



What Food are Available for Mothers and Children Under 2 Years in Nong District, Savannakhet Province: A Call for Sustainable Accessibility of Food in Rural Community

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Background

Poor nutritional status of rural mothers and early-life children continues a dominant health issue. Nong district, one of the poorest communities in Lao PDR, the accessibility of nutrient rich food is limited. This study is to explore food access and the feasibility of future sustainable interventions for mother and child nutrition.

Method

The study employed a qualitative technique with in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD) in 2021, with a new technique that used the nutritional six-food-group flag of the MoH for participants' interaction. Four remote villages were selected. Total IDI samples were 18 participants (pregnant women, mothers of U2-child, husbands, grand-mothers, community health providers, village health volunteers, local authority and local nutrition-related project representatives). Total FGD samples were 24 women (2 groups of pregnant women and 2 groups of mothers of U2-child). Additional observation and village women meeting were performed for re-check and confirming of available food on community by different seasons. The research was ethically approved by the UHS ethics committee and the recruitment of participant was voluntary. Thematic analysis was done based on the scarcity vs the availability of food type and the roles and responsibilities of multiple actors.



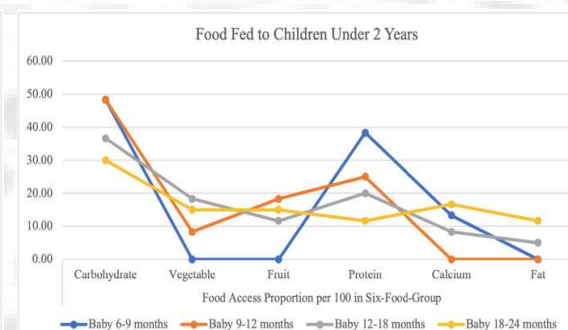
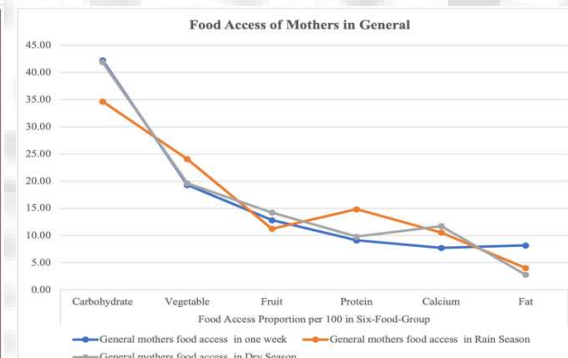
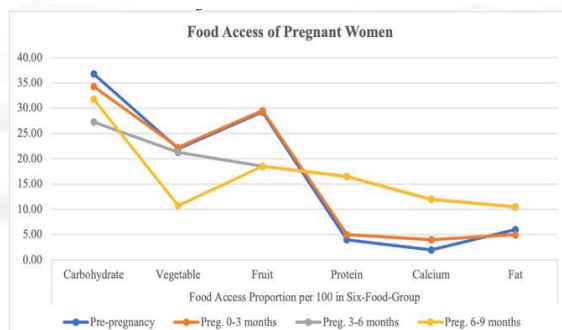
Result

The research revealed that availability of local food is not sufficient for mothers, especially in dry season. Mothers only had simple daily diet, e.g., usually bamboos, rice and sauce. Their children mostly had carbohydrate and rarely received diverse food.

WHAT AVAILABLE	MONTH	WHAT SCARCE*	Season
Fish, snail, crabs, eggs, vegetables, beans, bamboo, mushrooms, and fruits	June	Rice, meat and fat	Rain
	July		
	August		
	September		
	October		
Rice, bamboo, eggs and insects	November	Fish, snail, crabs, vegetables, beans, mushrooms, meat, fat and fruits	Dry
	December		
	January		
	February		
	March		
	April		
	May		

AGENCY	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Mothers	Act upon availability	Find food, feed children & cook for family
Husbands	Decision maker in the family	Earn money & find food for family
Grand mothers	Control restricted food & child feeding	Help take care of children
Community Workers	Local facilitation	Connecting with villagers & facilitate the health & agriculture related activities
Government Partners	Provision of supports	Monitoring and evaluation on the achievement of activities
Acting Sectors	Technical supervision	Provide needed knowledge & skill to villagers & measure how much or how well people can practice based on provided knowledge & skill, with regular supervision
Local Governors	Political Supervision	Provide political guidance and supervision to ensure activities/programs well going along with the policy and satisfied with related indicators

WHAT EASY to ACCESS	The Six Food Groups	WHAT DIFFICULT to ACCESS
Rice	Carbohydrate	Corns and bread
Local & house garden vegetable	Vegetables	Diverse types of vegetable
Bananas	Fruit	Imported fruits
Fish, snails & wild animal	Meat (Protein)	Pork & beef
Small fish & insect/crab	Calcium	Milk product
Beans	Fat	Animal fat & kitchen oil



Conclusion

Pregnant and lactating mothers, and young children seriously require a sustainable accessibility and availability for diverse of food. Knowledge, motivation and skill for accessing and preparing diverse of food is very essential for now for all families. Sectors other than health and agriculture are in need to help work it out. There is a strong need of supportive and interactive programs, e.g., behavior change, regular nutritional coaching, women empowerment, husband participation, local capacity building in production and economics.