

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Study on Gender, Food and Nutrition in Hakha

Report



For the Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development (MIID)

Project: Securing Positive Nutritional Outcomes through Agricultural Extension, Nutritional Education and Institution Building in Rural Chin State (NOAC), MIID/LIFT/2016-003

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1 List of acronyms and abbreviations/ Tables

CM	Committee Member
F	Female
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRET/ MFI	Micro-Finance Institution under GRET
HH	Household(s)
LDC	Land Development Committee
KAP	Knowledge/Attitudes/Practices
KII	Key Informant Interview
KMSS	Karuna Myanmar Social Services
M	Male
MCHD	Mother and Child Healthcare Department (under Department of Health)
MIID	The Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development
MSG	Monosodium glutamate
MW	Midwife
Mya Sein Yaung	Credit scheme under Department of Rural Development (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation)
M1	Men's Group Part 1
M2	Men's Group Part 2
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOAC	Nutritional Education and Institution Building in Rural Chin State (LIFT funded project)
NU	Nurse
PTDC	Participatory Technology Development Committee
Q	Question
RL	Religious Leader
SRG	Member of Self-Reliant Group
SRG TLG	Township Leadership Group
Std.	Standard
TE	Teacher
THE	Traditional Health Educator
V	Villager
VL	Village Leader
W1	Women's Group Part 1
W2	Women's Group Part 2

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2 Introduction

This study on *knowledge, attitudes and practices* (KAP) aims at understanding the complex realities of women and men related to gender, food and nutrition¹. We directed our focus on people's *knowledge* related to food production, preparation and consumption and looked at possible misunderstandings, misconceptions or misinformation in their comprehension. Next, we searched to find out people's *attitudes*, including preferences, tendencies and beliefs, linked to food and nutrition. Finally, we analyzed people's *practices* or the application of their comprehensions and the role gender dynamics play in these practices related to food and nutrition in their everyday life.

Gender differences, indeed, define the core distinctive function of our analysis based on the hypothesis that the social category of gender plays a crucial role related to food and nutrition in the individual lives of women, men, girls and boys, and is also reflected in the institutionalized challenges and chances for substantial gender equality. The study, hence, particularly identifies the differences and similarities between women and men in all areas of the research and highlights the most relevant gender disparities of knowledge, attitudes and practices of women and men related to food and nutrition.

The major purpose of applying the 'gender lens' for this qualitative food and nutrition study is to generate sustainable solutions that take the importance of existing gender dynamics from the individual, household/ family and community level into account, and that considers institutionalized gender (in)equalities that need to be addressed to create improved nutritional outcomes for the whole community.

The findings of this study hint at potential obstacles to the future project activities, particularly barriers to behavior change, as well as at gender-related, untapped resources related to nutrition. The conclusions offer suggested strategies that could produce positive effects at overcoming these barriers, and the design of innovative project activities that enhance the equal cooperation between women and men whilst creating a more equitable living environment.

3 NOAC Project activities and purpose

The NOAC project runs over a timeframe of three years with an integrated approach supporting poor rural households through a combination of advisory services for improved production and sale of cash crops, the promotion of integrated farming including backyard livestock and fish production, kitchen gardening, nutrition education, linkages between smallholder farmers and markets, women's leadership and the strengthening of local academic and government institutions involved in agriculture and agriculture education.

The project, targeting poor rural households, links communities, civil society, government, private sector and agricultural education institutions (Yezin Agricultural University and State Agricultural Institute) in planning and executing efforts for household resiliency to ultimately achieve the core objective of improved nutrition in the target areas.

The project contains four distinct but complementary areas of activities:

1. Strengthening of Agricultural Education Institutions (Yezin Agricultural University, Chin State Agricultural Institute)
2. Farm-based nutrition sensitive agricultural extension education
3. Capacity building for good nutrition practices
4. Women's empowerment

¹ This study represents one of the early research projects of the LIFT-funded NOAC project that contributes to building a knowledge base together with the Farm Systems Analysis and the Monthly Nutrition Calendar collected in the project area in the early stage of the project.

In any efforts towards improved nutrition and food production, activities promoting women's voices and gender equality are needed since women are key stakeholders in household decisions about food, and their empowerment builds a strong foundation for broader development. Improved nutritional outcomes for children will most strongly be achieved and sustained if accompanied by the empowerment of mothers and women more broadly.

4 Conceptualization of the study

For this study, food is defined as food preparation and food consumption, i.e. everything people eat and drink at any time, including the methods related to preparing and processing food. Nutrition is conceptualized in a broader sense, including food preparation, consumption, health, hygiene as well as environmental hygiene. As the concept of nutrition is not existent in Burmese and Chin languages, the difference between food and nutrition was broadly pre-defined by the researchers in their interaction with the research participants. However, the study intended to apply an emic perspective to learn what women's and men's understandings and realities of the concepts of food and nutrition are in each of their own contexts, and to give the participants the possibility to define food and nutrition in their own words.

This KAP study collects opinions and perceptions of the participants based on their declarations and representations (i.e. their statements) covering 11 different categories related to food and nutrition security. These are:

1. Gendered tasks in food production
2. Food consumption and behavior customs ('food taboos')
3. Food preferences of women and men
4. Gendered food preparation
5. Breast-feeding and infant nutrition
6. Food and nutrition challenges and needs from women's and men's perspectives
7. Women's and men's hygiene
8. Nutrition-related health situation and availability of health care for women and men
9. Decision-making related to food, nutrition and land
10. Food shortages and mitigation strategies
11. Availability of financial services/ loans/ credits

5 Methodology

The KAP study was conducted through qualitative data collection in four selected villages out of a total of 24 villages in the project area. One village of each of the four clusters in the project area was selected. The selection intended to cover all four clusters while selecting villages with a high diversity of geographic, economic, agricultural, social living situation.

The research participants in each village were then selected with the support of the respective Community Facilitators (CF) responsible for the community outreach in the cluster, in consultation with the village administrator or village leader. The main data informing this report was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) with villagers in gender-separate female and male groups, in which fully structured questionnaires were used by the CFs leading the discussion. In addition to that, interviews with key informants from each village, i.e. village leaders, religious leaders, nurses, midwives, traditional health educators, teachers, members of the UNDP-supported Self-Reliant Groups (SRGs) or any other recommended person, were conducted to complement the findings from the villagers.

These key informant interviews (KII) were conducted in gender-homogeneous small groups (with a maximum of three persons).

Given the lack of the concept of nutrition in the Burmese and Chin languages, the research questions were designed in open-ended way allowing to learn about what women’s and men’s understanding of the concepts of food and nutrition are through their (emic) perspective, and how the concepts are being used to describe phenomena in the people’s reality.

Prior to conducting the research, the CFs were trained in the research methodology. A pretest was conducted with the translated questionnaire in Hakha town on 17 January 2017 with six female participants from different villages from Hakha township and Hakha city to trial whether the questionnaires were clearly understandable, relevant and appropriate. The questionnaires were discussed, revised and adjusted accordingly after the pretest considering the participants’ and the CF’s suggestions. During the conduction of the research, participant observation as well as transect walks through the villages were undertaken to complement the data collection and to generally observe, confirm or reject any information collected from the research participants.

6 Socio-demographic data of participants

The FGDs were conducted with a total of 97 participants of which 57 were women and 40 men from the four selected villages Nabual, Aive, Surkhua and Bungzung (resulting in six participants on average per FGD). All 97 participants were Chin, and participants from Nabual and Surkhua additionally identified themselves as belonging to the Lai tribe. Participants from Nabual and Aive all spoke Chin Language (Hakha dialect); In Surkhua, women spoke Senthang dialect in addition to Hakha dialect, while men spoke Hakha dialect as well as Burmese language. Participants from Bungzung showed the greatest variety of spoken languages with most speaking Chin (Hakha dialect), Senthang and Burmese (spoken by more men than women). The most commonly spoken languages in all four villages are Chin (Hakha dialect) and Senthang.

Table 1: Number and gender of FGD participants from four selected villages.

FGD	Village	Number of participants	Gender
Women group 1	Nabual	10	F
Men group 1	Nabual	4	M
Women group 2	Nabual	8	F
Men group 2	Nabual	4	M
Women group 1	Aive	7	F
Men group 1	Aive	3	M
Women group 2	Aive	6	F
Men group 2	Aive	6	M
Women group 1	Surkhua	5	F
Men group 1	Surkhua	8	M
Women group 2	Surkhua	6	F
Men group 2	Surkhua	6	M
Women group 1	Bungzung	8	F
Men group 1	Bungzung	4	M

Women group 2	Bungzung	7	F
Men group 2	Bungzung	5	M
Total		97	

All participants were Christians of the Baptist Church expect for one male Evangelist participant. Participants' age ranged from 19 years to 80 years (both females) with an average group age of 45 for the female focus groups and 51 years for male. The obtained levels of education of the FGD participants ranged from zero to 10th standard with only a few female participants from Surkhua and Bungzung not having attended any school. Most participants' school education levels ranged within 04th and 08th standard. The highest obtained school levels were 10th standard in the three villages Nabual, Aive and Surkhua; In Bungzung, 9th standard was the highest educational level among participants.

Many female group participants, particularly in Nabual and Aive, worked in weaving or a different income generating activity, such as casual labor, in addition to farming. Among male participants, most engaged exclusively in farming and only a few participants in Aive and Surkhua earned an additional income through running a grocery store or working as a carpenter.

Table 2: Female FGDs' age range, education levels and livelihoods.

FGD	Village	Age range	Education obtained	Livelihood/ work
W1	Nabual	19-70	4-10 std.	Farming and weaving
W2	Nabual	25-80	4-9 std.	Weaving
W1	Aive	22-56	3-10 std.	Shifting, paddy land cultivation, weaving
W2	Aive	22-25	4-8 std.	Shifting, weaving
W1	Surkhua	38-62	4-10 std.	Farming, weaving, clerk
W2	Surkhua	48-74	0-8 std.	Farming
W1	Bungzung	32-64	0-9 std.	Farming, weaving, casual labor, livestock
W2	Bungzung	25-60	4-9 std.	Farming, shop keeper, weaving, casual labor

Table 3: Male FGDs' age range, education levels and livelihoods.

FGD	Village	Age range	Education obtained	Livelihood/ work
M1	Nabual	28-61	4-8 std.	Agriculture (shifting and lowland cultivation)
M2	Nabual	28-61	4-8 std.	Agriculture (shifting and lowland)
M1	Aive	50-55	5-8 std.	Farming, carpenter
M2	Aive	27-43	4-10 std.	Farming
M1	Surkhua	57-69	4-10 std.	Farming, pension (retired)

M2	Surkhua	60-66	4-10 std.	Grocery store, farming
M1	Bungzung	41-71	3-4 std.	Farming
M2	Bungzung	31-72	4-9 std.	Farming

In addition to FGDs, interviews with key informants were conducted. The interviews typically took 45 min to 1.5 hours and were conducted in small groups of professional peers, i.e. village leaders with religious leaders were interviewed together, so were teachers and head mistresses, nurses, midwives and traditional health educators where available. We included 14 female and nine male key informants. Women were between 23 and 63 years old (average of 37.4 years), men between 29 and 64 years (average of 47.9 years). Per average, the number of people living in the same households with the key informants ranged between 4.7 (per female interviewees)² to 5.8 people (per male interviewees). All interviewees identified themselves as Chin ethnics and of Christian religion. Among women, the most frequent language spoken was Chin (Hakha). Female informants in Surkhua spoke only Sentshang, while those in Bungzung spoke both Chin (Hakha) as well as Sentshang. All male interviewees were proficient in Chin (Hakha) and Burmese languages. The levels of education were relatively high compared to the general education level among participants of FGDs: two female interviewees held a University degree, a third one was finishing her University degree (3rd year) at the time of the research. Among male key interviewees the education levels were lower ranging from 04th standard to 10th standard with no respondent holding or pursuing a University degree.

Table 4: Female key informants' age, obtained education levels, number of family members living in the same households (HH) and livelihoods in the four villages.

#	KII	Village	Age	Education obtained	Number of family members living in the same HH	Livelihood/ work
1	Teacher (1)	Nabual	30	B.A. (Philosophy)	6	School teacher
2	Teacher (2)	Nabual	33	10 th std.	5	Headmaster
3	SRG (1)	Nabual	48	8 th std.	8	Farming and weaving
4	SRG (2)	Nabual	27	9 th std.	6	Farming and weaving
5	SRG	Aive	28	4 th std.	5	Farmer/ Home garden (grapes and elephant foot yam)
6	Traditional Health Educator	Aive	26	10 th std.	5	Farmer, Paddy land
7	Teacher (1)	Aive	37	10 th std.	5	Primary teacher
8	Teacher (2)	Aive	28	B.A (Geo)	1	Primary teacher
9	Midwife (1)	Surkhua	63	10 th std.	5	Retired mid-wife
10	Midwife (2)	Surkhua	57	10 th std.	1	Mid-wife (UNDP)
11	Teacher (1)	Surkhua	28	B.Sc.	5	Primary school teacher

² Two of the female teachers were appointed to the villages by the government and living alone in the villages (with their families living elsewhere).

12	Teacher (2)	Surkhua	48	10 th std.	7	Primary school teacher
13	SRG	Bungzung	48	8 th std.	6	Farmer/ weaving
14	Teacher	Bungzung	23	University Student (distance), 3rd year	1	Teacher

Table 5: Female key informants' age, obtained education levels, number of family members living in the same HH and livelihoods in the four villages.

#	KII	Village	Age	Education obtained	Number of family members living in the same HH	Livelihood/ work
1	Village Leader	Nabual	55	4 th std.	5	Farmer
2	Religious Leader (1)	Aive	29	10 th std.	3	Pastor
3	Religious Leader (2)	Aive	34	4 th std.	7	Farmer
4	Village Leader (1)	Surkhua	64	10 th std.	6	VTA (farmer)
5	Village Leader (2)	Surkhua	47	10 th std.	3	VTA committee member (farmer)
6	Religious Leader	Surkhua	57	10 th std.	5	Pastor
7	Religious Leader (1)	Bungzung	50	8 th std.	11	Church elderly person (Deacon)
8	Religious Leader (2)	Bungzung	35	10 th std.	5	Pastor
9	Villager	Bungzung	60	9 th std.	7	Farmer

It should be noted that there are no female village leaders nor women in the positions of religious leaders in any of the villages; vice versa, there are no male health staff or teachers in any of the villages. Hence, professions and responsibilities of the key informants are gender-segregated.

7 Nabual village

7.1 Village profile snapshot

Nabual village is situated in the Northern area of Hakha township close to Hakha town in the most Northern project cluster. The village is relatively easy to access from Hakha town via unpaved roads. Nabual consists of 50 households of which 40 are male-headed. Of the 10 female-headed households, half are women-only households³. The total population in Nabual is 203 people, of which 108 are female and 95 male. The average household size comprises 4.3 family members. There are currently nine children under the age of two years in Nabual (5 boys, 4 girls), and only one woman is registered as pregnant at the time of the research. 33 villagers from Nabual were reported to be living abroad, i.e. outside of Myanmar, i.e. 16.3% of the size of Nabual's current population living abroad⁴.

7.2 Findings

7.2.1 Gendered tasks in food production

Villagers produce most of the vegetables for household consumption, and raise chicken and pigs. Fruits and meat, such as beef, mython, goat meat (other than chicken and pork meat) are mostly bought at the market in Hakha. The major agricultural crops produced in Nabual are: mustard, garlic, coriander, cabbage, rice, corn, sugarcane, and bananas⁵. In the farms and gardens, the villagers rejected the use of chemical fertilizers (*“promoted by the government”*) and revealed strong attitudes against it. Agricultural products from Nabual that are sold in the market in Hakha are: chicken, pigs, and bananas.

Men and women in Nabual have mostly separate tasks related to the agricultural production. While men are mostly responsible for all tasks requiring strength, such as constructing a fence, ploughing, working with larger cattle, women's tasks are associated with sowing, watering and taking care of smaller livestock (pigs and chicken). A range of tasks are conducted by both men and women, with either gender undertaking most the work and the other in a supporting function, as shown in the annex 15.1.

Women and men have different perceptions about their work responsibilities, i.e. women listed 10 different tasks as their sole responsibilities related to agricultural production, while men are responsible for 11 steps. Strikingly, men mentioned only two tasks (watering crops, raising pigs/ chicken) as belonging to women's sole responsibilities. In men's views, most tasks are being conducted together.

Table 6: Perceptions of female and male FGD participants on agricultural labor division (tasks done by only women, only men, or women and men together) in Nabual.

Women's FGD			Men's FGD		
Only women	Only men	Together	Only women	Only men	Together
10	11	6	2	6	9

7.2.2 Food preferences of women and men

Women and men shared that fruits - even though only rarely consumed – are among their most favored foods, particularly apples, oranges, pineapples, bananas, papayas and mangos, as well as meat (pork, chicken, goat, rat meat), followed by green and white vegetables (mustard leaves, chayote, cauliflower, cabbage, bitter eggplant).

³ Female-headed households in the countryside are typically households led by widows, divorcees or single women.

⁴ Data from MIID, Household Registry Baseline, 2017.

⁵ Information received from male KII, Nabual, 18.01.2017.

Both, women and men mostly mentioned 'good taste' as the major reason for their food preference and expressed the knowledge that fruits are providing necessary vitamins for the body. Men added that fruits and meat provided physical benefits, i.e. they were believed to be healthy, provide energy, "make people strong", and to "help digestion"⁶.

7.2.3 Gendered food preparation

Nearly all steps in food preparation and processing are undertaken by women including pounding the rice or corn, cleaning vegetables, cooking and frying. The men's task in food preparation is only slaughtering chicken and slicing meat. Most meals are fried with peanut oil or sunflower oil, or boiled in water. Daily, all the meals are prepared by women and girls, and most households in Nabual eat three times per day. Men only support food preparation in the households when the women/ girls are sick or busy with other activities, such as weaving textiles.

Vegetables such as mustard, potato, chayote are usually washed (and potato peeled) before cooking and then fried or boiled. Often vegetables are prepared as a mixed 'curry', i.e. fried in oil with spices, such as chili, turmeric, ginger and seasoning (salt, fish sauce, pepper, monosodium glutamate (MSG)). Left-overs are stored in baskets or (open) bowls in the households. Women highlighted that the scarcity of firewood, and the low quality of the cooking oils and the lack of capital to purchase better quality oil were major challenges for their food preparation.

A few foods are being processed such as Roselle (rosalie) that is being dried in the summer time. Bamboo-shoots are being fermented with salt and kept in glasses or bottles to be used for soups.

Local rice or lowland rice builds the major component of every meal. Women do not wash the local rice before cooking but lowland rice is being washed twice as respondents believed the rice was treated with chemical fertilizers. Most respondents revealed a strong attitude against chemical fertilizer. The water used for boiling the rice is used for drinking by the villagers, while the water used for washing the lowland rice is used only for feeding the pigs.

For sick people, women usually prepare rice soup (gruel), or meats usually boiled or steamed and sometimes mixed with egg or salt. Also, cakes or biscuits are purchased for sick people. On special occasions, such as religious celebrations, fried intestines are prepared with chili and vegetables as side dishes to rice. The (chicken, pork or beef) meat is either boiled or sometimes skewered on bamboo sticks for barbequing.

Regarding the preparation and storage of food, all respondents were plagued by the high prevalence of insects (flies), both in processed food and in the stored rice, the high levels of moisture during the rainy season, and the lack of knowledge on how to process and conserve food. Some foods (e.g. Roselle and hog plum leaves) were traditionally dried in the sunlight during the winter and summer seasons, and on the fireplace during the rainy season. Participants complained about the high use of firewood needed for drying food during the rainy season.

⁶ From the male FGD, Nabual, 18.01.2017.



Picture 1: Rice cooking as major component of every meal (Nabual). Picture: Ra Luk, January 2017.

7.2.4 Food consumption and behavior customs/ 'food taboos'

Participants in Nabual village are mostly consuming corn or rice soup or boiled rice with vegetables of the white, yellow and orange categories, such as pumpkin, cabbage and potato, followed by green vegetables, such as chayote, mustard and Roselle leaves, during all three seasons (winter, summer and rainy season). However less of both categories is available during the rainy season. A variety of beans, such as black gram, chick pea, fermented sulfur bean, fermented soybean, and *petai bean* also forms part of the diet, mostly so during the winter season⁷. In general, women mentioned a greater variety of available crops in all categories (see annex 15.3 with food categories). Rice was not explicitly mentioned by the villagers as part of their seasonal consumption, however, when asked about their intake within the last 24-hours, all participants listed rice in the first place. Furthermore, all key informants included rice consumption as part of the daily, seasonal and yearly food consumption of all villagers⁸.

Meat consumption in Nabual ranges between once and three times per week, with mostly rat meat (field rat) available during the winter season (none available during the summer season), or sun-dried beef. Fish is hardly ever available, and consumed of less than once a month, typically only during the summer season in dried form. Eggs are consumed rarely, according to the respondents, but more often during the winter season. Fruits are consumed very rarely, most of which they are available in the rainy season. Related to fruit, men listed a larger variety of available crops (mango, peach, lime, grapes and goose-plums), while only banana and papaya were available in the winter and summer seasons. Nabual further produces sugar cane.

Of all foods, men typically consume larger amounts than women which (in the understanding of the key informants) was related to men's physical work (e.g. cutting of trees) that was perceived as relatively harder than women's work, as well as men's relatively stronger physique.

For infants, a general food consumption custom ('food taboo') in Nabual is to not feed chili or any spicy food to children. In the FGD, participants discussed that children should avoid eating MSG, and are being taught not to smoke or consume alcohol to avoid quarrels and conflicts with others. Men added that black gram and sweet potato was avoided for infant nutrition as it can cause stomach pain.

⁷ From female FGD, Nabual, 18.01.2017.

⁸ This could indicate that for the villagers, the consumption of rice is a normality as well as a priority not worth mentioning.

Certain 'food taboos' and 'behavioral taboos' exist in Nabual for women only:

- **During pregnancy:** Women should not eat tortoise meat, venison as they are believed to cause smallpox disease. These foods are rarely/ hardly available for consumption in Nabual.
- **After delivery:** Villagers hold that, for at least one month after delivery, mothers in Nabual should not eat soybeans, chili or fish paste.
- **Breastfeeding women:** Women who are breastfeeding are advised to not eat spicy food and corn soup with beans.
- **Reproductive health problems:** Women having uterus problems should not eat venison meat and eggplant.
- **Menstruating women:** During menstruation, women and girls should not wash the upper body parts as well as the head hair as it is believed that the cold water might impede the blood circulation.

7.2.5 *Breast-feeding and infant nutrition*

Women in Nabual breast-feed their babies typically for 13 to 24 months while the period of exclusive breast-feeding is usually between one to six months. Men were uninformed about the actual duration of women's exclusive breast-feeding though assumed it was 12 months.

The most frequent reason for mothers weaning breast-feeding is that the mothers need to continue working on the farms and it was impossible for them to carry the babies during work. Men added they believed the babies would not grow well (*'do not become fatter'*) if they were fed of breast milk only. Women usually supplement breast-feeding with boiled rice soup, bananas and Cerelac infant nutrition formula.

To supplement infant nutrition, vitamins (Grovit brand, Appiton brand, Nanakid brand) in syrup form and medicine can be purchased in Hakha town. Families spend approximately 1 lakh MMK per average for vitamin supplements per child in total.

7.2.6 *Food and nutrition challenges and needs from women's and men's perspectives*

Both female and male villagers claimed the need for water for irrigation, particularly during the summer season, to increase agricultural production as well as the need for fencing to protect crops from being destroyed by animals.

In general, the villagers in Nabual perceived their diet as "*insufficient and not nutritious*". Female participants also asserted the lack of adequate nutrition knowledge as well as the lack of good nutrition practices as major challenges to improve their nutrition-related behavior, along with limited and unsuitable agricultural land in the village.

Women particularly mentioned that they would like to grow corn, purchase a corn mill to produce corn powder to be used for producing corn powder cakes, and a sugar cane mill to produce sugar cane juice. Furthermore, the villagers wish to have an orchard farm to produce and eat more fruits. Men highlighted the need for seeds to improve agricultural production, as well as the improvement of agricultural (technical) knowledge as major needs.

7.2.7 *Household hygiene and physical hygiene of women and men*

Knowledge related to physical and food hygiene appeared to be limited. Female respondents shared that hygienic preparation of food, avoiding the use of rusty kitchen utensils and washing hands with soap were important, though they could not explain the reasons why they believed this was important in detail.

Practices of household hygiene are all under women's responsibilities. These include cleaning the house and washing the bed sheets (typically four to five times per year). Men added that they would help women in '*their work*' of cleaning the houses if the women were sick or busy.

Women in Nabual stated the lack of time as the greatest challenge to keep the houses clean as they are engaged in both reproductive and productive activities (weaving), and sometimes in community activities, such as preparing and organizing religious celebrations. Male participants referred to diseases caused by flies, dirty environment and the lack of a communal waste management system as the biggest problems.

7.2.8 Nutrition-related health situation and availability of health care for women and men

Key informants mentioned diarrhea and gastroenteritis as occurring once a year in children under 5 years. In normal cases, the children are treated with 'dehydration powder' provided by Merlin; In more severe cases, children were brought to the hospital in Hakha. Other diseases, such as tuberculosis and seasonal colds were occurring regularly. Tuberculosis was typically treated with sugarcane juice and rice soup with eggplant. In case the sick person did not improve, medicine was purchased in Hakha town or the person was transported to the health facilities in Hakha town.

Participants from Nabual did not complain about health problems in relation to food and nutrition other than a feeling of itchiness after eating frog meat and bee-larva (mentioned by women only). It was believed to be related to their '*blood type*'. To mitigate the sensations, women take the drug named '*Baminton tablet*' (known as remedy against food poisoning, as flu and that can cause feeling tired). To react to itchy skin sensations, women stated they apply salt to the skin area and wash it off.

According to the FGDs, the government provides vaccinations for children until the age of 1.5 years against chicken pox and polio, provides deworming tablets for 2-9 year olds, as well as Vitamin A (every 6 month)⁹.

For pregnant women, a midwife from Hniar Lawn village regularly visits the village and provides iron tablets. Vaccinations are also offered to mothers. A nurse can be hired from Hakha town to deliver a baby at the cost of 1 lakh MMK. A traditional mid-wife supports poor families/ women without any fee and can provide emergency support when needed during pregnancy and delivery.

Access to trainings on Health care or nutrition is limited in Nabual. Only the SRG member attended one training on child care and family food consumption and management organized by the SRG TLG (Township Leadership Group) in Hakha.

7.2.9 Gendered decision-making related to food, nutrition and land

While most women perceived that agriculture-related decisions were made by men who are mostly the heads of the households, the male participants stated that such decisions would rather be made by men and women together after a joint agreement.

All decisions related to the preparation and processing of food are without any exceptions made by women only. In case of disagreement or conflict between the spouses, men perceived that they were usually the ones apologizing to their wives even if they had "*not done any mistake*", exemplified in the proverbial saying:

*"Don't get angry, even if your teeth mistakenly bite the tongue sometimes"*¹⁰.

Women's perceptions, on the other hand, were that disagreements were settled in a rather balanced way with the partner apologizing first who had made a mistake.

In Nabual, only men hold the formal land-ownership titles. There is no formal female land-owner nor joint ownership. Farming plots, and their temporary ownership, are distributed by the village administrator.

⁹ Information received during the female FGD, Nabual, 18.01.2017.

¹⁰ Information from male FGD in Nabual, 18.01.2017.

7.2.10 Food shortages and mitigation practices

Food shortages (mostly related to rice) happen in Nabual yearly between August and October given that stored food is usually consumed by August and the crops are not ready for harvesting¹¹. According to the village leader, food shortages happened regularly and started even earlier, between May and October of every year. In the rainy season, clean water for drinking was often lacking and income-generating activities were harder to find leading to a significant livelihood deterioration during that period in people's perception. Children, women and elderly people were believed to be most affected by food shortages.

Landslides happening typically during and at the end of the rainy season (May to September) can further deteriorate people's access to food. The landslides in September 2015 caused a food shortage that required many villagers to take small loans with an interest rate of 5% to purchase rice in Hakha town transported to the village by motorbike. Male respondents highlighted the difficulties to transport the rice from Hakha (town) to the village, especially during the rainy season when roads were unsafe.

Strategies to mitigate food shortages in Nabual include preparation and consumption of products that are otherwise not eaten, such as banana stems that are pounded and consumed, or villagers borrow food from each others. Women would search for daily labor at farms (daily wages were around 6000MMK)¹².

7.2.11 Availability of financial services/ loans/ credits

In Nabual, AgriBank and the Cooperative Bank are offering small loans to the villagers. Furthermore, the Self Reliance Group (SRG) established with the support of UNDP also supports/ facilitates loans and micro-credits. Many villagers received remittances from abroad. Such credits were used for buying rice, drought cattle, for school education and for health-related costs.

Community support mechanisms are rare in Nabual. Participants knew of the existence of a religious group called 'Relief Sunday' offering financial aid and in-kind donations, particularly food, to poor households and elderly people in need.

8 Aive village

8.1 Village profile snapshot

Aive village is part of the second project cluster and located 14 miles East of Hakha town. Despite of its relatively close position to Hakha town, Aive is reachable only via shadow-sided roads that are frequently disposed to landslides making access often difficult. The village comprises 36 households with 153 people (78 male, 79 female). The heads of households range in age between 26 and 81 years (average age of 45.4 years) and are mostly male (30 households, or 83.3%). Among the few female-headed households, two thirds are women-only households. There are currently 10 children under the age of 2 years (6 boys and 4 girls), and one woman was known as pregnant at the time of the research. Currently, 18 family members are living outside of Myanmar of which only one is a woman resulting in 11.8% of the size of Aive's current population living abroad¹³.

¹¹ Female participants remembered food shortages as far back as in their childhoods during the Japanese occupation in Chin State, from: Female FGD, Nabual, 18.01.2017.

¹² Information received during KII with village leader, Nabual, 18.01.2017.

¹³ Data from MIID, Household Registry Baseline, 2017.

8.2 Findings

8.2.1 Gendered tasks in food production

Aive villagers produce mostly rice, corn, banana, Sulphur bean, pigeon pea, black gram, millet mustard, cabbage, garlic, onion, chayote, most of which are produced in home gardens and paddies for subsistence economy¹⁴. Animals that are hunted by (only) male hunters in the forests are wild boars, barking deers (Indian muntjac), antelopes, bears, pheasants as well as fish in the river. A few crops, i.e. banana and black gram as well as meat are sold in the market.



Picture 2: Typical home garden in Aive village producing garlic, mustard, cabbage. Picture: Tluang Chin Sung, January 2017.

Like in Nabual village, the agricultural production steps in Aive village are mostly gender-separated. Both female and male villagers have a clear understanding of gendered responsibilities of each task. Only harvesting, carrying the rice paddy from the fields, growing corn and rearing pigs may equally be done by either a man or a woman. Exceptions were reported for digging holes during land preparation (mostly done by men, sometimes also by women), weeding (mostly done by women), collecting of wild herbs and edible flowers (mostly done by women), and finally for selling and buying food (mostly done by women). The main crop produced in Aive village is corn which is mostly used as feed for pigs and chickens.

Other than in Nabual, women's and men's perception of their gendered responsibilities matched each other. Women listed the agricultural working tasks in more detail than men.

Table 7: Perceptions of female and male FGD participants on agricultural labor division (tasks done by only women, only men, or women and men together) in Aive.

Women's FGD			Men's FGD		
Only women	Only men	Together	Only women	Only men	Together

¹⁴ From male KII, Aive, 19.01.2017.

9	13	6	6	8	6
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8.2.2 Food preferences of women and men

Both women and men listed various fruits as their favorable food (plum, apple, orange, mango, pineapple, jack fruit, banana) followed by fish and different kinds of meat (chicken, beef). Food preferences among men varied more than among women's FGDs; However, most of the listed foods were not available in Aive, but had to be purchased at the market in Hakha. For both genders, the 'good taste' of their preferred food items was the major reasons for their liking. In addition to that, women believe that fruit "increases the appetite" which was stated as a positive effect, while men believe that fruit and meat is "needed by the body".

8.2.3 Gendered food preparation

Each single step of the preparation of meals were typically performed by women in Aive's households, including pounding of rice or corn, cleaning products, cooking and frying. Exceptions apply for chopping meat and cutting intestinal parts that lies in men's sphere of tasks. According to the men's FGD, men occasionally supported the preparation of food if women were sick or busy. Women did not provide this information.

Women usually wash the green vegetables, such as mustard leaves before cooking or frying them. Potatoes are peeled, washed and fried for consumption. Rice is purchased from Kalay Myo, washed and cooked, the water being used for feeding pigs. Locally produced rice is not washed before cooking. Women also wash the meat before mostly boiling it. Often, it is fried with seasoning after being boiled and eaten as a soup or curry. Female respondents asserted that they tended to overcook the food as this was the "traditional way of preparing the meals". Furthermore, women claimed that large amounts of time were needed to collect firewood for cooking.

There are few food processing practices in Aive village: Roselle leaves, turmeric, chili and elephant foot yam are dried in the sunlight during winter season; mustard leaves, Sulphur beans and soy beans are fermented and stored, albeit only for a few days. There are no indications of eating practices of fresh, raw, or steaming food.

Sick people are usually given cooked rice mixed with salt, oil and sometimes chicken or dog meat, corn soup mixed with pumpkin leaves and fermented Sulphur beans, as well as tea and cake purchased in the market. Ginger and chili are often used for seasoning. Sometimes steamed black crabs ('aivom') are prepared for sick (weak) persons as the meat and fluids were assumed to be healthy.

In special occasions, like religious festivities, women prepare fried meat and fried intestines with mustard leaves as side dish, or a meat soup with Roselle leaves, 'thorzam' (wild sour leaves), cabbage or 'tung bor' (East Indian glory bower).

8.2.4 Food consumption and behavior customs/ 'food taboos'

Throughout the year, people in Aive eat mostly green vegetables, such as chayote, pumpkin leaves, bitter eggplant, and wild aromatic herbs, most of which are available during winter and rainy season, followed by vegetables in the white/ yellow/ orange categories, such as pumpkin, cabbage, onion, or cauliflower. A variety of meat was listed by the participants, including rat meat, chicken, birds, pork, beef and barking deer, however consumption of meet is limited to once a week or even once a month. Fish is available about six times per year, mostly during the dry summer season (February to April). Eggs are consumed rarely and were only mentioned by women as part of the diet during all three seasons. The greatest variety of foods can be found during the winter and the least variety during the hot summer season. Fruit is consumed rarely with only banana available in the winter season. Fish paste is commonly used for seasoning the meals throughout the year. Most people in Aive eat three or at least two meals per day. Both female and male villagers alleged that

their knowledge on nutrient-rich food preparation was lacking and that traditional practices, such as overcooking food, limited the healthy preparation and consumption.

In general, respondents held that infants should not consume any chili, coffee or MSG. Men asserted that people should avoid eating chemically produced (packed) food, as well as smoking and drinking alcohol as their abuse could “*seriously affect health*” and produce a “*negative effect on other family members*”.

Women mentioned the following ‘food taboos’ applying to women:

- **During pregnancy:** Women should not eat chili.
- **During breastfeeding:** Women should avoid eating corn soup, sweet potato and taro (yam).
- **During menstruation:** Women should not have sexual intercourse, and not wash their hair. The use of soap should be avoided for lower body parts.

Men added that women should not wash their hair or bathe during menstruation and avoid carrying heavy things. For men, no food taboos apply.

8.2.5 Breast-feeding and infant nutrition

Women and men indicated that the typical breast-feeding period was usually between one and a half and two years. Women thought that babies would increase their food intake once breast-feeding was weaned. Breast-feeding was commonly weaned earlier if the woman had to work on the farms, if she was expecting another child or if she fell ill, e.g. with Hepatitis B and C¹⁵.

Exclusive breastfeeding was done typically for a duration of two to six months. Women shared that they would not produce enough milk to continue exclusive breast-feeding. Infant nutrition was supplemented with *Gold Power* formula bought in Hakha or rice soup, sometimes mixed with *jiggery*. The food was pre-masticated by mothers before feeding the babies. Tinned condensed milk boiled with water was also used to feed the infants.

Male respondents were aware of the recommendation by the public health educator that nutrition supplements (water and ‘medicine’) should not be fed before the age of six months.

8.2.6 Food and nutrition challenges and needs from women’s and men’s perspectives

Respondents claimed that improved irrigation was necessary for agricultural production, especially during the months of April and May in the summer season, as well as improved protection of the home gardens with fences. The villagers were lacking capital to make improvements to agricultural production as limited income-generating possibilities were existing. Villagers were hoping to extend the paddy land, establish a permanent orchard farm, grow hybrid species and crops that are suitable for the soil in Aive, such as elephant foot yam to improve the nutrition situation of the villagers. For food processing, i.e. sun-drying of Roselle leaves and spices, respondents claimed that they needed tarpaulin and space for storage of processed food.

8.2.7 Household hygiene and physical hygiene of women and men

Women in Aive were aware that cleanliness and hygiene are important when cooking. In their perception cleanliness was related to wellbeing rather than to health:

“*Cleanliness makes people happy when they eat and produces a good appetite*”¹⁶.

Vegetables are usually washed and cleaned before cooking. In the households, women are sweeping and cleaning the floors, of the kitchen and the living room daily. Bed sheets are

¹⁵ Female FGD, Aive, 19.01.2017.

¹⁶ Statement from the women’s FGD, Aive, 19.01.2017.

washed once a month. These tasks are mostly done by women, however men also expressed that if they were free “*they feel that it is also their [men’s] duty*”.

During the rainy season, keeping the household clean and hygienic became more challenging, and cases of malaria occurring frequently in the village. In the dry summer, flies on the food were causing health problems, such as dysentery and diarrhea, and dust created respiratory health problems.

Regarding physical hygiene practices, women shared to wash off with warm water (heated on the fireplace) and soap every night before going to sleep. Women asserted that it is a common practice for lactating mothers to clean their breasts before breast-feeding after they returned from their farm work. Before taking meals, women tended to use soap for hand washing, as well as for washing cloths and dishes which were in women’s exclusive responsibility. If soap was not available, rice husk, ashes and sand were used instead for washing kitchen utensils.

Men stated that they would wash twice a week with warm water and soap and that they cleaned their bodies off dust before going to sleep. However, men asserted that they sometimes did not use soap for washing their hands and faces.

Women and men held that women needed hygiene more than men and that women were taking hygiene “*more serious(ly)*”¹⁷.



Picture 3: Public washing place where women wash clothes, blankets and fetch water, at the roadside in Aive village. Picture: Nora Pistor, January 2017.

8.2.8 Nutrition-related health situation and availability of health care for women and men

Respondents claimed cases of minor food poisoning, stomach pain when eating black gram and skin allergies appearing in relation to consuming bee larva with sticky rice. Men further mentioned feelings of dizziness after eating pork meat, and frequent occurrence of dysentery from consumption of hog plums. Women believed that these food related health problems were due to a lack of “*good discipline*” and “*unhealthy eating practices*”. Men held that stomach problems were caused if people had allergies or high blood pressure. Local remedies against such problems include taking digestion supporting locally available medicine (Digene, Antacil, Baminton), turmeric powder with salt or lime juice.

¹⁷ From women’s FGD, Aive, 19.01.2017.

Medicine, such as Paracetamol and Amoxicillin, was provided by health workers from Merlin Organization and Save the Children. In more severe cases of sicknesses, patients needed to be transported to the hospital in Hakha. Diarrhea and mumps were occurring frequently and associated with “*seasonal change*”, according to the belief of the only village teacher.

Women often use ready-made nutrition supplements for infants (brands: Grovit, Nutroplex) bought at a cost of 3000-10000 MMK (per child) at the market in Hakha where other vitamins and medicines are available. Men indicated higher costs for nutritional supplements for infants of approximately 40,000 to 50,000 MMK per child in total. A midwife from Merlin coming from Dauchim village provided iron tablets (brand: *Ferrous Sulphate tablets*) for pregnant women after the third month of pregnancy until delivery. From the Rural Health Center a delivery kit containing gloves, a plastic bowl and a knife were available¹⁸.

Male respondents from Aive were not aware of any available health care services.

The SRG member and the Traditional Health Educator (THE) attended one training on Mother and Child Health Care, and one training on healthcare and child nutrition of the duration of one month in June 2016 organized by Merlin in Hakha.

8.2.9 Gendered decision-making related to food, nutrition and land

In Aive, all land is formally owned by men holding the exclusive land title in their names.

Decisions around agricultural production were made exclusively by men who spend most of their time working on the farms, while women made decisions in the households and related to home gardening including the selection and purchasing of seeds.

Concerning food preparation and consumption, it is mostly women who make decisions and execute the preparation of meals, while men would support the cooking process in a few exceptions. In case of disagreements between the spouses, women stated that compromises would be made, while men held that it was mostly men who apologize and compromise.

8.2.10 Food shortages and mitigation practices

Most food shortages occurred in Aive yearly from July to September during the rainy season and before the yearly crop harvest. Food shortages affected the whole village: “*Not having enough food is a big problem*”¹⁹. In respondents’ understanding, food shortages were mostly referring to the lack of rice²⁰.

Water shortages appeared yearly in April and May during the dry summer season. Participants claimed not to have financial resources to purchase food, and that lack of infrastructure and transportation means created difficulties to access the markets.

While food shortages were affecting women and men in the village alike, women felt more stressed by food and water shortages as they are responsible for nurturing the family members. To mitigate the food shortage, women take loans from private creditors or financial service providers to buy rice in Hakha town, or borrow food from other villagers. Women also engage in weaving to generate some income, or collect traditional herbs in the forest to sell them in the market in Hakha. Men seek to find daily labor, e.g. as carpenters or lumber jacks, in Hakha town.

8.2.11 Availability of financial services/ in-kind support

Loans as well as in-kind support (soaps²¹) are provided by the church, the Governmental AgriBank, the rice bank (rice loans), and the through the members of the SRG in Aive.

¹⁸ Information provided by female respondents of the FGD, Aive, 19.01.2017.

¹⁹ Female FGD, Aive, 19.01.2017.

²⁰ From male KII (religious leader), Aive, 19.01.2017.

²¹ Soaps are given out by the local church twice per year on Father’s Day and Mother’s Day.

Furthermore, some households were receiving remittances by family members living abroad. The loans are mostly used for purchasing food and paying school fees and related costs for education of children.

9 Surkhua village

9.1 Village profile snapshot

Surkhua village is part of the fourth project cluster to the South and Southwest of Hakha township. Surkhua is 51 miles distant from Hakha town (approximately 4 hours by motorized vehicle) and located on a relatively well accessible road. Surkhua is with 253 households and a population size of 1310 people (636 male, 674 female) the largest village partaking in this study. The average household size is 5.2 people. The heads of the households are mostly male (187 households, or 73.9%); Of the 66 female-headed households, only 17 are living without a male family member in the household. The age range of household heads in Surkhua is between 19 and 91 years with the average age of 54.4 years.

There are currently 49 children under 2 years (25 boys and 24 girls), and 34 pregnant women in the village. A total of 182 family members are living abroad, of which 98 are men and 84 women, resulting in 13.9% of the size of the current population of Surkhua living abroad²².

9.2 Findings

9.2.1 Gendered tasks in food production

The diversity of produced crops was asserted as very limited in Surkhua. Women held “(...) we eat only the vegetable as they are seasonally available. For example, we eat only mustard, mostly every day during the mustard season”²³. Also, male villagers were aware of the lack of a balanced diet that included “vegetables or curry, meat, peas and bean... (that) are not produced in our village”²⁴. Female respondents from Surkhua claimed that they needed to purchase food from the market without knowing the nutritious values of such food or health hazards: “We don’t know if the groceries are expired or not (...)”²⁵.

Agricultural production in Surkhua village is organized along gender-divided tasks, except for sowing seeds (corn), weeding (twice a year) and harvesting that can be done by both genders alternatively or together. For all other tasks, it is clearly defined whether they should and will be conducted by a man or a woman.

Both women and men matched in their distinctions which gender was responsible for which tasks and of the distribution of the various steps in the agricultural production between women and men. However, women perceived the number of steps conducted together or by both women and men alternatively as less than the gender-separate tasks, while men perceived them as more than the separate tasks.

Table 8: Perceptions of female and male FGD participants on agricultural labor division (tasks done by only women, only men, or women and men together) in Surkhua.

Women’s FGD			Men’s FGD		
Only women	Only men	Together	Only women	Only men	Together
8	8	7	6	6	8

²² Data from MIID, Household Registry Baseline, 2017.

²³ Male FGD, Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

²⁴ Male FGD, Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

²⁵ Female FGD, Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

9.2.2 Food preferences of women and men

Both, women's and men's preferred food is meat (mostly poultry but also pork, beef and goat meat) and fish, as well as fruits, particularly pineapple, avocado, apricot, apple, banana, orange. The major reason for this food preference is the taste and respondents held that "fruit contained vitamins" and meat "provided strength needed for hard work".

While chickens are raised in the village, most of the fruits are not produced in Surkhua but need to be purchased in the market in Hakha. Fish is caught in the nearby river stream ("Reva"), however, availability for consumption is limited.

9.2.3 Gendered food preparation

Food is prepared typically by women in cooked or fried modes. Fish paste, chili and MSG are commonly used in Surkhua for seasoning the dishes. Lowland rice bought in Hakha is often washed before cooking, the liquids filtered and used for pig feeding. Vegetables and meats are also washed before slicing or chopping them for cooking. The most common modes of preparation are to boil the food. Women prepare rice soups (rice congee) often mixed with an egg and salt for sick people or corn soups prepared in the traditional Chin way, i.e. young or broken corn are used fresh for soups, dried corn is pounded.

For special occasions, villagers prepare cooked rice (without pre-washing), grilled meat skewered on bamboo sticks, and fried intestines with chili and vegetables as side dishes.

9.2.4 Food consumption and behavior customs/ 'food taboos'

Respondents from Surkhua village consume mostly green vegetables, such as mustard, cabbage, collard and chayote, and a variety of beans, such as chickpea, red beans, monkey-cry, lablab, and green peas. Meat, i.e. poultry, beef, pork, mython, is consumed between once a week and once a month. During the winter season, rodent meat is available on a weekly basis. Fish is consumed approximately once a month, as it needs to be purchased at the market in Hakha. Women stated that lack of knowledge and traditional practices for food preparation and consumption posed significant barriers to a nutritious diet: "We eat just whatever we have and don't know what is good for what and how it affects the health"²⁶.

For adults, no specific 'food taboos' were reported in Surkhua village other than alcohol and the use of tobacco. Both substances should be avoided as they would cause "getting drunk and having quarrels between husbands and families", or leading to "thefts and financial problems". Both substances were mentioned only by the male respondents²⁷. For children, no specific nutrition is prepared. However, all respondents asserted that children should not eat any chili or spicy food.

Key informants mentioned that even though women prepared the food, they would prioritize giving food to their husbands, and rather eat leftover rice and only little amounts of meat²⁸. Men in general ate more than women as they had to accomplish "hard work".

Also in Surkhua, consumption and behavior prohibitions apply to women only during certain times in their lifespans. Both women and men were aware of the following taboos:

- **During breastfeeding:** Women should avoid spicy and bitter food. The latter is believed to cause a reduction of the breast milk.
- **During menstruation:** Women should avoid washing themselves.

²⁶ Female FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

²⁷ Male FGD, Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

²⁸ Female KII in Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

9.2.5 Breast-feeding and infant nutrition

Mothers breastfeed their babies mostly until 18 months, sometimes even until 24 months. The most common reason for weaning breast-feeding was that women had to continue working in the farm land for the family livelihoods.

Exclusive breastfeeding was practiced from one month to six months, usually until the baby did not receive sufficient amounts of milk. Women in Surkhua were informed by midwives that food supplements could be given after 6 months of exclusive breastfeeding.

Women usually supplemented the infants' nutrition with rice powder dissolved in water, rice soup, banana, peanut and sugar.

9.2.6 Food and nutrition challenges and needs from women's and men's perspectives

Women claimed that lack of capital and water for irrigation of farm land constituted the major impediments for agricultural production in Surkhua: *"Our soil is so dry that it is very hard to plant vegetables"*²⁹.

People shared that they would lack any knowledge on the application of natural fertilizers. Men shared that the farmers did not have sufficient knowledge, water, fertilizers nor pesticides to improve their farming techniques and hence, trainings on agricultural technology were needed.

Women claimed that there are no opportunities for daily labor, and that particularly old people faced hardships due to the lack of income-generating possibilities.

Regarding storage of food, corn seeds could be kept for up to six months due to insects and the unavailability of improved storage facilities and technical knowledge. The cold winter temperatures would cause the cooking oil to congeal.

9.2.7 Household hygiene and physical hygiene of women and men

Both male and female respondents from Surkhua had a relatively clear understanding about the importance of household hygiene for human health: *"Cleanliness is very important for health. We can easily get diseases if we don't keep (the house) clean"*³⁰.

Women's daily routine includes sweeping the floor, cleaning the bedroom and the toilet, as well as washing cooking utensils. Bed sheets are washed only three times per year. Men only support these tasks when women are busy with other work.

Food items are usually washed (by women) before preparing meals, however flies posed challenges to human health causing frequent cases of diarrhea. Men also added that the latrines were basic and not hygienic, especially during the rainy season.

Practices of physical hygiene revealed that both, women and men washed their bodies with warmed water and soap between once and twice per week. Morning hygiene included face washing with soap and tooth brushing. Most men stated that they washed their hands regularly with soap before meals. If no soap was available, women boiled tree bark with salt to clean the kitchen utensils.

When discussing the differences in hygiene needs for women and men, women stated that men should improve their sanitation habits as they worked a lot in the farms and forests. Similarly, men held that hygiene was more relevant for women because

*"(...) women love beauty. Men live simple and just in an easy way as it is"*³¹.

²⁹ Female FGD, Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

³⁰ Female FGD in Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

³¹ From Male FGD in Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

9.2.8 Nutrition-related health situation and availability of health care for women and men

Female respondents recalled headaches after eating pork, and stomach ache after eating sticky rice. If no drinking water was available, women noticed constipation and urination problems. Women linked this to a weak immune system and were generally unaware of nutrition-related health effects. Men reported stomach aches and flatulency after eating fatty food, such as pork meat, as well as after sesame and fermented soybeans.

In general, there was no treatment available other than trying to drink more water (women) and waiting for the stomach pain to decrease (men) as well as trying to avoid these foods (men and women).

Women claimed that no support for nutrition supplements was provided from the government. Some families can afford to buy vitamins in Hakha town at approximate costs of 2500 – 7000 MMK per bottle. Pregnant women could receive iron tablets ('Ferrous Sulphate' tablets) from the third month of pregnancy on until the delivery of the baby. From the seventh month of pregnancy Vitamin B1 supplements ('Thiamine') are supplied by the Department of Maternal and Child Health (MCH).

Men were not aware of the availability of any nutrition supplements for mothers and infants.

One midwife living and working in Surkhua had access to a few trainings on Mother and Child Healthcare, provided by the Mother and Child Healthcare Department (MCHD) in Hakha, by UNDP (midwifery training for 4 months, and in 2003 for 2 months) in 2001, and by Merlin (health worker training on Health as well as Mother and Child Health Care) in 2013.

9.2.9 Gendered decision-making related to food, nutrition and land

Most land titles in Surkhua are held by men with a few exceptions of female land owners.

Women indicated that most decisions in the households were made by the women, while men held that general decisions were discussed in a joint process between both spouses. In case of disagreements, men perceived themselves to be more apologetic and compromising than women. Both genders agreed that all decisions related to food consumption and preparation were made exclusively by women.

9.2.10 Food shortages and mitigation practices

Food shortages appeared in Surkhua every year between July and September during the dry season. The villagers do not produce enough staple food (corn and rice) for the year and the new crops are not ready for harvest yet. Rice then needs to be purchased from Kalay. In women's perception, food shortages are creating stress for both parents alike, while men believed that women and children are more negatively affected.

At the same time, water shortages occurred during the dry season with water containing dirt and sediments: "(...) *the water darkens and we cannot have clean drinking water*"³².

As there are no income-generating activities nor causal labor possibilities for women or men in the village, people usually had to borrow money from other villagers or from known credit sources.

9.2.11 Availability of financial services/ loans/ credits

A number of financial service providers are active in Surkhua, i.e. GRET/ MFI, KMSS (Karuna Myanmar Social Services), PTDC (Participatory Technology Development Committee operating in collaboration with the government), and through the SRGs. The Department of Rural Development (Mya Sein Yaung) offers loan schemes of 100,000 MMK at an interest rate of 1,000 MMK. Both, women and men were equally aware of the availability of these financial services. Women tended to use the loans for food, education or

³² Male FGD, Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

livestock farming. Some households could receive a larger loan which they used to invest in small business (mostly small-scale trading). Men recalled that the loans were mostly used for agricultural production as well as for small-scale trading.

KMSS also supported with in-kind provisions, such as rice, oil, or clothes, and one NGO supported the house construction through providing iron sheets after the landslides in 2015.

Other support mechanisms available in Surkhua are provided by family members living abroad, e.g. during the landslides in 2015, a total of 4 Mio. MMK was donated by various family members. The church also supports elderly persons above 60 years with a yearly donation. Family members living in the US also support some students from Surkhua with receive educational support.

10 Bungzung village

10.1 Village profile snapshot

Bungzung belongs to the third project cluster and is one of the most distant villages of the 24 project villages located in the Southeast of Hakha with road and market access to Gangaw being the closest town. Bungzung is 80 miles distant from Hakha township requiring approximately 7 hours by motorized car to reach the village.

The village comprises 141 households with a total population of 700 people (319 male, 381 female). The heads of households ranged in age between 30 and 75 years resulting in an average age of 47.3 years. More than 90 % of the households are male-headed (127 households); Among the few female-headed households, there are no women-only households in Bungzung village. There are currently 21 children under the age of 2 (10 boys and 11 girls), and two women were reported to be pregnant of the time of research. 31 family members are living abroad, outside of Myanmar, of which nearly two thirds (65%) are male, and 35.5% female resulting in 4.4% of the current size of the village population living abroad³³.

10.2 Findings

10.2.1 Gendered tasks in food production

Due to Bungzung's location in a Protected Forest Reservoir Area, the available land for cultivation is limited and water shortage causes considerable challenges to agricultural production. Besides, male farmers argued that "(...) *when we have water, it is often unclear*"³⁴. Respondents from Bungzung asserted that most of the crops including rice must be purchased in the market in Gangaw as agricultural production was very limited and the variety of crops in the home gardens was small. Rice is both produced in Bungzung and purchased from the closest market in Gangaw. Except for poultry, most meat is bought in the market.

Agricultural tasks are usually gender-separate. Those tasks that can be conducted together by women and men or alternatively by either gender are: harvesting and transporting the paddy from farm to village. Different than in the other three villages, the men in Bungzung also engaged in collecting wild sour leaves/ wild herbs and in buying food in the market together with the women.

Women in Bungzung took an active part in the agricultural production, undertaking the majority of steps in the food production of Bungzung. Men were not active in sharing information about their agricultural work even though their main livelihood is farming. Their

³³ Data from MIID, Household Registry Baseline, 2017.

³⁴ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

general perception was that women and men had an equal number of tasks (2) while the same number of tasks is being done conjointly or by both genders alike.

Table 9: Perceptions of female and male FGD participants on agricultural labor division (tasks done by only women, only men, or women and men together) in Bungzung.

Women's FGD			Men's FGD		
Only women	Only men	Together	Only women	Only men	Together
10	7	3	2	2	2

10.2.2 Food preferences of women and men

Women and men in Bungzung revealed generally similar food preferences, mostly fruits (pineapples, banana, oranges or lemons) and meat (chicken beef, venison, pork) and fish.

Taste was the most frequent factor for people's food preferences. Meat was also believed to be needed for a "strong immune system", and rice to "provide energy" according to male respondents. People stated that they liked the taste of rice but also that they did "not have any other food to replace the rice"³⁵.

10.2.3 Gendered food preparation

Respondents in Bungzung explained similar food preparation modes like in the other villages of this study. Women are responsible for all steps along the food preparation. Men shared "(...) we only married our wives to cook for us"³⁶.

Vegetables including lowland rice purchased in the market are washed, potatoes are peeled and washed, sliced or chopped and mostly boiled for soups or fried with sunflower oil and a seasoning consisting of garlic, onion and turmeric. The filtered rice water is used for pig feed.

It is mostly men's task to slaughter the animals including chickens, which are held in boiling water before de-feathered, and deprived of intestines (prepared separately), then grilled, boiled or grilled.

For special occasions, women prepared various meat and vegetable dishes, such as boiled meat, mixed with mustard, Roselle or tamarind leaves, cabbage and tomato salad (seasoned with salt and chili).

10.2.4 Food consumption and behavior customs/ 'food taboos'

Similar to the other villages, respondents from Bungzung consume mostly vegetables in the white/ yellow/ orange category, such as cabbage, potato, cauliflower, followed by green vegetables, such as mustard leaves, pumpkin leaves, or Roselle leaves. Red vegetables, fruit and eggs are consumed rarely. Meat consumption varied between four times per week (male respondent) to bi-weekly consumption (female). Even though there is a river in reach, most fish are purchased at the market in Gangaw as villagers claimed that "(...) the fish stock in the river has decreased considerably since the flooding in 2015. So, we eat fish twice a year"³⁷.

Pregnant women are advised to avoid eating chili, beans and peas as people assume that "(...) if women eat these foods the baby can get stomach ache"³⁸.

Both men and women were aware about the importance of eating meat and fish for pregnant women as "they will get more energy and strength when they are having a baby"³⁹ and

³⁵ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

³⁶ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

³⁷ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

³⁸ Female FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

women were informed about the availability of iron tables for pregnant women through the Public Health Department.

Also in Bungzung, certain 'food taboos' apply to women and girls only. Both women and men held the following:

- **During menstruation:** Women/ girls should not wash their hair and not eat sour fruits as it might stop the bleeding.
- **During breast-feeding:** Women should not eat sour, spicy and bitter food, avoid corn soup with beans and chili as it is believed to cause stomach irritation for the infants.
- **During pregnancy:** Women should not eat hot or spicy food, and avoid coffee, banana, and sweets⁴⁰. KII also stated that pregnant women should not eat meat (venison, beef or buffalo)

For children, it is believed that sour food and guava fruits are not healthy. Furthermore, children of the Christian community are taught not to take and eat the food donated to Buddha statues, temples and altars). Drugs are forbidden for children.

10.2.5 Breast-feeding and infant nutrition

Women breast-feed babies for up to two or even three years. Women often wean breast-feeding after one year applying a bitter taste on the nipples. Most frequent reasons stated why women wean breast-feeding in Bungzung are:

- Women must work on the farm.
- Women believe the babies prefer to eat food (rice).
- The mother becomes pregnant again.

Female respondents were aware of the recommendation of the Public Health Department to continue exclusive breast-feeding for six months. However, they stated that many women would use nutrition supplements after three months of breast-feeding as they believed the babies could not get sufficient milk or remained hungry after breast-feeding. Babies were often fed "*rice flour*". Commonly, both male and female respondents believed that breast-milk was only "*good*" or sufficiently available during the first three months.

Men held that eating chicken soup could increase the amount of breastmilk, only if the "*whole body of the chicken is used for boiling in the soup*"⁴¹.

10.2.6 Food and nutrition challenges and needs from women's and men's perspectives

Women's major concern in relation to agricultural production in Bungzung was the lack of water, despite the UNDP-supported dwell construction in the village: "(...) *if we had a sufficient water supply we would be able to make home gardens*"⁴². Women also claimed the limited variety of crops produced in the village and that most food had to be purchased in the market.

Men, on the other hand, looked at the need to improve timely planting techniques to improve the agricultural production and to increase the yield of rice production. Furthermore, rice could not be stored appropriately and was prone to insect infestations (larvae).

10.2.7 Household hygiene and physical hygiene of women and men

Hygiene was generally considered important by both women and men. The dwell water was used for drinking and river water for washing and bathing. Both women and men had a clear

³⁹ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

⁴⁰ From female KII, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

⁴¹ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

⁴² Female FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

understanding that “*washing dishes and hands cleanly and thoroughly before eating food (serves) to avoid germs and diseases*”⁴³.

Women are exclusively responsible for the household hygiene consisting of sweeping the floors, folding the mattresses and sheets, and washing the dishes. The bed sheets were washed twice per year at the *Reva* stream. Men occasionally “*help women (...) when we don't have work and stay at home*”⁴⁴.

Flies, mosquitos and dust from the road (particularly in the summer season) are the greatest challenges to hygiene in the households. During the wet season, flies and mosquitos would cause health problems including diarrhea, malaria and other diseases.

For physical hygiene, both women and men bath daily using soap, and twice per day during the summer time. Men stated to wash their faces and brush teeth every morning and evening, and their hands before eating meals. For hands washing, soap is not used, per the explanations of the respondents, only for bathing, washing the dishes and clothes.

As in the other villages, hygiene was considered more important for women's bodies to prevent “*bad smell appear(ing) from the body*”⁴⁵. Men thought that women were more sensitive to (personal) hygiene, and giving it more importance.

10.2.8 Nutrition-related health situation and availability of health care for women and men

Villagers maintained that certain foods would cause flatulency, e.g. bamboo shoots, chili and Roselle. There were a few people with high blood pressure who were advised to not eat fat food and sticky rice. One man stated to regularly feel dizziness and nausea after consuming mushrooms, other foods would cause insomnia or an irritated stomach (e.g. beans, peas, potatoes, sweet potatoes). People were unsure about possible reasons of their nutrition-related health problems but associated them with improper cooking modes or incompatibility with “*our digestive system*”⁴⁶.

Respondents had different remedies to address these problems when they occurred, either to wait without any treatment, to take medicine (unspecified), or to drink turmeric with water.

Women were informed about the availability of iron tablets for pregnant women from the Governmental Health Department. Vaccinations were made three times to the babies and preventive medicine was provided for under-five year olds (deworming and Vitamin A).

The female KII (SRG member and teacher) have not attended any training related to nutrition education.

10.2.9 Gendered decision-making related to food, nutrition and land

Most land titles are formally owned by men with some exceptions of women being land title holders. Most decisions are made by men even though women seem to have certain decision-making possibilities related to plantation of crops. All decisions related to food preparation and consumption are made by women. In case of spousal disagreement, women held that they would typically apologize first, while men held it was them (men) who apologized first.

10.2.10 Food shortages and mitigation practices

Women were not able to remember a food shortage occurring in Bungzung. Men stated that the last food shortage appeared in August of the previous year when the crops were not ready to harvest yet and the staple food was already consumed. The last water shortage

⁴³ Male FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

⁴⁴ Male and female FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

⁴⁵ Female FGD, Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

⁴⁶ Male FGD from Bungzung, 24.01.2017.

happened from April to July last year. Men stated that children and elderly people were affected most by the food and water shortage.

A common mitigation strategy is to borrow food from other villagers and to repay them after harvesting, or to buy food from shops with income from casual labor. However, men also stated that the opportunities to find labor were limited if existing at all.

10.2.11 *Availability of financial services/ loans/ credits*

Loans were offered by CP Company, GRET, The Cooperative Department of the Government and the AgriBank as well as by the SRG. Both women and men were informed about these possibilities.

However, women and men showed different ways of using the capital: While women invested in livestock (pig and chicken), in opening a small shop, or in food, men bought fertilizers, hired labor for paddy land preparation, or food.

Further support was also provided by the Bungzung Baptist Church, particularly for sick people and those in need. A Women's Group contributed financial support for the people affected by the landslides and in need.

11 Analysis and discussion of findings

11.1 Similarities related to Gender and Food and Nutrition in the four villages

“**Food taboos**” are existing only for women in all villages with strong similarities (albeit slight variations) applying throughout different stages of a woman’s life span:

- During pregnancy: no tortoise, venison, beef or buffalo meat should be eaten (“*can cause smallpox disease*”⁴⁷), no chili;
- After delivery: for at least one month after delivery, no soybeans, chili or fish paste should be consumed;
- Breastfeeding women: no spicy food, no corn soup with beans, sweet potato, taro, no bitter food to be eaten (“*reduces the breast milk*”⁴⁸);
- For women with reproductive health problems: no venison meat and eggplant for women with “*uterus conditions*”⁴⁹ (undefined).

In addition, “**hygiene taboos**” apply in all villages for menstruating women prescribing that they should not wash the upper body parts and hair as it is believed that the “*cold water impedes blood circulation*”⁵⁰. Menstruating women are also advised to not use any soap for lower body parts, and to not eat any sour food.

Roles and responsibilities in the households and home gardens were divided similarly in all villages per gender resulting in women having the major responsibility for all tasks related to households and home garden production.

Women were also found to be engaged in **quadruple tasks** including the *agricultural subsistence economy* where women play an important role, e.g. in weeding, transplanting, watering, harvesting etc., *productive work*, e.g. in weaving, selling, or working as daily laborers during harvest times, and *community work*, e.g. preparing food for religious ceremonies and celebrations, next to the time-consuming *reproductive work* in the households, e.g. child rearing, child bearing, cooking, cleaning the homes etc. and managing the home gardens.

Men showed overall a **lack of understanding of the multiplicity of women’s tasks**, and seemed to rather underestimate women’s contributions to agricultural production and to community development in general. Statements revealed the attitude among both male and female respondents that men’s work is generally perceived as more strenuous and important (“*men work harder*”, “*(men’s work) requires more strength*”⁵¹). Not only are women’s relatively increased work load not acknowledged but women also face discrimination regarding access to transportation, e.g. most men transport the harvest by motorbike, while women walk with the load, and access to machines or tools which are seen as appropriate for use by men only.

Food preparation is seen exclusively as women’s role and responsibility: “*(...) We married our women only to cook for us*”. Women prepare the food mostly in “traditional Chin ways”, i.e. mostly boiled (cooked for long time) or fried with sunflower or peanut oil with seasoning (incl. fish sauce, MSG). Women also eat less than men and less meat/ fish, sometimes receiving the left-over pieces only after the male head of the household has eaten.

In all villages, the importance of **hygiene** was generally acknowledged, however practices revealed a very limited application of that general knowledge in every day behavior of the villagers. Physical hygiene appeared very limited, even more so for male respondents, especially during water shortages, with soap being used inconsistently e.g. for hand-washing

⁴⁷ From FGD in Nabual, 18.01.2017.

⁴⁸ From FGD in Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

⁴⁹ From FGD in Nabual, 18.01.2017.

⁵⁰ Explanation provided by MIID project staff from Chin State, 16.02.2017.

⁵¹ From FGDs in the four villages (18.- 24.01.2017).

prior to consuming meals or physical hygiene. Men's and women's attitudes revealed that physical hygiene was given higher importance for women while men's physical hygiene appeared to be undervalued ("*(...) women love beauty. Men live simple and just in an easy way as it is.*")⁵² Women also complained about the need for protection from flies during summer season, and mosquitos during rainy season and the possible links to sicknesses such as diarrhea, dysentery, skin irritations occurring frequently in all villages, according to the respondents.

Knowledge on **infant and child nursing** and bearing appeared to be very limited and medical support in most villages unavailable. Child nursing practices, and particularly **breastfeeding** practices, showed to be insufficient with many respondents reporting that many women had to wean breast-feeding at an early child age, i.e. between one and six months after delivery. The major reasons provided for the early abruption of breast-feeding were:

- Farm work ("*(...) not possible (for women) to carry babies*"),
- "Insufficient breast milk",
- "Expecting another baby", or
- Sickness of the mother (Hepatitis B or C).

Decision-making structures were very similar in all villages with men making far most decisions related to agriculture as well as productive and community issues, while women are responsible decision-makers for all issues related to food preparation, consumption and intra-household issues.

Food shortages were reported in all villages happening regularly, i.e. on a yearly basis, and are mostly relating to rice and corn as well as water shortages. Most villagers agreed that children were mostly affected by food shortages, followed by women given their overall responsibility of preparing food and nurturing the families. **Mitigation strategies** were analogous in the four villages: Villagers tend to borrow food from others or seek micro-credits or loans from either formal or informal financial sources that can be repaid after the next harvest season. While women have increased access to formal loans due to stereotyping of women as financial managers in the households, and are hence being favored by any micro-credit institutions. However, men are usually deciding about the use of loans.

12 Differences related to Gender and Food and Nutrition in the four villages

Agricultural production and crop availability for household consumption differs affecting the consumption patterns and nutritional value of people's diets in the four villages. Naturally, also the **preferences of food** vary, however most respondents shared liking various fruits, meat and fish – mostly products that are rather absent in the common diet of the villagers. Also, the availability of meat and fish varies in each village, with Nabual having most availability of meat and fish, followed by Aive and Surkhua and the least in Bungzung.

Income-generating activities further differ as only in Nabual and Aive women were able to perform productive work of weaving textile next to casual or daily labor sought for by most villagers during the harvest period.

While the general lack of knowledge and adequate practices related to hygiene and health care was found similarly in all four villages, the **frequency of physical hygiene** practices varied, with Bungzung showing the most frequent practices (e.g. body washing, showering), followed by Aive and least in Surkhua. Interestingly, **health problems** were reported most in Bungzung where next to frequent cases of diarrhea and dysentery, also malaria was appearing, and least health problems were claimed in Nabual.

⁵² From Male FGD in Surkhua, 20.01.2017.

Nabual also has the highest number of **family members living abroad**, outside of Myanmar, and Bungzung the least which could be linked to remittances being sent to the households. The FGDs showed that, if money was available such as micro-credits or loans, it was mostly used for buying food, seeds, health care and school education of children.

Table 10: Percentage of village population living abroad, i.e. outside of Myanmar, in view of the currently existing total village population.

Village	% of family members living abroad
Nabual	16.3%
Aive	11.8%
Surkhua	13.9%
Bungzung	4.4%

13 Strategic and practical barriers to women’s equal participation and empowerment for improved nutrition

From this study, both, strategic and practical barriers to women’s equal participation and empowerment became inherent. Strategic barriers are those that relate to underlying structures or conditions that present obstacles to gender equality. Practical barriers are more visible or tangible factors, however can be easily overlooked.

13.1.1 Strategic barriers

1. Decision-making practices and underlying beliefs and norms of men as leader and women as their followers are impacting on the possibilities for women to equally participate in trainings, meetings, decision-making processes in the community, and related to equal food (meat) consumption.

2. Women lack access to various resources compared to men. Women are usually not participating or in significantly lower numbers than men in mass meetings where community decisions are being made. Women also receive less information about community decisions, and have less decision-making power related to agriculture, community development, trainings, education, income, labor, or the use of vehicles.

3. Women are systematically and traditionally excluded from owning land titles in Hakha where all land title owners in the villagers are male and the customary land distribution system is traditionally favoring men as receivers of the plots⁵³. Especially for female-headed households, landlessness can exacerbate vulnerability and poverty⁵⁴.

4. Due to underlying gender norms (and women’s multiple tasks) women’s lack of exposure to knowledge, trainings, meetings and other resources, leads to a lack of agency for women to become fully engaged active citizens contributing to development and to improved nutrition. Gender equality awareness and understanding of equality is low, based on a traditionally organized society.

⁵³ Inheritance laws for property including land are generally guided by the customary law based on the ‘Chin (Special Divisions) Act’ dating back to 1948 (amended in 1957) following patrilineal inheritance practices.

⁵⁴ The rate of female-headed households varies in the four villages, with the lowest rate in Bungzung with 9.9%, 16.6% in Aive, 20% in Nabual, and the highest figure of 26.1% in Surkhua.

5. Some traditional beliefs and practices related to “food taboos” and “hygiene taboos” represent misperceptions and lack of knowledge on health care and nutrition. These apply to women only and can produce negative effects on women’s and infants’ development.

6. Institutional support mechanisms (including trainings and awareness) for women are lacking or inaccessible, e.g. models of farm sharing, baby sitting, crèches, early childhood development centers/ kindergartens), improved breast-feeding practices and techniques.

13.1.2 Practical barriers

1. Women shared to be overburdened with accomplishing a **quadruple** role including agricultural subsistence economy, productive work, community work and reproductive work. The unequal distribution of tasks has a disadvantageous effect on women.

2. Women frequently encounter challenges to balance productive and reproductive tasks, and are complaining about lack of time, particularly so related to breast-feeding and child nursing. Traditional food preparation modes prove to be particularly time consuming and inefficient (fire wood). Men, on the other hand, have more leisure time but rarely engage in additional income-generating activities.

3. The sharing of responsibilities between wives and husbands is not practiced. However, the topic has recently been taken up, and sharing of household tasks seems socially acceptable for men if women contribute to income generation (as was found in Nabual and Aive).

4. Infant nutrition, breast-feeding practices insufficient, knowledge of breastfeeding benefits and techniques is missing.

5. Reproductive Health Care awareness is very limited and health care is often practiced through ‘traditional midwives’ or ‘traditional health educators’, who are often reproducing traditional practices having a negative health effect on women, e.g. prohibition of hygiene during menstruation.

6. Infants do not receive the necessary nutrition and care at the crucial stage of early childhood development.

7. Hygiene practices are performed with limited frequency and extent, by both, men and women, and particularly prohibited or restricted for women during menstruation and lactation periods.

14 Recommendations for NOAC project

1. **Engaging in participatory approach** with the communities on the integration of gender aspects and gender dynamics in agriculture and nutrition related activities should be fostered. Members of the communities play the central role in the production and multiplication of knowledge related to gender and nutrition and only with their active participation from within the communities, can change be achieved. Local organizations and individuals, such as SRG members, religious leaders, and representatives of women’s groups where they are existing, should be targeted for trainings and become leaders to multiply the information related to the promotion of improved gender equality and nutrition within their communities.

2. **Women’s agency and leadership on nutrition** and related topics of agricultural production, hygiene, waste management need to be enhanced from a gender perspective. Targeting women to enable them to make informed decisions about nutrition and livelihoods will contribute to their empowerment and improved status in the society. However, the project should pay attention to the multiple roles and

critical workload of most women, and support creating measures that lower women's workload and work time which, in turn, will make them more amenable and accessible for trainings, community decision-making processes and income-generating activities.

3. **Developing institutional support mechanisms** especially for women and children on the village level, such as baby sitting models, e.g. on a rotational basis implemented by community members, crèches and early childhood development centers (e.g. mobile centers set up during harvest times), kindergartens, as well as models of farm-sharing of women could considerably reduce women's work burden and free more time for them to participate in meetings and decision-making processes in the communities. Such models should be introduced and discussed with village representatives and members of women's groups and SRGs.
4. **A series of practical trainings** for women should be designed on improved cooking methods, healthy meal preparation (new recipes), reproductive health, healthcare, improved breastfeeding practices, infant nurturing, child care, hygiene, financial management and financial planning skills. Ideally, this new information would be combined with the introduction of labor-saving technologies, such as improved cook stoves, and gender-sensitive mechanization tools.
5. **Awareness raising** talks and activities need to be conducted for women and men separately in connection to nutrition-related trainings, on topics of: decision-making, gender equality and gender roles, with the aim of increasing women's involvement outside of the domestic sphere and empowering women's voices, eventually providing opportunities to reduce poverty and develop the communities. New models of sharing of responsibilities and workloads between women and men should be introduced. All awareness raising activities and trainings should be supported through adequately designed behavior change communication tools, such as the production of songs in local languages and easy-to-use training material.
6. The project should **systematically collect sex-disaggregated data** throughout all research training and M&E activities, including data on particularly vulnerable groups, such as female-headed households, as these are more likely to live in poverty and more often landless than other households, or elderly women. A gender-sensitive daily activity cycle could be conducted on a regular basis with communities in order to monitor changes over time.
7. Through **advocating and networking on gender equality** among Chin civil society and local government, the project could contribute to eradicating the existing gender-discriminative legal provisions in the Chin Act, particularly the challenges for women to inherit land and property, and to slowly reach an alignment of the existing norms and practices with international and national standards of gender equality and women's rights.

15 Annex

15.1 Gendered division of labor in food production in four villages

15.1.1 Nabual village

Table 11: Gendered division of labor in food production in Nabual.

Production of food	Women	Men	Details
1. Home gardening			
Fencing the garden		✓	Men carry heavy wood and bamboo from the forest
Land preparation (tillage) and slashing		✓	
Sowing the species	✓		
Weeding	✓	✓	
Watering	✓		
Applying manure (i.e. pig/ chicken manure) [no use of chemical fertilizer]	✓		
Seed broadcasting and planting	✓	✓	
2. Agricultural production			
2.1. Shifting Cultivation (upland)			
Paddy land preparation (ploughing)		✓	Men usually do the hard work like clearing the land, fencing, ploughing, burning, other works, men and women share.
Slashing/burning/ fencing/ clearing		✓	
Sowing corn	✓	✓	
Seed broadcasting and planting, weeding (2-3 times/ year)	✓	✓	These are mostly seen as women's tasks where men would help when needed.
Harvesting	✓	✓	When harvesting women mostly harvest (stripping plants from the stalk) and men carry products back from the land.
2.2. Permanent land			
Tilling and ploughing the land		✓	
Germinating		✓	
Transplanting	✓		
Weeding [using small tools]	✓		Mostly done by women, sometimes supported by men.
Harvesting	✓	✓	
3. Transportation of food			
Bringing agricultural products from farm to home, selling in other places	✓	✓	Men carry corn and paddy; women carry some goods to sell.
Carrying and loading products		✓	Men use motorbike, horses and bullock cart, women usually help using baskets.
4. Raising animals			

Cattle, buffalos and horses, mython		✓	Men mostly take care of big cattle (including selling of them).
Pigs and chicken	✓		Female usually raise home animals and livestock.
Chicken and pigsty building		✓	
Buying piglet		✓	
Feeding of pig and chicken	✓	✓	
Selling of pig/ chicken	✓	✓	Men mostly sell pig and women sell chicken.
5. Hunting			
Wild boar, barking deer, birds, bear		✓	Only done by men.
6. Fishing			
Small local fish from river	✓	✓	Men use fishing hook, rod and net and women use basket for catching fish.
7. Collecting/ gathering food			
Fetching water	✓	✓	Both men and women help each other.
Fig, wild sour leave, floral herbs (Hitchenia glauca) and mushrooms	✓		
8. Selling/ buying food			
Selling banana, sugarcane, guava, fig, rat meat	✓		Women carry and sell goods in Hakha.
Men help carrying when selling food	✓	✓	

15.1.2 Aive village

Table 12: Gendered division of labor in agricultural production in Aive.

Production of food	Wome n	Men	Details
1. Home gardening			
Land preparation		✓	
Fencing		✓	
Soil excavation and digging holes		✓	Mostly done by men, sometimes also by women.
Seed sowing and growing crops	✓		
Watering crops	✓		
Applying organic fertilizer	✓		Pig and chicken manures
Weeding	✓		
2. Agricultural production			
2.1. Shifting cultivation			
Slashing and burning		✓	
Ploughing the paddy land		✓	

Making nursery plots		✓	
Building hut		✓	
Growing corn	✓	✓	
Weeding (twice a year)	✓		Mostly done by women, sometimes also by men.
Scaring away the crows		✓	
Harvesting	✓	✓	
2.2. Permanent land (lowland)			
Making tillage and ploughing		✓	
Constructing terraces		✓	
Building connection of water (irrigation)		✓	
Making nursery plots		✓	
Planting paddy	✓		
Weeding	✓		Mostly done by women, sometimes also by men.
Harvesting	✓		
3. Transportation of food			
Paddy	✓	✓	Carrying paddy on their own back from the farm. Distance of farm to village is 1.5 miles to 2 miles.
4. Raising animals			
Cow (cattle)		✓	Cattle keeping and caring by men.
Pig	✓	✓	Pig rearing by both men and women.
Pig and chicken sty construction		✓	
Feeding pigs and chicken	✓		
Selling of cattle and pig		✓	
Selling of chicken	✓		
5. Hunting			
Barking deer, wild boars, porcupine, birds, fowls and wild dog		✓	
6. Fishing			
Catching fishes by basket	✓		
Catching fishes by net		✓	
7. Collecting/ gathering food			
Wild herbs, edible flowers, buds, gooseberries, U Phyu	✓		Mostly done by women, men sometimes also collect.
8. Selling/ buying food			
Selling and buying food, rice, fruit (banana, eggplant, corn, black gram, sesame, pigeon peas)	✓		Mostly done by women, sometimes men carry by bike.

15.1.3 Surkhua village

Table 13: Gendered division of labor in agricultural production in Surkhua.

Production of food	Women	Men	Details
1. Home gardening			
Fencing the garden and land preparation (tillage)		✓	
Digging holes		✓	
Correcting the holes	✓		
Folding bed	✓		
Sowing the species	✓	✓	
Weeding	✓		
Watering	✓		
Carrying wood and bamboo from forest		✓	
Applying manure (i.e., pig/ chicken manure)	✓		
2. Agricultural production			
2.1. Shifting Cultivation (upland)			
Slash and burn		✓	
Building hut		✓	
Sowing corn seeds	✓	✓	
Weeding (twice per year)	✓	✓	
Harvesting	✓		Mostly done by women, in exceptions also by men.
Carrying the harvest to the hut		✓	Mostly done by men, in exceptions also by women.
2.2. Permanent land (lowland)			
Tilling and ploughing the land		✓	
Germinating		✓	
Transplanting	✓		
Weeding	✓	✓	
Harvesting	✓	✓	
3. Transportation of food			
Farm to home	✓	✓	Usually, men carry the harvest by bike or on their back, women carry it mostly on their back. If the farm is close to the village, trucks can carry the agricultural products at a cost of MMK 500 per bag.
4. Raising animals			

Cattle, buffalos and horses		✓	Men mostly take care of big cattle (including selling of them).
Chicken and pigsty building		✓	
Buying piglet		✓	
Feeding of pig and chicken	✓		Feeding of pig is mostly taking care by women but sometimes men also do when the women is not free or sick or traveling.
Selling of pig/ chicken	✓		Women sell the pig but the money is controlled and decided upon by men.
5. Hunting			
Barking deer, wild pig/boar, wild deer (saza), wild goat, birds (partridge, golden pheasant and pheasant)		✓	
6. Fishing			
Small local fish	✓	✓	Men use fishing hook, rod and net and women use baskets for catching fish.
7. Collecting/ gathering food			
Flowering herbs (Hitchenia glauca)	✓		
Millet	✓		Collected in bamboo baskets.
Sulphur bean	✓		
8. Selling/ buying food			
Selling mustard, cabbage, other vegetables	✓		
Chicken, cattle, corn and sesame		✓	Products/ cattle are sold both in Surkhua village and in another village, but sesame is sold only in Surkhua village.

15.1.4 Bungzung village

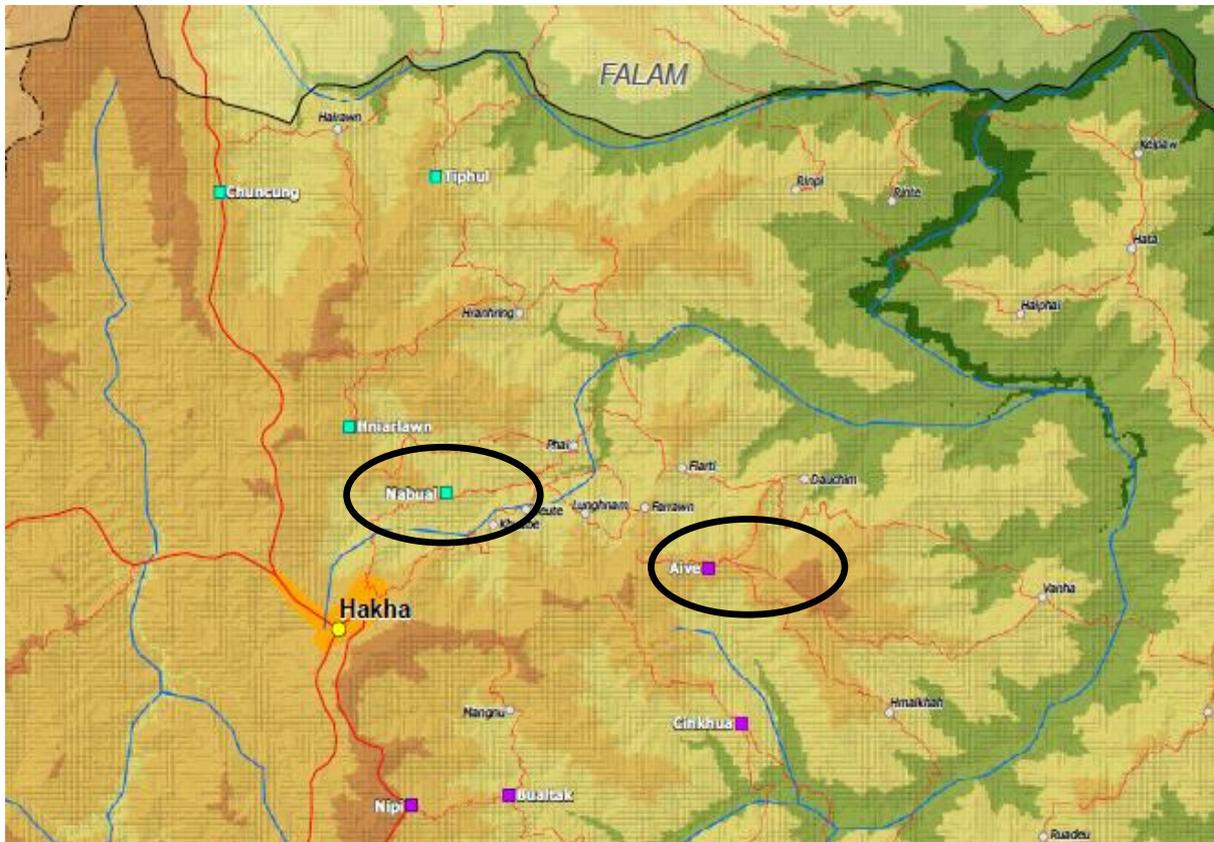
Table 14: Gendered division of labor in agricultural production in Bungzung.

Production of food	Women	Men	Details
Home gardening			
Fencing the garden and land preparation (tillage)		✓	
Carrying wood and bamboo from forest		✓	
Sowing the species	✓		
Weeding	✓		
Watering	✓		

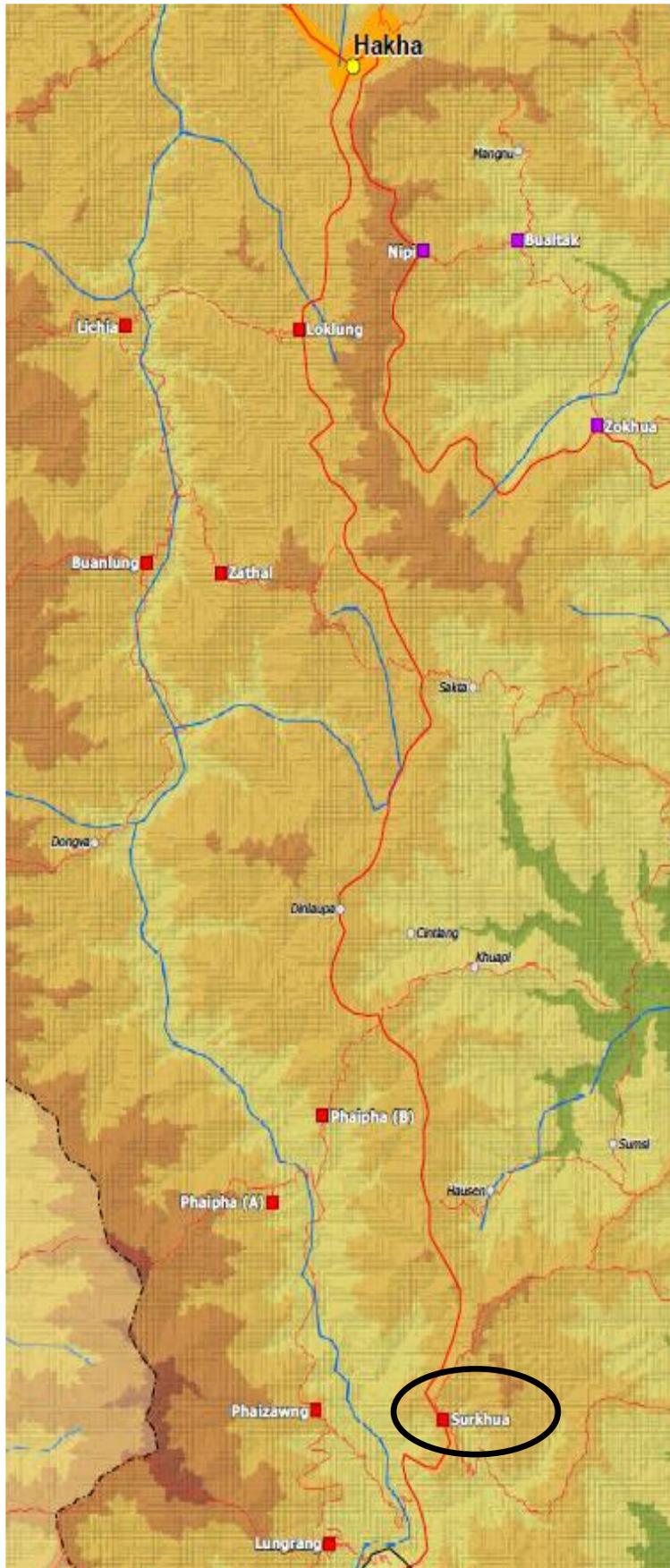
Applying manure (pig/ chicken manure)	✓		
Agricultural production			
Ploughing		✓	
Sowing the paddy plant	✓		
Weeding	✓		Men sometimes help women.
Harvesting	✓	✓	
Winnowing	✓		
Transportation of food			
Rice transportation from paddy to village with basket	✓	✓	Men carry by motorbike, women walk.
Raising animals			
Cattle and buffalo		✓	
Buying of species (e.g. piglet, calf etc.)		✓	
Construction of pig/ chicken sty		✓	
Feeding of pig, chicken and pet	✓		
Hunting			
Deer, pheasant, wild boar, birds		✓	
Fishing			
River fish with net, rod or hook		✓	
Basket fishing	✓		
Collecting/ gathering food			
Wild ginger, wild herbs, Hitchenia Glauca	✓		
Wild sour leaves	✓	✓	Both men and women collect together.
Selling/ buying food			
Most food is bought (even vegetables)	✓	✓	

15.2 Maps of selected villages in the four project clusters.

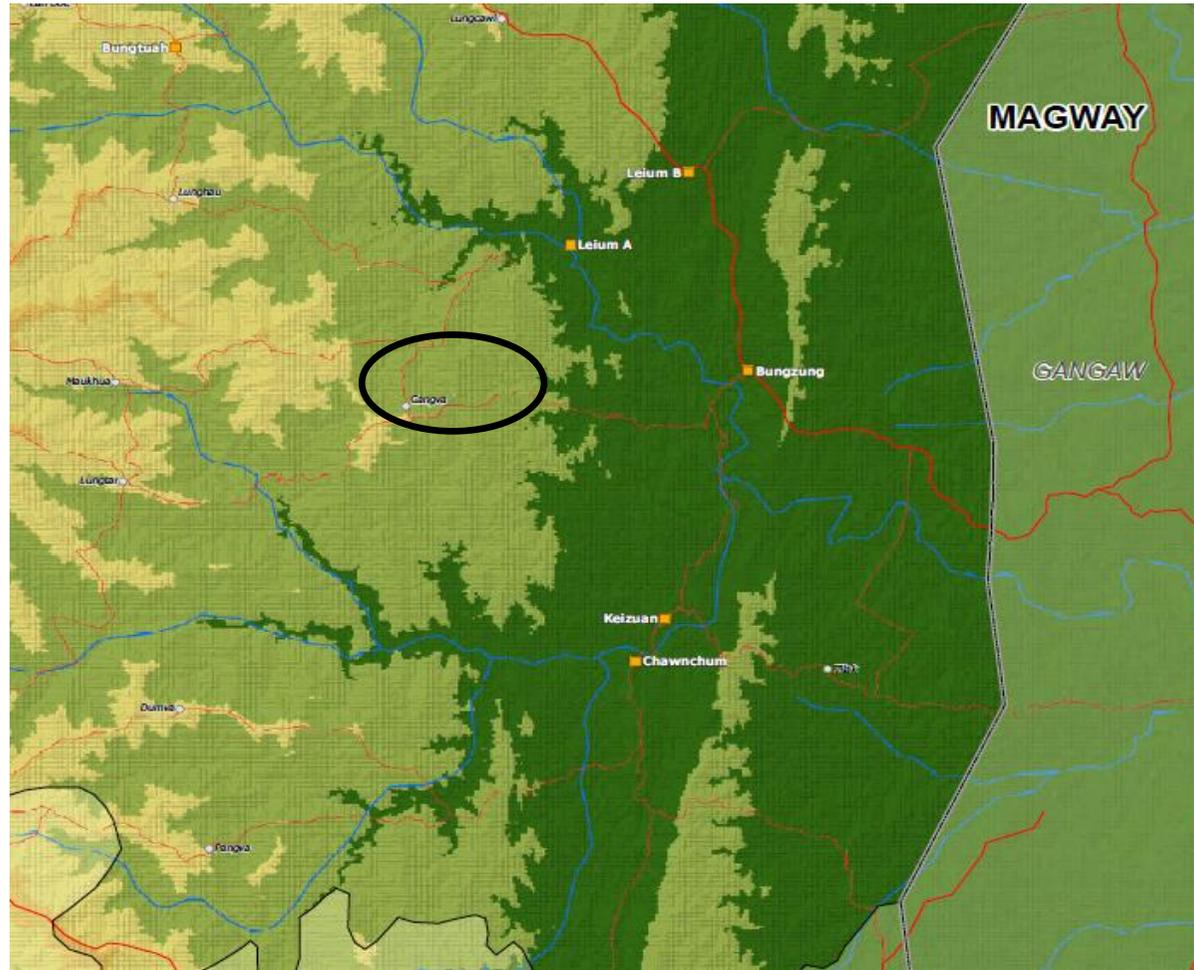
Map 1: Project cluster 1 (turquoise) with Nabual village and cluster 2 (violet) with Aive village.



Map 2: Project cluster 3 (red) with Surkhua village.



Map 3: Project cluster 4 (orange) with Bungzung village.



15.3 List of food categories of food consumed

Food category	Crop/ food								
Cereal food	noodles	rice	corn						
Green vegetable	bitter eggplant	cabbage	chayote	collard	mustard leaves	Roselle			
Purple vegetable	eggplant	taro	sweet potato						
Orange/ yellow/ white vegetable	bamboo shoots	cauliflower	garlic	onion	potato	pumpkin	sweet potato		
Red vegetable	Roselle flower	tomato	tree tomato						
Grain groups (peas and beans)	black gram	chick pea	garden pea	lablab	monkey-cry (parkia speciosa, petai bean or stink bean)	red bean	sesame	soy-bean	sulfur bean
Meat & poultry	beef	chicken	deer	dog (wild)	mython	rat	rodent		
Fish	dried fish	dried shrimp	fish						
Fruit	apple	banana	grape	hog-plum	lemon	mango	plum	tamarind	

15.4 Pictures

15.4.1 Women's tasks



Picture 4: Woman weaving and breastfeeding her child (Thiphul village, cluster 1). Picture: Van Bik, January 2017.



Picture 5: Woman carrying heavy loads of firewood in Zathal village. Picture: Joseph, January 2017.



Picture 6: Woman washing blankets in Zathul village. Picture: Joseph, January 2017.



Picture 7: Woman in Loklung, filtering rice. Picture: Joseph, January 2017.

15.4.2 Men's and joint tasks



Picture 8: Men in Loklung selling raw meet. Picture: Ra Luk, January 2017.



Picture 9: Men in Zarthal loading a truck with wood for construction. Picture: Joseph, January 2017.



Picture 10: Woman pounding corn in Zathual. Picture: Joseph, January 2017.



Picture 11: Woman and man working together on the field in Surkhua. Picture: Joseph, January 2017.