered municipalities. Evaluation results shows that almost all pregnant women surveyed took iron and folate supplements during pregnancy (94% in Sta. Rita, 97% in Dagami, and 97% in Tabon-Tabon). Iron intake is important to enhance maternal and infant health and reduce the risk for neural tube defect. Pregnant mothers who consistently sought antenatal care also increased, but what is important to emphasize here is the support of the project to establish and rehabilitate health services that can be accessed by pregnant women and the rest of communities as discussed further below.





Improving access to health services

Health and nutrition of children are better supported when health facilities are functional and accessible. In partnership with the local government units, the following facilities were constructed during the duration of the project: I health station in Barangay Tulay, Sta. Rita, Samar that can cater to 7,000 population, I health station in Guinarona, Dagami was repaired to service 9,000 population, and I barangay health station in Cansamada West was also rehabilitated for the benefit of 10,000 residents. Also, 35 barangays were provided with required equipment and tools for anthropometry and child health assessment. The sustainability and maintenance of these facilities were handed over to stakeholders to ensure that these remain functional and accessible to communities.



Promoting community ownership and project sustainability

The community-based approach encouraged participation and sense of project ownership among local stakeholders. Community leaders and volunteers actively engaged in the program and their participation and volunteerism was a facilitating factor in the project's successful implementation. This is evidenced by the number of community health and nutrition workers trained functionally as part of the community-based breast feeding support groups in the community, along with sensitization sessions that were also conducted. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of the commitment of the rural health unit's midwives and nurses, barangay nutrition scholars (BNS) and barangay health workers (BHW) assigned per barangay as they ensure regular monitoring of children's nutritional status.

The active participation of community volunteers also addressed one of the challenges in the project implementation which is limited participation of caregivers due to bad weather, distance of their houses to the venue for the daily sessions, and the need to prioritize daily livelihood activities. To resolve this, volunteers conducted house visits to check in with families and monitor the nutrition status of children.

Recommendations



Institutionalize and prioritize programs that support nutrition and health of children

Local stakeholders could further capitalize on the positive changes observed during the implementation of the INTERACTION Project by ensuring that nutrition and health needs of children are supported and prioritized. This can be

done through institutionalization of programs and lobbying for passage of local ordinances for nutrition. Additionally, nutrition interventions needs to be included as part of the local nutrition plan and local development plan for budget appropriation.



Address underlying conditions of malnutrition

One of the recommendations raised by community members captured by the focus group discussions is to address underlying conditions of malnutrition through economic development opportunities in the barangay. Some of the income generating ventures suggested were nutri-canteen, squash chips-making, that can be spearheaded by caregivers whose children successfully finished Positive Deviance/Hearth. Further, backyard gardening for households could also be further supported to improve access to food supply.



Build evidence on the applicability of the project model in other contexts

There is evidence to suggest that the project model helps contribute to the improvement of health outcomes of children, caregivers, and communities in general. However, the applicability of the project model in other contexts can be explored further, for example, in understanding how it can address high malnutrition rate in barangays that are not included in the first phase or in areas severely affected by COVID-19.



For any questions and clarifications about the project and evaluation results, you can reach out to World Vision's Strategy Management, Impact and Learning department at +632 8374 7618 to 28.



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