

DIETARY DIVERSITY AMONG CHILDREN 6-24 MONTHS OF AGE



3. Promoting IYCF behaviors to 1000 days women

Suaahara encourages 1000 days women to practice optimal IYCF behaviors through its multi-channel social behavior change communications strategy. The strategy includes interpersonal counseling delivered during home visits and at health facilities. A weekly radio program promotes healthy behaviors and is followed by an interactive call-in show where listener questions are answered. Community mobilization activities include events such as food demonstrations and celebration of key life events.



Photo: Dipak Sharma/JHUCCP



Photo: Suaahara Program/JHUCCP

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Recommendations on Children's Dietary Diversity

More children under two years of age are consuming foods from these three food groups in *Suaahara* areas. However, there is much work to be done to improve the consumption of flesh foods and eggs among children 6-24 months of age.

More research is needed to fully understand the diverse determinants, enablers and barriers that influence child consumption of flesh foods and eggs, such as resource constraints and socio-cultural food beliefs and norms. Programs should equally promote dietary diversity among both children and mothers, since mothers are traditionally the gatekeepers of family diets and entrusted with the primary responsibility for producing, preparing, and serving food for their households.

- 1 *Guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child.* Washington, DC, PAHO. 2003
- 2 Central Bureau of Statistics. 2014. *Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, Key Findings.* Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF Nepal.
- 3 *Suaahara* conducted a household-level survey of 480 pregnant women and mothers of children under two in four intervention and four matched non-intervention districts from November 2014 to January 2015. Results can be found in the *Suaahara* Process Evaluation: Program Exposure and Adoption of Practices, 2015 that can be accessed at: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00kwxg.pdf

- 4 P<0.01
- 5 P<0.05
- 6 P<0.001
- 7 P<0.05
- 8 Not significant.
- 9 Data sources include process evaluation studies, Annual Outcome Monitoring Data and routine monitoring.
- 10 GALIDRAA approach is where the counselor Greets, Asks, Listens, Identifies problems, Discusses, Recommends, Agrees to Act and makes an Appointment to follow-up.

Program Information

Suaahara is a USAID-funded five year (2011-2016) project led by Save the Children in partnership with Helen Keller International, JHPIEGO, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs, Nepal Water for Health, Nutrition Promotion and Consultancy Services, and Nepali Technical Assistance Group.

The project harnesses local, national and global expertise and experience to address the causes of under-nutrition in 41 out of the 75 districts in Nepal by uniquely integrating nutrition with agriculture, sanitation, and health care interventions. It works to influence behavior of individuals and communities through community-based behavior change programming with a focus on gender and social inclusion, in order to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and children under two.

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Dietary Diversity among Children 6-24 months of age

Once infants are introduced to food alongside breastmilk at six months of age, a diverse diet is essential to ensuring children receive the nutrients they need. The global standard for an adequately diverse diet for children six months to two years, is daily consumption of at least 4 of the 7 standard food groups.¹ In Nepal, less than 1 in 3 children meet these standards, which contributes to child undernutrition (see Box 1)².

Box 1: Undernutrition in children under 5 years of age in Nepal (2014)

- ▶ 37% of children are stunted (too short for their age)
- ▶ 30% of children are underweight (weigh too little for their age)
- ▶ 11% of children are wasted (weigh too little for their height)

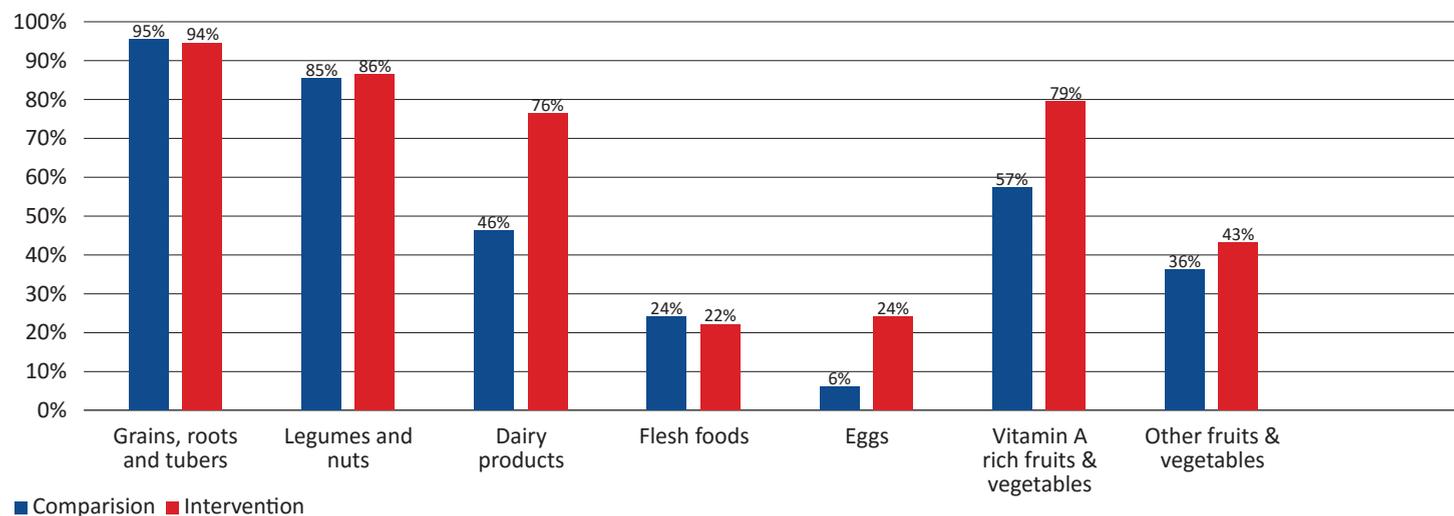
Suaahara's Achievements in Children's Dietary Diversity³

Suaahara has improved consumption of diverse foods in children's diets. In comparison to children in non-*Suaahara* areas, more children in *Suaahara* areas:

- ▶ meet the global standard for minimum dietary diversity by consuming 4+ food groups (78% v 52%);⁴
- ▶ eat foods from more food groups (4.2 v 3.5 groups)⁵; and
- ▶ consume dairy products (76% v 46%)⁶, eggs (24% v 6%)⁷ and Vitamin A rich fruits and vegetables (79% v 57%).⁸

Figure 1 shows a comparison of consumption from all food groups between *Suaahara* and non-*Suaahara* areas two years after program implementation.

Figure 1. Consumption of food groups among children 6-24 months of age



These results provide compelling evidence that programs that encourage and support Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) behaviors can improve dietary diversity among children aged 6-24 months (see Figure 1). *Suaahara* has numerous data sources⁹ in addition to the Process Evaluation (the source that is reflected here), for more results see the Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition Fact Sheet.

Suaahara's Integrated Child Nutrition Programming

With activities in more than half of the districts in Nepal, *Suaahara* promotes optimal IYCF behaviors and provides support to pregnant women and women with children under two (1000 days women) to adopt optimal feeding practices. These practices are encouraged alongside other key maternal and child nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and health behaviors.

The key child nutrition interventions are:

1. Building the capacity of FCHVs and Health Workers in IYCF counseling

Suaahara trains Nepal's Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) and health workers to counsel 1000 days women on key IYCF behaviors at health facilities and in the community.

Suaahara uses the Maternal, Infant and Young Child Feeding training package which was revised by *Suaahara* in collaboration with the Child Health Division in the Department of Health Services. Together with topics on IYCF practices, including complementary feeding, the package also includes training on interpersonal counseling skills (including reaching an agreement using the GALIDRAA approach¹⁰ and skills for facilitating support groups. The steps identified in the GALIDRAA approach include: Greets, Asks, Listens, Identifies problems, Discusses, Recommends, Agrees to Act and makes an Appointment).

2. Supporting IYCF counseling at health facilities, community groups and households

Suaahara's Field Supervisors provide direct support to health workers and FCHVs to counsel 1000 days women on optimal complementary feeding practices during home visits, Health Mothers' Group meetings and provision of health services. *Suaahara* also provides innovative job aids and promotional materials to assist counseling.