DSWD
Department of Social Welfare and Development

WFP
World Food Programme

Joint Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Security and Essential Needs and the Role of the Social Amelioration Program in the Philippines

July 2022

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Acronyms

ATM	Automated Teller Machines
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
DA	Department of Agriculture
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
FNG	Fill the Nutrient Gap
FNRI	Food and Nutrition Research Institute
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FSAC	Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
IATF-EID	Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases
JVOFI	Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation, Inc.
mVAM	mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
MoDa	Mobile Operational Data Acquisition
MSSD	Ministry of Social Services and Development
NCR	National Capital Region
PHCO	Philippine Country Office
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
RAM	Research Analysis and Monitoring
RBB	Regional Bureau in Bangkok
RBME	Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation
rM&E	remote Monitoring and Evaluation
SAP	Social Amelioration Program
TWG	Technical Working Group
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

1. To support the Philippine government in **assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and essential needs of the affected population and monitor the effect of its Social Amelioration Program (SAP) to its beneficiaries**, the Philippine Country Office, with support from the Regional Bureau in Bangkok, provided WFP's remote monitoring and evaluation (rM&E) and the mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) tools to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for the conduct of a joint post-distribution monitoring (PDM) in all the regions in the country.

2. DSWD was the lead agency that implemented **the SAP which targeted 18 million households** (out of the 22 million total households in the country) **in the first tranche of cash distribution in the months of May to June 2020 and around 14 million households** in the second tranche of cash distribution **in the months of August to September 2020.**

3. Based on the design of a PDM, the data collection activities of the project were carried out after each of the cash distributions of the SAP assistance were completed by the government. WFP and DSWD conducted a **panel study with two rounds of surveys at the regional level.** The first round of data collection was conducted in the months of June to August 2020 while the second round of data collection was carried out in the period of November 2020 to January 2021.

4. Aside from the mVAM and rM&E, WFP offered the use of its web-based and mobile-based remote data collection platform called MoDa (Mobile Operational Data Acquisition) to the DSWD. MoDa was used to conduct **phone interviews** and monitor the daily outputs of the enumeration team.

5. **The study completed a total of 9,743 interviews in the 17 regions** in two rounds of data collections. In the first round, 3,626 households were included in the survey while in the second round, 6,117 respondents participated in the survey.

6. Out of the total number of respondents who were covered in the study, 64 percent received only one tranche of cash assistance, 28 percent received two tranches of cash assistance while 8 percent did not receive any SAP assistance. Both groups of SAP beneficiaries — whether they receive one or two grant disbursements — were interviewed in both rounds of data collection. They served as the respondents for the **panel survey**[1] of this assessment. As for the non-SAP beneficiaries, the respondents were different for each round of data collection.

7. **Among the pillars of food security**[2]**, the most affected is food access** as the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was **felt through reduced household income and increased unemployment rate.** The lack of resources (or as the respondents reported, "no money") was a huge concern for 8 in 10 households (see Figure 12) in the first round and about half of the households in the second round of data collection, who reported experiencing diminished household income.

8. **The COVID-19 pandemic also negatively impacted households economic well-being** observed through deprivations in the areas of food, health, education, shelter, WASH (Water and Sanitation for Hygiene). The levels of deprivations were calculated using the multi-dimensional deprivation index (MDDI). About a quarter of the respondents in both rounds of data collections reported deprivations at the time of the pandemic.

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1 A panel survey is a type of longitudinal study that measures the behavior of the same set of people over time.

2 The pillars of food securiry are food availability, food access, and food utilization. Cutting across these pillars is the element of stability. For more details, please see discussion in the Introduction section.

9 The study found that between 10 and 25 percent of the affected households utilized at least one or more consumption-based coping strategies. Furthermore, **8 in 10 households resorted to the use of livelihood-based negative coping strategies.**

10 SAP provided financial assistance to households representing monthly income's worth for every tranche following the pronouncement of the government on SAP[3]. **The cash assistance allowed the households to access food,** which was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby helping stave off food inadequacy among the households of the SAP beneficiaries.

11 A comparison of SAP beneficiaries with households who did not receive any government assistance shows that **overall, SAP beneficiaries were better off.** For instance, a bigger percentage of non-SAP beneficiaries experienced reduced income. Furthermore, **SAP beneficiaries stood out as having a more adequate food consumption and diverse diet** compared to non-SAP beneficiaries. Non-SAP households were more likely to show an insufficient food consumption of staples, vegetables and protein-rich food such as meat and dairy. **SAP beneficiaries** were also found to **engage less in negative livelihood coping strategies** than non-SAP households at the time of the two surveys.

12 **SAP in its present form was able to help address some elements of food access as well as minimum diet diversity and meal frequency.** Since about 80 percent of the households experienced a reduction of income in the first round and about 50 percent in the second round, SAP served as the main source income allowing these households to access food. However, **the program could be further improved through better beneficiary selection and more effective and efficient delivery of assistance** to ensure that households will no longer resort to short-term and long-term negative coping strategies.

Policy Recommendations

Based on its findings, **the study identified three policy recommendations,** namely:

1. Continue the use of the SAP model as a response measure to future emergencies but consider improving its beneficiary targeting and delivery system;
2. Include the cost of nutritious food in the computation of SAP assistance; and
3. Institutionalize the use of remote data collection and analysis tools in the government to further strengthen the monitoring and analysis systems during emergency.

[3] Based on the DSWD document on SAP, "computation [of the SAP cash assistance] is based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rates, taking into account the subsidy amount given under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) cash grants and rice subsidy, which is estimated at PhP2,150.00 per month per family. Thus, the 4Ps cash grants and rice subsidy are augmented to reach the mandated ESP subsidy of PhP5,000.00 to PhP8,000.00".

At a Glance

Target Beneficiaries of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP)

18,000,000
Households (1st Tranche)

14,000,000
Households (2nd Tranche)

Data collection tools used

mVAM
WFP mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping

MODA
Mobile Operational Data Acquisition

SAP – PDM data collection cycles

Jun-Aug 2020
1st Survey

Nov 2020-Jan 2021
2nd Survey

SAP – PDM data collection cycles

17
Regions Covered

3,626
Households (1st Survey)

6,117
Households (2nd Survey)

Key Findings

Survey round 1 Jun-Aug 2021		Survey round 2 Nov 2020-2021	
5%	→	3%	**of households had inadequate food consumption.** In the second round of data collection, a slight improvement in diets was recorded. No household was found to be consuming poor diets and the proportion of households having borderline diets was reduced to three percent.
87%	→	81%	of the affected households **adopted at least one or more consumption-based coping strategies** during round 1 and 2 of the survey respectively.
83%	→	78%	of households **resorted to the use of livelihood-based negative coping strategies** on round 1 and respectively.
78%	→	47%	of the affected households r**eported experiencing reduced income** during the 1st and 2nd survey respectively.

BOX 1:

A comparison of SAP and non-SAP beneficiaries

A comparison of SAP beneficiaries with households who did not receive any government assistance shows that **overall, SAP beneficiaries were better off.** For instance, a bigger percentage of non-SAP beneficiaries experienced reduced income. Furthermore, **SAP beneficiaries stood out as having more adequate food consumption and diverse diet** compared to non-SAP beneficiaries. Non-SAP households were more likely to show an insufficient food consumption of staples, vegetables and protein-rich food such as meat and dairy. **SAP beneficiaries** were also found to **engage less in negative livelihood coping strategies** than non-SAP households at the time of the two surveys.

Introduction

The first case of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Philippines was confirmed on 30 January 2020. Since then, the cases of COVID-19 continued to increase in the country and today, while the situation has improved, spikes in cases were observed in March – April 2021 and August – September 2021.

More than a year ago, on 8 March 2020, upon the recommendation of the Department of Health, the Office of the President declared a State of Public Health emergency issued through Presidential Proclamation no. 922, series of 2020. Four days later, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) raised the COVID-19 threat to the highest alert level at Code Red Sublevel 2.

In response to the unprecedented shock brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government enacted various restrictive measures to curb infection rates and to support the population in dealing with the effects of these restrictions

On 15 March 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte approved the recommendation to declare a community quarantine in the National Capital Region (NCR). After two days, the enhanced community quarantine was expanded to the entire island group of Luzon. This community lockdown lasted until 30 April 2020 and affected more than 50 million Filipinos.

On 18 March 2020, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) started working on the development of a set of social protection measures aimed at mitigating the negative economic and psychosocial effects of the community quarantine restrictions for the most affected sectors of the population. One of these measures was the social amelioration program (SAP) by the DSWD. The rationale for the establishment of the SAP was based on the expectation that the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease will lead to economic and social disruptions – closures of offices and factories, reduced workforce, cutbacks in service provisions, supply chain disruptions and increased disease and morbidity. These, in turn, were forecasted to impact food security and essential needs of the affected population.

At the macro level, food security was directly impacted by COVID-19 through (i) reduction of food production due to quarantines, social distancing policies, border closings, and inability of working-age adults to continue working on agriculture and fisheries; (ii) lowering of national and sub-national food reserves; (iii) interruptions on supply chain (e.g., restrictions on food imports) and value chain (e.g., restrictions on agricultural inputs); (iv) decrease and possibly loss of purchasing power; and (v) increases in the prices of goods due to issues associated with supply and demand. Job and income losses due to COVID-19 were also anticipated to aggravate food insecurity situation and social vulnerability of affected population.

In April 2020, DSWD started the roll out of the SAP through the distribution of cash assistance. DSWD was the lead agency of the government that implemented the SAP with support from the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

The SAP component that DSWD rolled out targeted 18 million households (accounting for about 80 percent of the 22 million total households in the country) in the first tranche of cash distribution in the months of May to June 2020 and around 14 million households[4] in the second tranche of cash distribution in the months of August to September 2020 (Cho et al, 2021). The SAP beneficiaries were composed of the 4Ps[5] families and households with poor, vulnerable, and marginalized members of the society such as the senior citizens, pregnant and lactating women, solo parents, persons with disability, homeless families, and workers in the informal sector who lost their jobs due to the community lockdowns. The amount of cash assistance in both tranches of cash distribution ranged from PhP 5,000 to PhP 8,000 per household.

4 The reduction in the number of SAP beneficiaries from the first to the second round of cash distribution resulted to some households receiving only one tranche of cash assistance and others getting two tranches of cash aid.

5 4Ps is short for *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*. It is a human development measure of the national government that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor, to improve the health, nutrition, and the education of children aged 0-18 (www.officialgazette.gov.ph/).

To support the national government to monitor and assess the effect of the SAP to its beneficiaries, the World Food Programme (WFP) agreed to share with DSWD its remote monitoring and assessment tools consisting of the remote monitoring and evaluation (rM&E) and the mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM). WFP also provided the Ministry of Social Services and Development in BARMM its SCOPE digital solutions for SAP beneficiary registration and management in the region.

The use of remote tools like rM&E and mVAM were necessary at that time because access to the communities was limited considering the quarantine measures in place. Traditional modalities to collect information and monitor the food security and essential needs of affected populations could not be relied upon since face-to-face surveys could have exposed enumerators to further risk of contagion.

BOX 2:

Pillars of food security

Food security was defined by the World Food Summit in 1996 as: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs, and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (WFP, 2009).

It has three important pillars, namely: (1) food availability; (2) food access; and (3) and food utilization. Cutting across all these pillars is the important concept of stability (see ***Figure 1***). Food availability is defined as "the physical presence of food in the area of concern through all forms of domestic production, commercial imports and food aid." Food access, on the other hand, "concerns a household's ability to acquire adequate amounts of food, through one or a combination of own home production and stocks, purchases, barter, gifts, borrowing and food aid." Food utilization "refers to households' use of the food to which they have access, and individuals' ability to absorb and metabolize the nutrients — the conversion efficiency of the body. Lastly, stability describes the vulnerability and risk context affecting the other pillars of food security.

On the other hand, essential needs refer to the "essential goods, utilities, services or resources required on a regular, seasonal, or exceptional basis by households for ensuring survival and minimum living standards, without resorting to negative coping mechanisms or compromising their health, dignity and essential livelihood assets." Food is considered to be a central component of the essential needs plus drinking water, soap, clothing, shelter, life-saving medical care, essential sanitation, contagious disease prevention and education are additional examples of essential needs of the people.

Figure 1. Pillars of Food Security

Objectives of the Project

The Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Food Security and Essential Needs in the Philippines and the Role of the Social Amelioration Program has two main objectives, namely: 1) to collect valuable information on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food security and essential needs of the most affected population in the 17 regions in the country, and 2) to support the government in monitoring the impact of SAP to its beneficiaries.

The information generated by the survey was expected to further help understand the vulnerability of the affected population and support DSWD to identify appropriate assistance modalities for future program undertakings of the government and other stakeholders to support vulnerable populations during emergencies.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was guided by the Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E) framework which was initially prepared by the technical staff of DSWD's Research and Evaluation Division. WFP technical staff provided additional inputs by suggesting the inclusion of some of WFP's corporate outcome indicators (i.e., Multi-dimensional Deprivation Index, Food Consumption Score, Consumption-based Coping Strategies, Livelihood-based Coping Strategies, Food Expenditure Share) into the RBM&E framework. These indicators were eventually adopted by the project's TWG in the monitoring framework.

The project's TWG likewise decided to utilize WFP's remote post-distribution monitoring (PDM) tools called rM&E and mVAM. The designs of these tools plus the modules of the various WFP outcome indicators guided the development of the household survey questionnaire. The final survey tool contained sections on administrative regions, socio-demographic information, types of assistance received, food consumption score (FCS), consumption-based coping strategies (rCSI), livelihood-based coping strategies (LCSI), access to food and market, access to health, health and illness concerns, income and expenditure, and SAP beneficiary satisfaction and feedback.

Prior to the conduct of this study, there was no known baseline data on these outcome indicators during a pandemic. Thus, it was critical for the design to include at least two rounds of data collection. The results of the first survey serve as baseline data for the study while the results of the second survey allowed fora comparative analysis.

The scope of the study covered the 17 regions in the country. The main target respondents of the two household-level surveys were SAP beneficiaries including both 4Ps and non-4Ps beneficiaries. The target respondents were limited to the SAP beneficiaries because DSWD only has access to the list of 18 million households targeted in the first tranche and around 14 million households targeted in the second tranche of SAP cash assistance.

However, TWG decided to conduct a comparative analysis between the households which received SAP and those that did not receive any cash assistance from the government. Thus, non-SAP beneficiaries were included in the target respondents in NCR and BARMM.[6] The non-SAP beneficiaries belonged to the 20 percent of the total number of households in the Philippines who were deemed not to be directly affected (i.e., did not lose their jobs and/or capacity to earn) by the community lockdown and other measures imposed to address the risk posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. They were also not considered to be poor, vulnerable, and marginalized members of society.

Using the Raosoft sample size calculator,[7] the target sample size for each region was initially pegged at 500 SAP beneficiaries for both NCR and BARMM and 300 SAP beneficiaries (150 4Ps households and 150 non-4Ps households) for each of the remaining 15 regions. The minimum sample size of about 300 was determined by Raosoft as having a margin of error of 5 percent and a confidence level of 95 percent. When the decision to cover non-SAP beneficiaries was made for NCR and BARMM, an additional sample size of 250 households were added to the sample size of each region.

6 The non-SAP beneficiaries was covered only in NCR and BARMM because there was not enough information from the other regions to generate a list of households who did not receive cash assistance from the government.

7 http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html

WFP commissioned GeoPoll[8] to carry out the two household surveys in NCR and BARMM. For the 15 other regions, the remote interviews in the first round of the household survey were done by approximately 50 DSWD staff from the central office while in the second round of the data collection, WFP commissioned a non-government organization called Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation, Inc. (JVOFI) to do the data enumeration (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2. Project's Research Design

Scope	Target Groups		Data Collection Design	
NCR & BARMM	• 4Ps SAP bene • Non-4Ps SAP bene	**Group 1** 500 Sample HHs	Longitudinal (Panel) **rm&E**	• 2 Rounds • **GeoPoll** collected data
	• Non-SAP bene	**Group 2** 250 Sample HHs	Cross-Sectional **mVAM**	
Cambodia	• 4Ps SAP bene • Non-4Ps SAP bene	300 Sample HHs per region	Longitudinal (Panel) **rm&E**	• 2 Rounds • **DSWD/JVOFI** collected data

8 GeoPoll is a US-based company that specializes in remote, mobile-based surveys all over the world.

Number of Completed Interviews

The study completed a total of 9,743 interviews in the 17 regions in two rounds of data collections. In the first round, 3,626 households were included in the survey while in the second round, 6,117 respondents participated in the research.[9]

Across the regions, NCR and BARMM recorded the highest number of completed interviews, accounting for about 15 percent each of the total number of completed interviews while the remaining 15 regions accounted for about 5 percent each of the total respondents in the two surveys (see ***Table 1***).

Table 1. Distribution of Completed Interviews by Region

No.	Code	Name of the Administrative Area	Number of Interviews - Round 1	Number of Interviews - Round 2	Total number of Interviews
1	R1	Ilocos Region	153	336	489
2	R2	Cagayan Valley	137	319	456
3	R3	Central Luzon	161	287	448
4	R4A	CALABARZON	190	314	504
5	R4B	MIMAROPA	121	311	432
6	R5	Bicol Region	161	299	460
7	R6	Western Visayas	131	276	407
8	R7	Central Visayas	131	322	453
9	R8	Eastern Visayas	151	277	428
10	R9	Zamboanga Peninsula	137	364	501
11	R10	Northern Mindanao	149	362	511
12	R11	Davao Region	146	324	470
13	R12	SOCCSKSARGEN	119	315	434
14	R13	CARAGA	108	301	409
15	BARMM	BARMM	749	561	1,310
16	CAR	Cordillera Administrative Region	132	293	425
17	NCR	National Capital Region	750	856	1,606
	PHL	Philippines	3,626	6,117	9,743

[9] The target sample for each region was originally set at about 300 household for each region, with a confidence level of 95%. In the first round, DSWD technical team suggested to have their staff do the data collection in 15 regions. This was done to address the lack of a data sharing agreement between WFP and DSWD, which would have allowed WFP staff to access the mobile phones of SAP beneficiaries. The DSWD staff, however, failed to meet the target respondents as they have other tasks. In the second round, WFP continued relied on GeoPoll and another third party to do the data collection.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

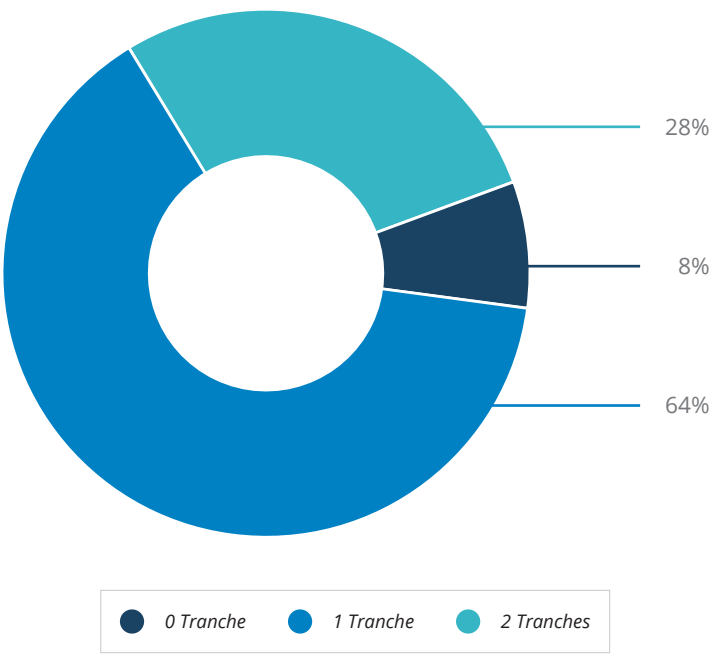
A. Respondents Characteristics

1. Number of SAP beneficiaries covered in the surveys

Out of the total number of respondents who were covered in the study, 64 percent received only one tranche of cash assistance, 28 percent received two tranches of cash assistance while 8 percent did not receive any SAP assistance (see *Figure 3*).

Both groups of SAP beneficiaries whether they receive one or two disbursements were interviewed in both surveys. To identify their categories, the study utilized a filter question at the beginning of the form asking participants whether they had received assistance from the government in the last three months prior to the interview. As for the non-SAP beneficiaries, the respondents were different for each round of data collection.

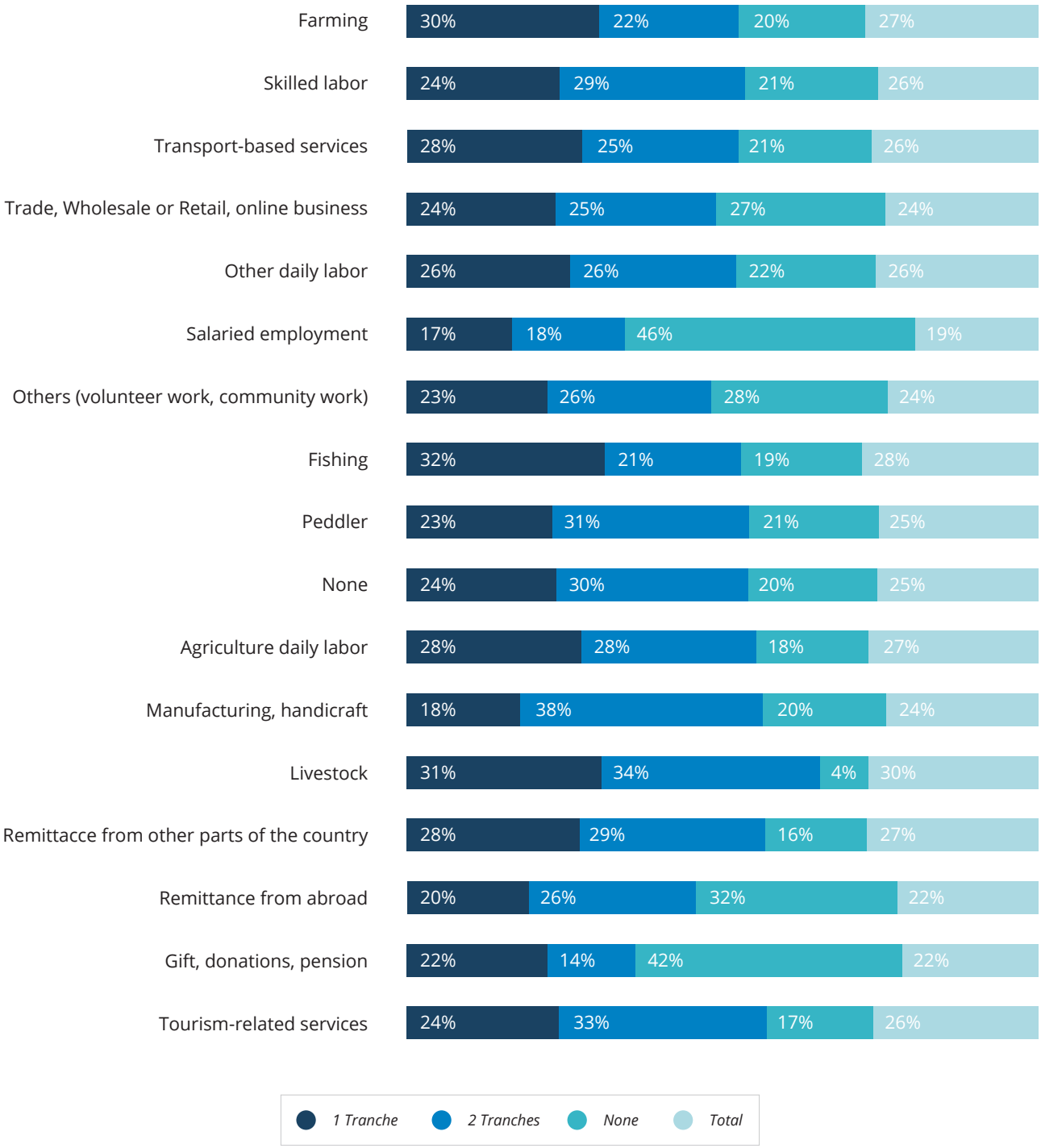
Figure 3. Types of Respondents by Number of SAP Tranche Received



2. Types of Livelihoods (or Income Sources)

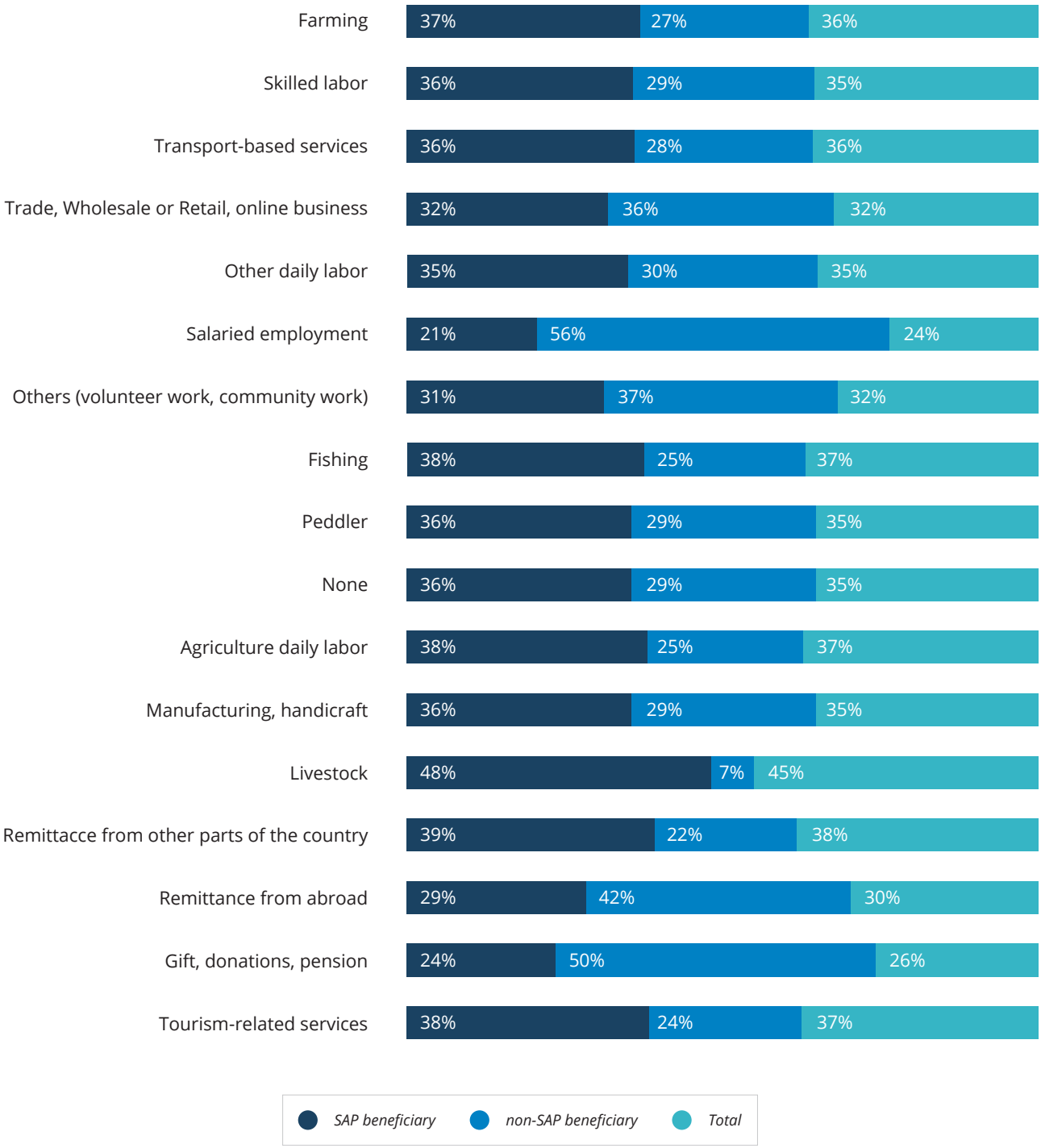
Farming is the economic activities where the biggest proportion of households (13%) were engaged in at the time of the surveys. This made be sense since workers engaged in farming account for about a third of the labor force in the country and even during the pandemic they continued to work since work in the farm allowed for more social distancing. Other sources of income which made up the top five were skilled labor (13%), transport-based services (13%), wholesale and retail trade including online business (12%), and other daily labor (11%). On the other hand, only a very small proportion of households were getting income from gifts and donation and tourism-based services at the time of the surveys (see *Figure 4*).

Figure 4. Types of Respondents by Number of SAP Tranche Received



Among the SAP beneficiaries, more households were engaged in farming (15%), skilled labor (13%), transport-based services (13%), and other daily labor (11%) than non-SAP beneficiaries. On the other hand, a bigger proportion of non-SAP beneficiaries were engaged in salaried employment (22%), trade (13%), and relying on gifts/donation/pension (1%) (see ***Figure 5***).

Figure 5. Main Income Sources by Types of Respondents



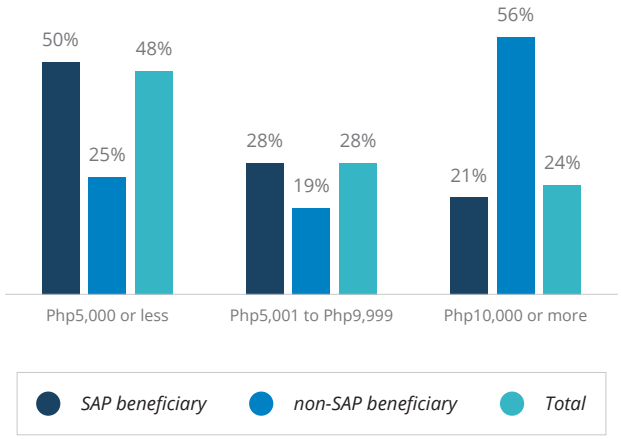
3. Household Income

The average household income of all the respondents was PhP 7,562 per month. The total household income of non-SAP beneficiaries was significantly higher than SAP beneficiaries by 114 percent. This is likely due to the higher proportion of non-SAP beneficiaries that have better (i.e., salaried job) employment than SAP beneficiaries.

Furthermore, total household income during the second round of the survey was significantly lower than the first round of data collection by 12 percent. More than half (63%) of the respondents reported having only one household member and 28 percent having two household members contributing to income.

The income of SAP beneficiaries tended to skew more towards the lower end of the spectrum since about 50 percent of the households were earning PhP5,000 per month or less and only 23 percent were earning PhP10,000 or more per month. On the other hand, a larger proportion (56%) of non-SAP beneficiaries reported earning more than PhP10,000 per month than SAP households (see *Figure 6*).

Figure 6. Income Distribution by Types of Beneficiaries



B. Impact of COVID 19 community quarantine measures on Household Food Security and Essential Needs

To determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food security and essential needs of the affected population, the study examined different dimensions namely: (1) income, (2) food sufficiency, (3) food consumption and typical diets, (4) important concerns during emergency, and (5) level of deprivation.

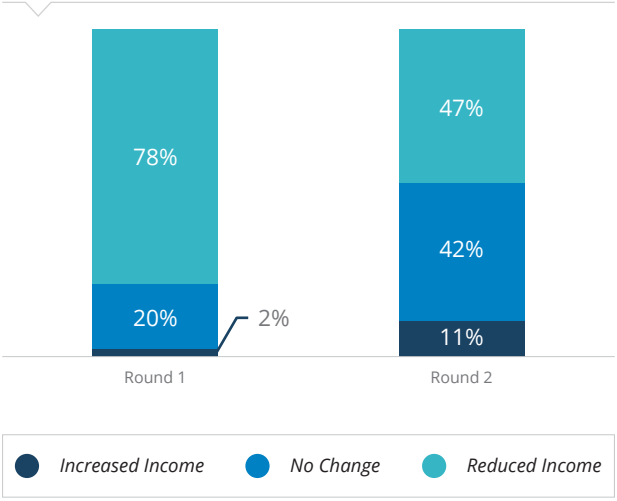
Impact of COVID-19 community quarantine measures on Household Income

The first dimension of household food security that the study assessed to determine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic was household income. To determine the impact on household income, the respondents were asked this question: "Did your family income change now compared to a month prior to the assessment?". The question has a recall period of one month since each survey was designed to be done a month after each round of cash distribution. The question is answerable by either 1) No change, 2) Increased income, and 3) Reduced income. reported having at least one the survey.

On the first round of data collection, about 78 percent of households reported that they experienced reduced income due to the community quarantine implemented in response to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the country. In addition, 20 percent of households said their income did not change. A small proportion (2%) of households claimed to have increased income during the pandemic.

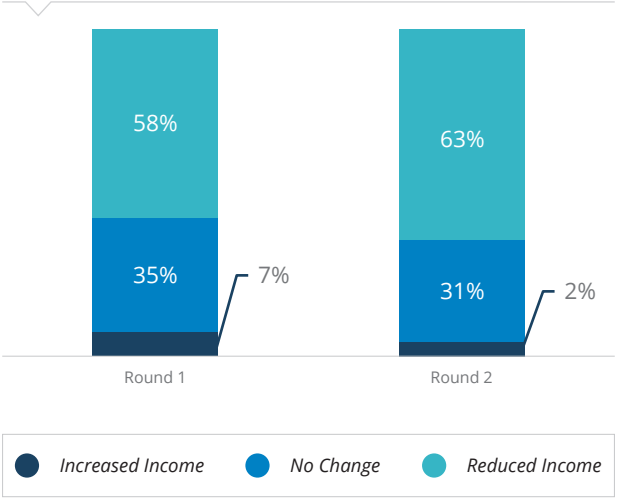
In the second round of data collection, the percentage of households who stated experiencing reduced income decreased to 47 percent. Those who claimed their household income did not change rose to 42 percent while those who had increased income improved to 11 percent (see *Figure 7*).

Figure 7. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Household Income, by Round of Data Collection



A comparison of SAP beneficiaries with households who did not receive any government assistance shows that overall, SAP beneficiaries were better off. For instance, a bigger percentage of non-SAP beneficiaries (63%) experienced reduced income. This can be due to the community quarantine implemented in response to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the country which resulted in reduced income generating activities. Likewise, a lower proportion (5%) of non-SAP households claimed to have increased income during the pandemic compared with SAP households (7%). Lastly, 31 percent of non-SAP households reported no change in their income.

Figure 8. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Household Income, by Type of Beneficiary



The study also looked at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on food sufficiency.

Impact of COVID 19 community quarantine measures on Household Food Consumption and Typical Diets

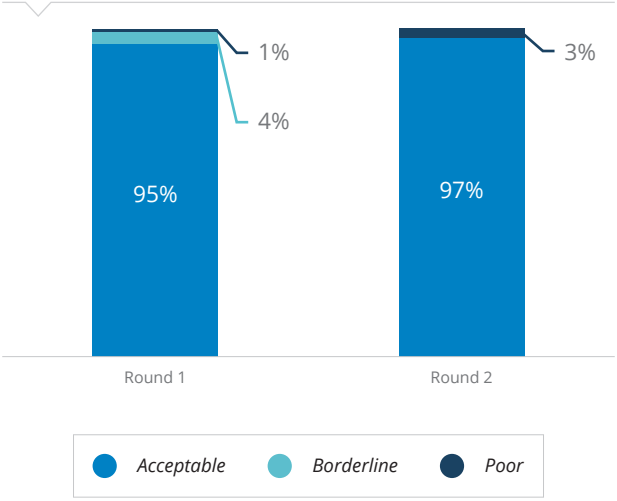
To assess the impact of Covid-19 on household food consumption, the study utilized the food consumption score (FCS) - a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency and relative nutrition importance of different food groups. The FCS is used to categorize households into three groups: poor, borderline, and acceptable food consumption.[10]

Poor food consumption corresponds to less than 1,500 kilocalories (kcal) eaten per person per day. Households with poor food consumption consume staples, oil, and vegetables. This diet normally does not meet the recommended energy requirement, lacks essential micronutrients, and is associated with higher poverty rates and malnutrition. Borderline food consumption corresponds to an energy intake of 1,500 - 1,800 kcal per person per day. In comparison, an average recommended energy intake is around 2,100 kcal per person per day. Poor and borderline food consumption groups represent inadequate diets in terms of macro- and micro-nutrient requirements and are hence referred to as having inadequate food consumption. Households characterized by an acceptable food consumption typically consume staples and vegetables every day, frequently accompanied by oil and pulses, and occasionally meat, fish and dairy.

In the first round of data collection, approximately 5 percent of the households at the national level had inadequate food consumption, with about one percent of households consuming poor diets and four percent of households having borderline diets.

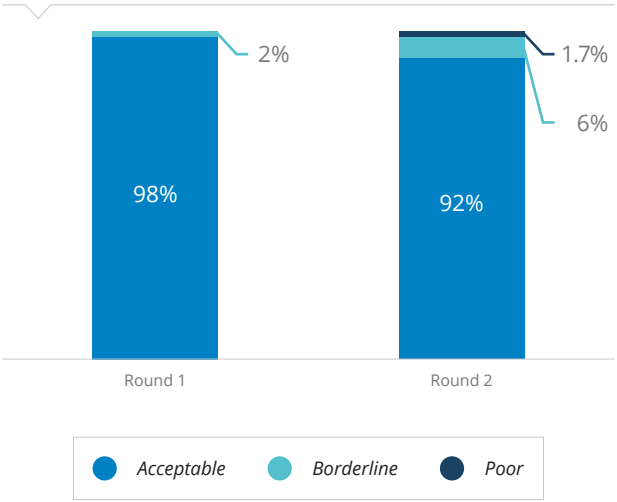
In the second round of data collection, a slight improvement in the FCS was recorded. No household was found to be consuming poor diets and the proportion of households having borderline diets was reduced to three percent (see ***Figure 9***).

Figure 9. Household Food Consumption Score by Round of Data Collection



Overall, SAP beneficiaries stood out as having a more adequate food consumption compared to non-SAP beneficiaries. A higher percentage of SAP households (98%) have an acceptable food consumption than non-SAP beneficiaries. Likewise, a higher proportion of non-SAP beneficiaries have a food consumption deficit with 6 percent and 2 percent consuming a borderline and poor food diet respectively, compared to 2 percent borderline and 0.4 percent poor for SAP beneficiaries. (see ***Figure 10***). This indicates that non-SAP households were more likely to show an insufficient food consumption of staples, vegetables and protein-rich food such as meat and dairy. These results mirror the higher proportion of non-SAP beneficiaries facing income reduction.

Figure 10. Household Food Consumption Score by SAP and non-SAP beneficiary



[10] Prior to the conduct of the PDM for SAP, the latest baseline data for FCS in the country was available by FNRI through its national nutrition survey in 2015. The statistics were available at the national, regional, and provincial levels.

While FCS showed a certain degree of improvement in the energy intake of households, many Filipino households still couldn't afford a nutritious diet. A nutritious diet refers to a diet that meets the daily required levels of all essential nutrients for a person to maintain good health and function. A WFP Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) study in 2018 found that the daily cost of nutritious diet was Php 206 (USD 4.3) for a family of five (modeled as comprising of a father, a pregnant/lactating mother, an adolescent girl, a school-aged child, and a child aged 6-23 months (about 2 years). A follow up FNG study in 2020 showed that the average daily cost of nutritious diet rose to Php 250 (USD 5.2) during the pandemic.

The non-affordability of a nutritious diet in the country is considered as one major factor for the high prevalence of stunting. The non-affordability of a nutritious food is highly influenced by two factors, namely: rising food prices and the low purchasing power of the minimum wage. In the Philippines, the daily minimum wage rates vary from region to region, ranging from Php310 (USD 6.46) to Php537 (USD 11.19) a day for 2021. The wages are set by tripartite regional wage boards located in every region[11])

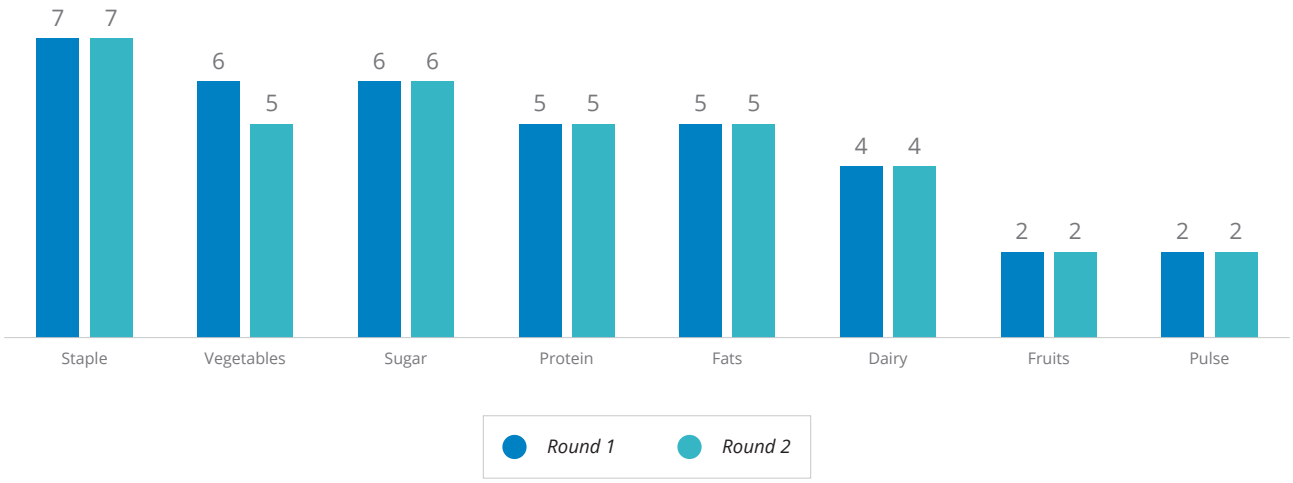
The typical household diet in the country provides information on the dietary diversity and food frequency. In the context of the Philippines, a typical diet is characterized by staple food (which normally refers to rice), vegetables, sugar, some proteins, and fats. Consumption of dairy, fruits, and pulses is low.[12] Ideally, a more diverse diet, would consist of four or more food groups. In addition, the consumption of more nutritious food such as proteins, vegetables, fruits, dairy, and pulses is recommended (See ***Figure 11***).

Based on the results of the first round of data collection, households consumed rice for about 6.8 days within the 7-day recall period; vegetables for 5.7 days; sugar for 5.5 days, and fats for 4.6 days. On the other hand, dairy was consumed for 3.8 days; fruits for 2.4 days; and pulses for 2.2. days.

In the second round of data collection, the diversity of food eaten remained the same but with slight increases in the frequency of consumption of rice, sugar, some protein, and fats. Compared to the first round of data collection, the frequency of consumption of rice increased to 6.9 days; sugar to 5.8 days; protein to 5 days; and fats to 4.8 days. Conversely, the frequency of consumption of vegetables decreased to 5.3 days; dairy to 3.6 days; fruits to 2.2 days; and pulses to 1.7 days (see ***Figure 12***).

The comparison of changes in food consumption, including diet diversity and food frequency, is relevant in highlighting the need to promote nutritious food during emergency.

Figure 11. Average Days of Household Consumption of Food Groups by Round of Data Collection

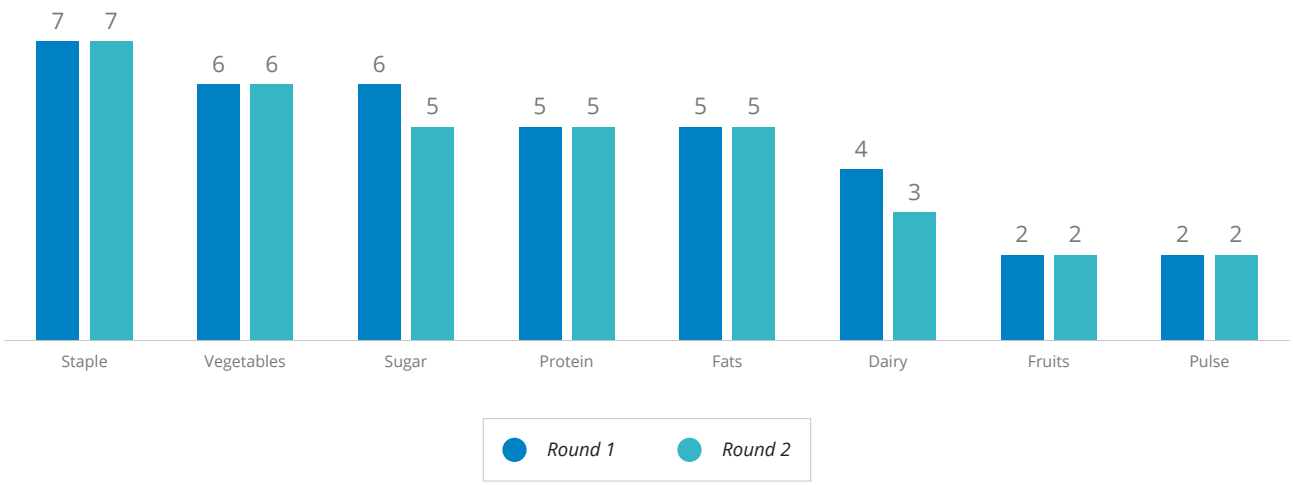


11 Source: https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/minimum-wages-in-asean-for-2021/

12 Based on the 2015 Philippine Nutrition Facts and Figures – Dietary Survey, a typical household food intake consists of the following food groups, cereals, and cereal products (43.1%), vegetables (14.6%), fish and fish products (11.5%), meat and meat products (7%), poultry (3.2%), and condiments (3.3%). (FNRI, 2015)

A closer look at the typical diet of SAP beneficiaries versus non-SAP beneficiaries showed that the former consume a more diverse diet. Similar to the trends evident in the FCS, this indicates that overall SAP beneficiaries consume more vegetables and dairy products.

Figure 12. Average Days of Household Consumption of Food Groups by SAP and non-SAP beneficiary



Important Household Concerns During the COVID-19 Pandemic

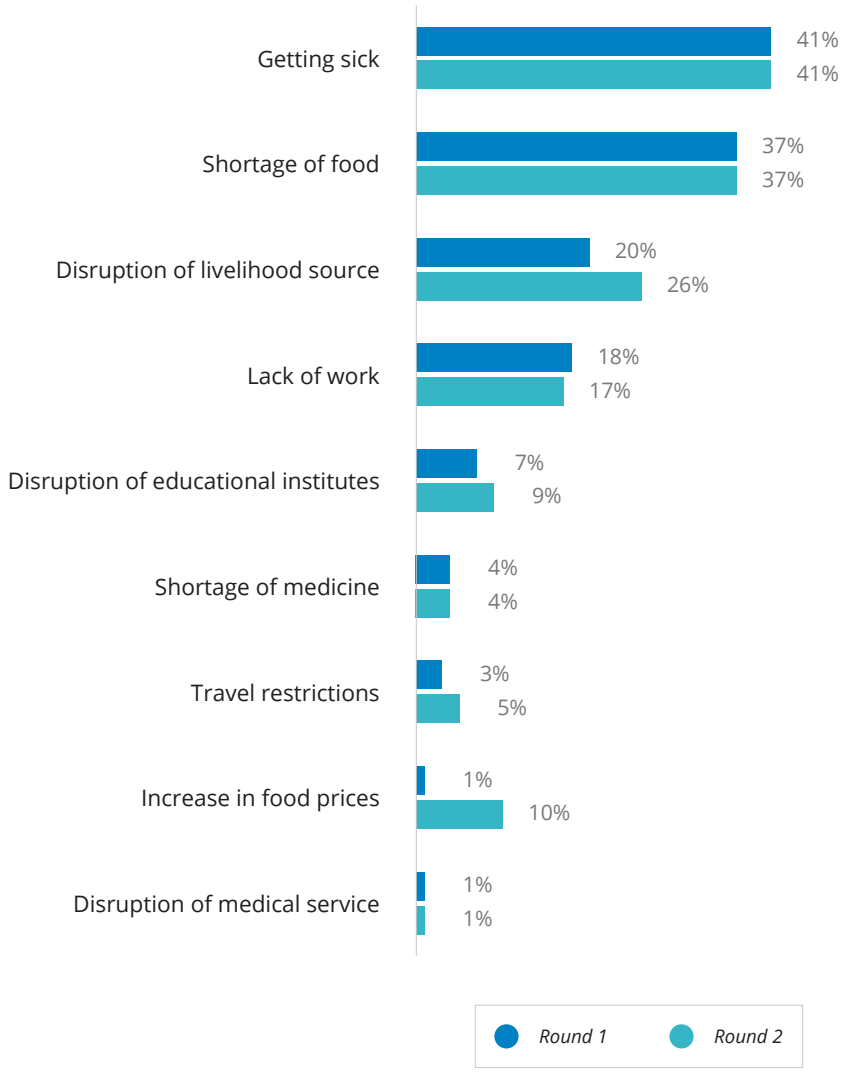
To understand the other essential needs that concerned the households, the study asked the respondents to identify two critical issues that impacted them during the pandemic.

The highest proportion (41%) of the households were worried about getting sick at the time of the pandemic. This was true for both rounds of data collection. The second highest proportion (37%) of households were concerned about food shortages during the pandemic. Again, the percentage of households remained the same for both rounds of data collection.

The next most important concerns in the first round of data collection were the disruption of sources of livelihood (20%) and lack of work (18%). The proportions of households who worried about to the disruption of sources of livelihood grew to 26 percent while those who became apprehensive about lack of work shrank to 17 percent this validates the correlation between the households who reported the reduction of income (due to the distribution of livelihood and/or loss of jobs) and access to food.

Other important concerns raised by the respondents included disruption of education, shortage of medicine, travel restrictions, increase in food prices, and disruption of medical services. Notably, the proportion of households who were concerned about the rise in food prices increased tenfold from 1 percent to 10 percent between the first and second round of data collection (***Figure 13***).

Figure 13. Important Household Concerns During the Pandemic by Round of Data Collection

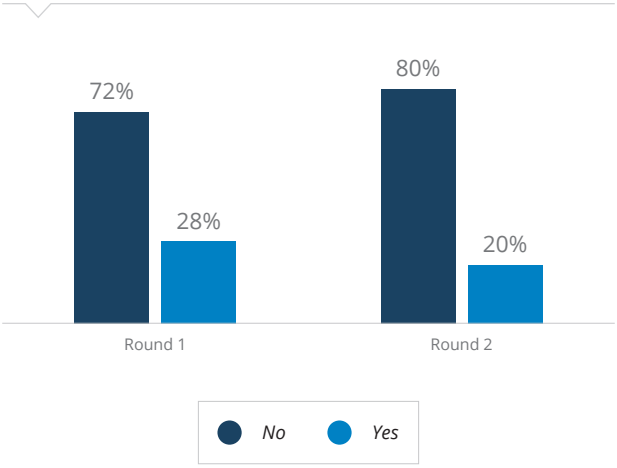


Level of Household Deprivation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

To have a holistic view of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the food security and essential needs of the households, the study computed the level of deprivation of the affected population. To do so, the multi-dimensional deprivation index (MDDI) was utilized. The MDDI is a measure of acute non-monetary poverty calculated at the household level based on a range of 'deprivations' across the different essential needs dimensions such as food, health, education, shelter, WASH (Water and Sanitation for Hygiene) and economic well-being. This measure is relevant in understanding how households allocate their resources to address the different deprivations that they are facing. In the case of the SAP program, the level of deprivations can help comprehend how beneficiaries utilized the cash assistance that they received. As can be seen in the succeeding section on SAP as a Determinant of the Levels of Household Food Security and Other Needs, only about half of the affected household used the SAP cash assistance to buy food. Because they also experienced some deprivations on health, WASH, and shelter, about 22 percent of the households said they used the SAP money to purchase hygiene materials; 18 percent to pay for medical needs, and 10 percent to pay their housing rents.

In the first round of data collection, 28 percent of the households were found to have experienced multi-dimensional deprivation. In the second round of data collection, the proportion of households with deprivation decreased to 20 percent. This indicated an 8-percentage point improvement in the overall situation of food security and other essential needs of the affected population during the pandemic (see ***Figure 14***).

Figure 14. Multi-Dimensional Deprivation of Households by Round of Data Collection



C. Determinants of the Levels of Household Food Security and Other Needs

This section will present the several factors that played important roles in mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and helped shape the levels of food security and other needs of the affected population. These factors are grouped into two categories. The first category included the different mechanisms utilized by the households to adapt to the emergency. These mechanisms are called coping strategies, and these are further subdivided into the consumption-based strategies, the livelihood-based mechanisms, and the traditional lifeline of accessing credit and borrowing money.

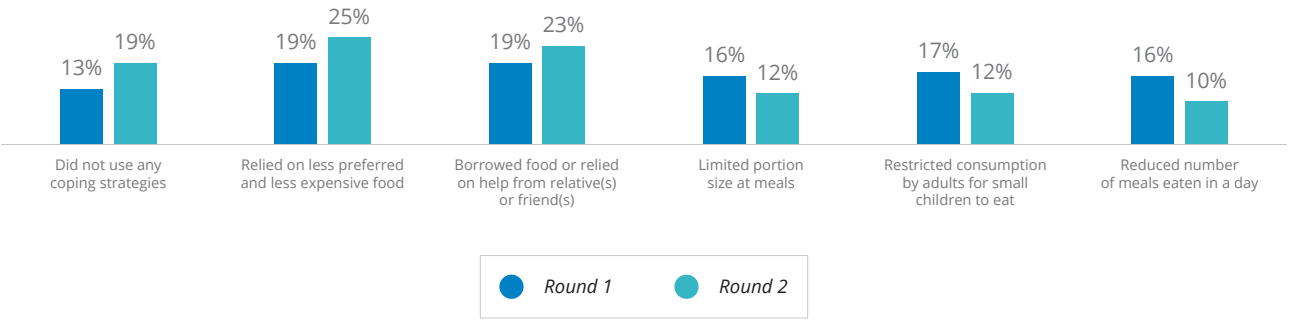
The second category of adaptive mechanisms referred to the SAP which was implemented by the government to address the negative impact of the pandemic on household food security and essential needs.

1. Consumption-based Coping Strategies

The consumption-based coping strategies, also called Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) or CSI food, is measured by assessing the frequency and severity of adoption of five strategies in a 7-day recall period. The five strategies are: (1) Rely on less preferred and less expensive food; (2) Borrow food or rely on help from relative(s) or friend(s); (3) Limit portion size at meals; (4) Restrict consumption by adults for small children to eat; and (5) Reduce number of meals eaten in a day. Increased frequency of utilization of these strategies, individually or in combination, resulting to higher CSI food index, indicates worsening situation and increasing stress on household food security.

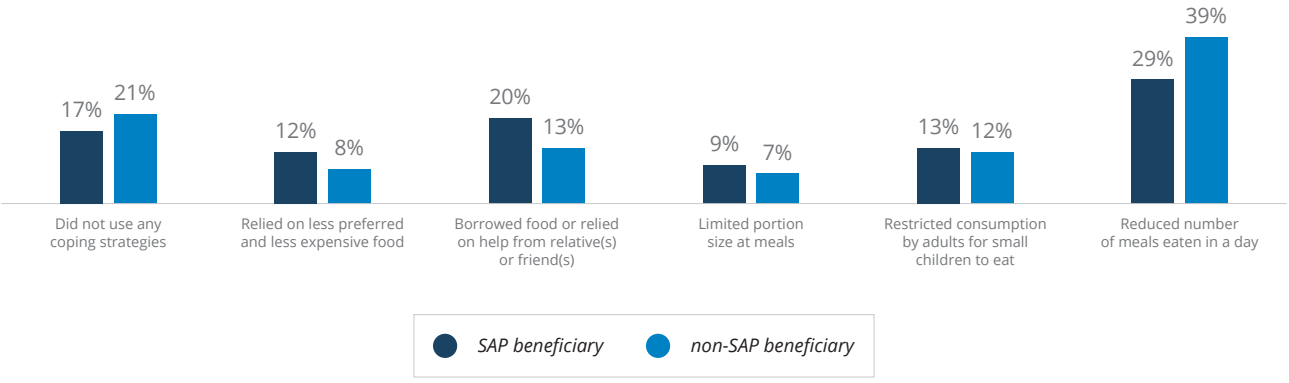
In the first round of data collection, about 87 percent of the households utilized at least one or more consumption-based coping strategies while 13 percent did not resort to using any of the strategies. In the second round of data collection, the proportion of households who utilized at least one or more consumption-based coping strategies fell to 81 percent. Conversely, the percent of households who did not adopt any coping strategies grew to 19 percent (see *Figure 15*).

Figure 15. Proportion of Households Utilizing Consumption-based Coping Strategies by Round of Data Collection



A comparison between SAP and non-SAP beneficiaries showed that about 83 percent of the SAP households utilized at least one or more consumption-based coping strategies compared with 79 percent among non-SAP households. Data reveal that bigger proportions of SAP beneficiaries relied on less preferred and less expensive food, borrowed food or relied on help from relatives or friends, limited portion size at meals, and restricted consumption by adults for small children to eat than non-SAP households. On the other hand, more non-SAP households resorted to reduced number of meals eaten in a day compared with SAP households (see ***Figure 16***).

Figure 16. Proportion of Households Utilizing Consumption-based Coping Strategies by SAP and Non-SAP



2. Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

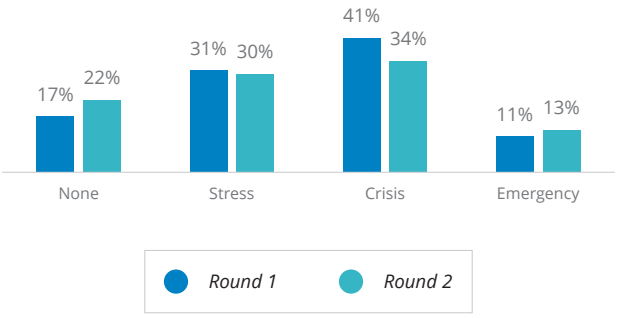
The second type of coping mechanisms practiced by households is the livelihood-based coping strategy Index (LCSI), which indicates longer-term coping capacities of households. These negative coping strategies are divided into three categories: (1) stress strategies, which are reversible coping strategies that reduce a household's ability to deal with future shocks as a result of reduction in resources or increase in debts; (2) crisis strategies, which are irreversible coping strategies often associated with a direct reduction of future productivity; and (3) emergency strategies, which are distress coping strategies that are more difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature than crisis strategies (WFP, 2020). On average, households adopted 16 livelihood-based coping strategies in the last seven days prior to the survey.

Analysis of the data showed that majority of the households have resorted to livelihood-based coping strategies during the pandemic. In the first round of data collection, about 83 percent of the households utilized negative livelihood coping strategies. Negative coping strategies refer to the combination of Stress, Crisis and Emergency measures adopted by the households to cope with the situation. Stress strategies are those which indicate a reduced ability to deal with future shocks due to a current reduction in resources or increase in debts. The examples of stress strategies were reduction in food expenses and selling of household assets. On the other hand, Crisis strategies can directly reduce future productivity, including human capital formation. The examples of the crisis strategies were spending of savings and selling of productive assets. Lastly, Emergency strategies are measures that affect future productivity, but are more difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature. The examples of Emergency strategies were availing of loans from banks, selling of houses and lands, and begging. In the second round of the survey, around 78 percent of the respondents have utilized these negative coping strategies (***Figure 17***).

A closer look at the categories of coping strategies across the two rounds of data collection shows that respondents using emergency coping strategies increased by 2 percentage points, those utilizing crisis coping strategies decreased by 7 percentage points and those using stress coping strategies decreased by a single percentage point. The proportion of households not employing any coping strategies also increased by 5 percentage points.

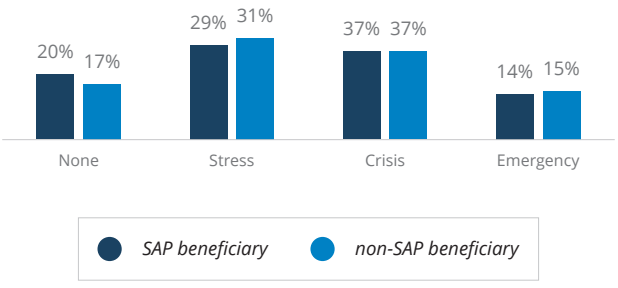
In line with the result shown by the consumption-based coping strategy measurement, the results of the LCSI analysis indicate an improvement in the household situation. The improvement might be due to the lifting of community quarantine in many areas of the country thereby resulting to the gradual opening of the economy and the distribution of the second tranche of SAP assistance.

Figure 17. Proportion of Household Utilizing Livelihood-based Coping Strategies by Round of Data Collection



Much like the trends in food consumption, dietary diversity and income above, SAP beneficiaries were found to engage less in negative livelihood coping strategies than non-SAP households at the time of the two surveys. ***Figure 18*** shows that 31 percent of non-SAP households adopted stress coping strategies compared with 29 percent among SAP beneficiaries. Furthermore, a slightly higher proportion of non-SAP households (15%) used emergency coping strategies compared to SAP households (14%).

Figure 18. Proportion of Household Utilizing Livelihood-based Coping Strategies by SAP and non-SAP beneficiary



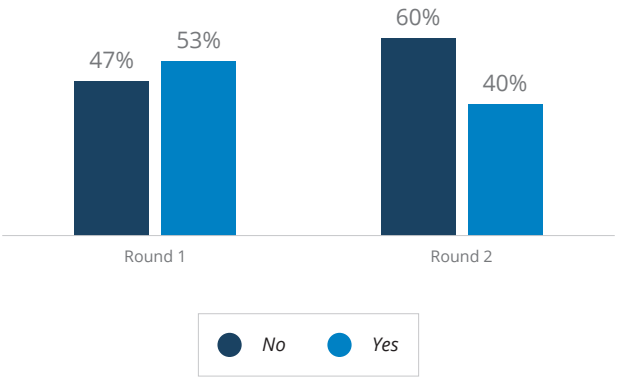
3. Traditional Lifelines for Households: Borrowing Money to Purchase Food

The third category of coping strategy that is usually resorted to by households in the country is borrowing money to address food insecurity. While borrowing money from formal lending institutions is already part of the livelihood-based coping strategy module, the debt being discussed in this section refers to the credit line in many communities which is based on informal agencies like relatives, neighbors, and others. This type of debt is considered as one of the traditional lifelines of many households during emergency.

In the surveys, the respondents were asked if they have borrowed money before receiving cash assistance from the government. In the first round of data collection, 53 percent of the households said they incurred debt prior to receiving cash assistance from the government. In the second round of data collection, the proportion of those who loaned money before getting cash assistance from the government was reduced to 40 percent (see *Figure 19*).

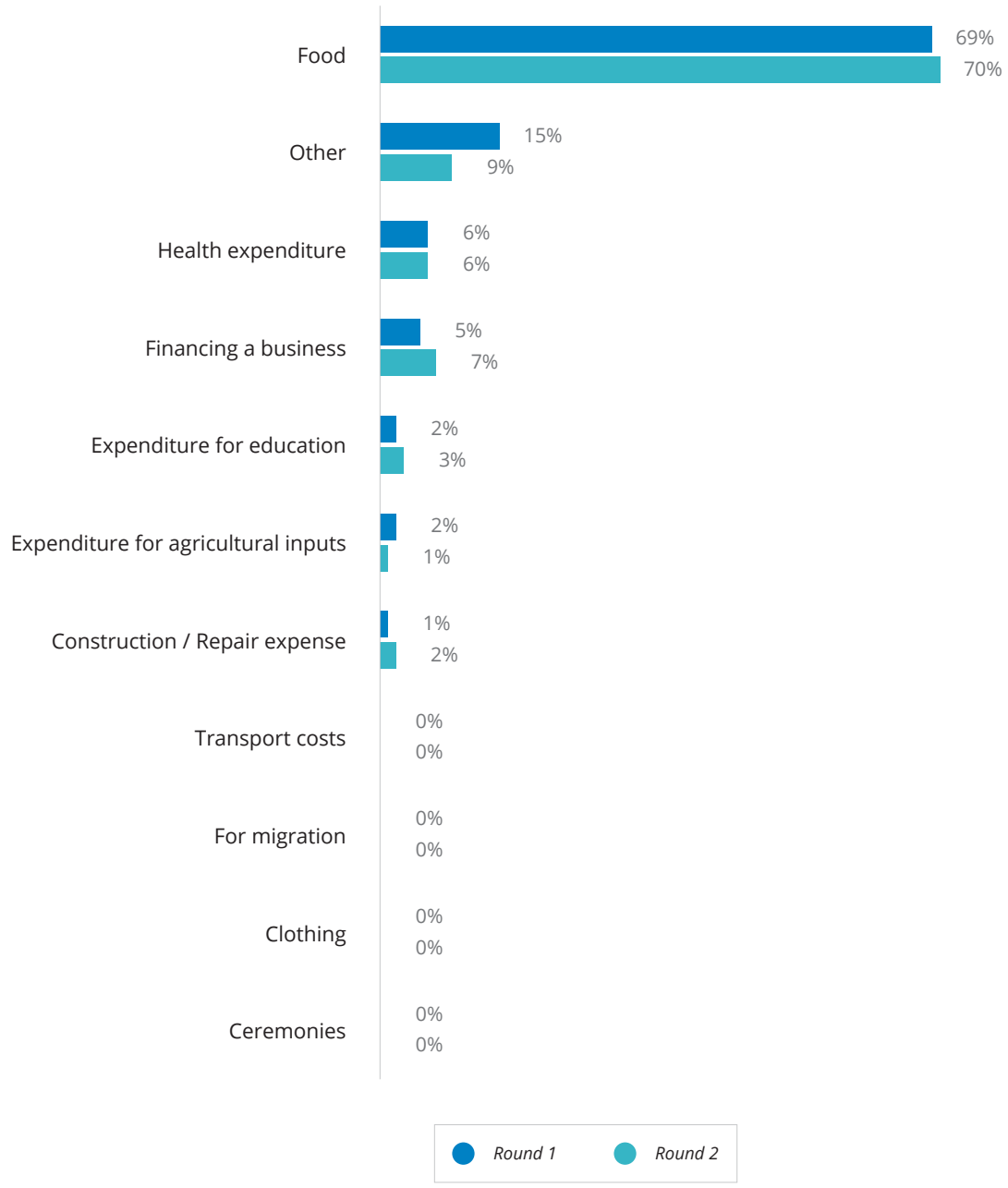
The question was asked because one of the traditional lifelines households resorts to during emergency is to avail loans especially if the situation entailed some disruptions in their livelihoods and/or loss of jobs.

Figure 19. Proportion of Household Debt Prior to Receiving SAP



When asked why households must incur debt prior to receiving cash assistance from the government, majority of the respondents mentioned the need for food as the primary reason. In the first and second rounds of data collection, 69 percent, and 70 percent respectively of the respondents mentioned food as the main reason for borrowing money before receiving the SAP cash assistance. Other reasons identified were regarding expenditures related to health, business, education, agricultural activities, and house repairs (see ***Figure 20***).

Figure 20. Proportion of Household Debt Prior to Receiving SAP



4. Social Amelioration Program

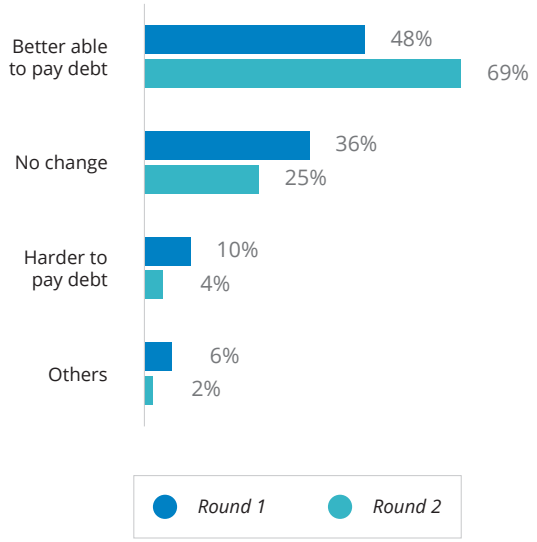
Majority of the surveyed populations received one or two traches of SAP assistance. This section is focused on the role of SAP assistance in determining their levels of food security and other essential needs at the time of the pandemic. However, non-SAP beneficiaries are included in the discussion to highlight the differences in the experiences between those who received something from the government and those that did not benefit from the cash assistance provided through SAP.

a. SAP and Household Debt

One of the most important roles that the SAP assistance played among households who said that they incurred debt prior to receiving cash grants from the government was enabling most of them to pay off their loans.

In the first round of data collection, 48 percent of the households said that the SAP grants provided them greater ability to settle their debts. This proportion increased to 69 percent in the second round of data collection (see ***Figure 21***).

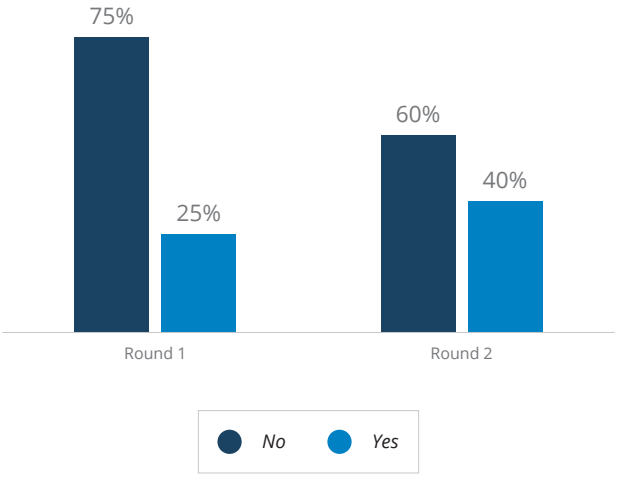
Figure 21. Impact of SAP to Households Ability to Pay Debt by Round of Data Collection



b. SAP and Households' Ability to Buy Things They Could Not Buy Before

Another important contribution of the government's cash assistance in alleviating the situation of the SAP beneficiaries was providing the ability for about a quarter of them in both rounds of data collection to purchase some goods that they could not buy before getting the SAP grants (see ***Figure 22***).

Figure 22. Impact of SAP on Ability of Households to Buy Something They Could Not Buy Before[13] by Round of Data Collection

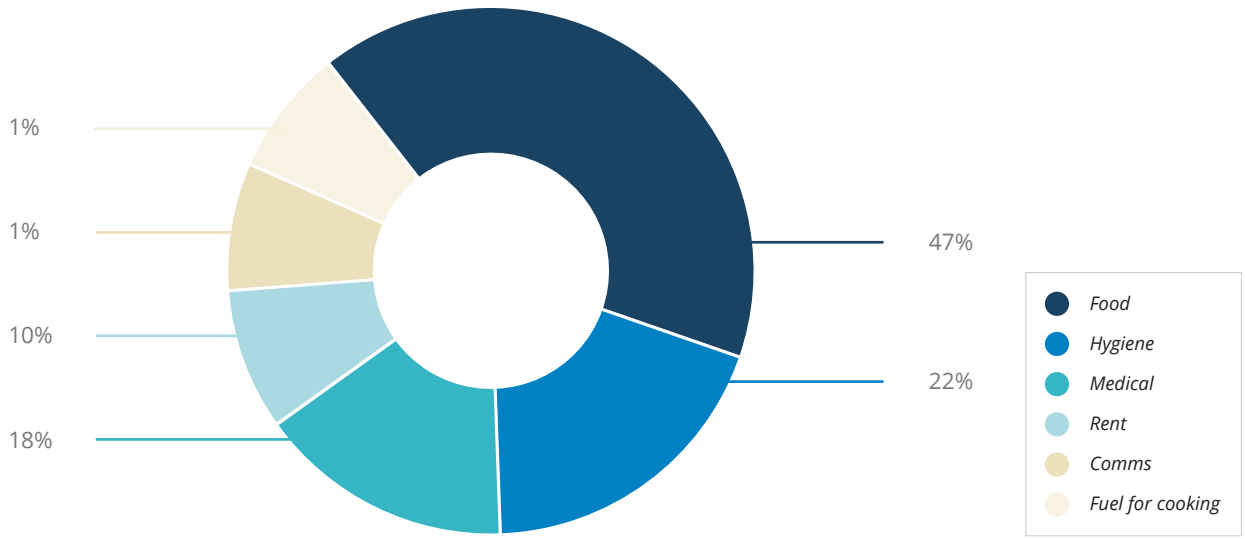


When asked to provide details on how they utilized the SAP grants, most of the beneficiaries said they used the cash assistance to buy food (47%); access hygiene materials (22%); and pay for medical needs (18%). Due to the limitations of remote household interviews, the respondents did not elaborate on the details of food, hygiene, and medical items they purchased. However, those were reported as the households needs at the time of the pandemic.

13 This is a question that the DSWD technical team requested to be included in the questionnaire to check if the SAP will enable beneficiaries to buy something they have not bought prior to receiving the SAP. The question was formulated as "Since receiving the DSWD SAP Cash Assistance, were you able to buy something you couldn't buy before?" It is answerable by Yes or No.

Other expenditure items identified by the SAP beneficiaries were housing rent (10%), communication cost, and cost of fuel used for cooking. The use of cash assistance and expenditure items were the same for both SAP beneficiaries who received one grant or two grants (see ***Figure 23***).

Figure 23. Items Purchased Using SAP Cash Assistance

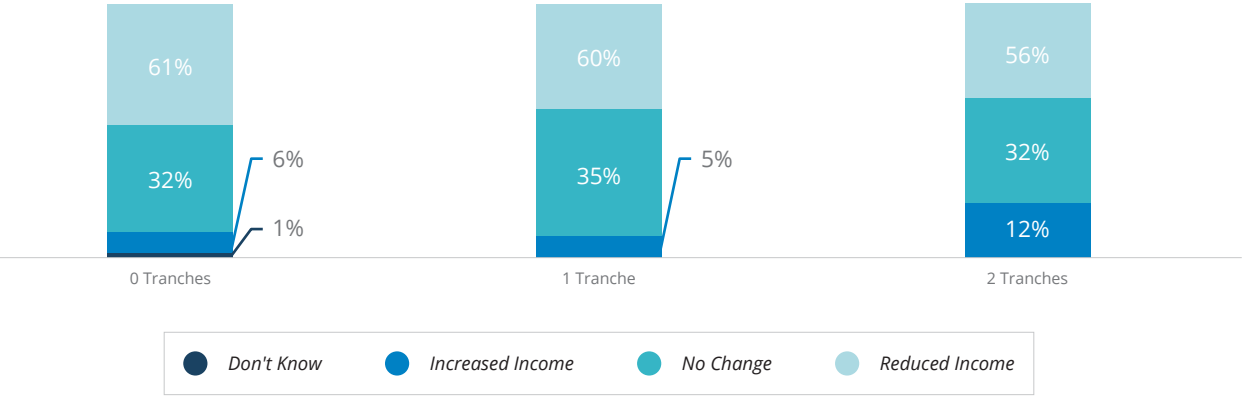


c. SAP and Household Income

Among the affected population, those who reported that they did not receive any cash assistance from the government recorded the highest proportion of households who had reduced income at 61 percent, followed by those who received only one tranche of SAP assistance at 60 percent. Those who received two tranches of cash assistance registered the lowest percentage (56%) of households who experienced reduced income and the highest proportion (12%) of households whose income increased amidst the pandemic (see ***Figure 24***).

Given the significant reduction in household income, SAP provided financial assistance to households corresponding to approximately one month of income (per tranche) for the average beneficiary.[14]

Figure 24. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on HH Income by Type of Beneficiaries



[14] As explained in the DSWD SAP document: "Computation is based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rates, taking into account the subsidy amount given under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) cash grants and rice subsidy, which is estimated at PhP2,150.00 per month per family. Thus, the 4Ps cash grants and rice subsidy are augmented to reach the mandated ESP subsidy of PhP5,000.00 to PhP8,000.00."

d. SAP and Household Food Shortages[15]

Across households, those who did not receive any cash assistance from the government have the highest proportion (41%) of households that experienced food shortages. Those who received one tranche of cash grant have slightly lower proportion (39%) of household with food insufficiency while those who received two tranches of cash assistance, registered the lowest percentage (33%) of households who experienced food insufficiency (see *Figure 25*).

In this regard, SAP played a key role in staving off food inadequacy among the households of the SAP beneficiaries. With the cash assistance, SAP ensured most beneficiaries with food access.

e. SAP and FCS

About 4.3 percent of households who received one tranche of SAP cash assistance had inadequate diets at the time of the study. On the other hand, 3.6 percent of households who did not receive SAP assistance had inadequate food consumption while 2.5 percent of households who received SAP grants for two rounds experienced having inadequate diets (see *Figure 26*).

f. SAP and main Household Concerns

The main concern that worried households during the height of the pandemic in 2020 was getting sick. Among those who got two tranches of SAP assistance, 45 percent identified this issue, followed by 36 percent of those who are non-SAP beneficiaries, and 33 percent among those who received one tranche of cash assistance.

The second most critical issue among the respondents was shortage of food. This was prominent among the households who got one tranche of cash grant and the non-SAP beneficiaries, with 29 percent and 23 percent, respectively voicing out this concern. Only 3 percent among the households who got two tranches of cash assistance mentioned this as a problem during the pandemic, indicating that many were able to access food thus food was enough in their households. This is significant because amidst the stress of the emergency during of the pandemic, the provision of cash served to relieve beneficiaries from concerns and worries related to food, therefore with positive effects also on the mental well-being of beneficiaries.

Figure 25. Household Food Insufficiency by Type of Beneficiaries

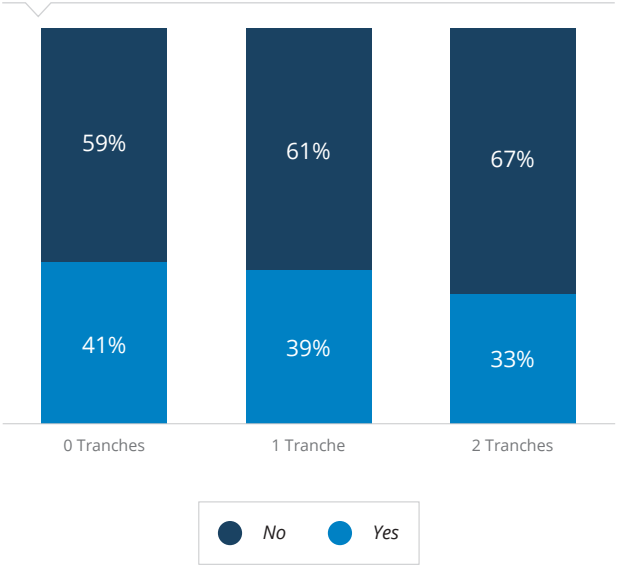
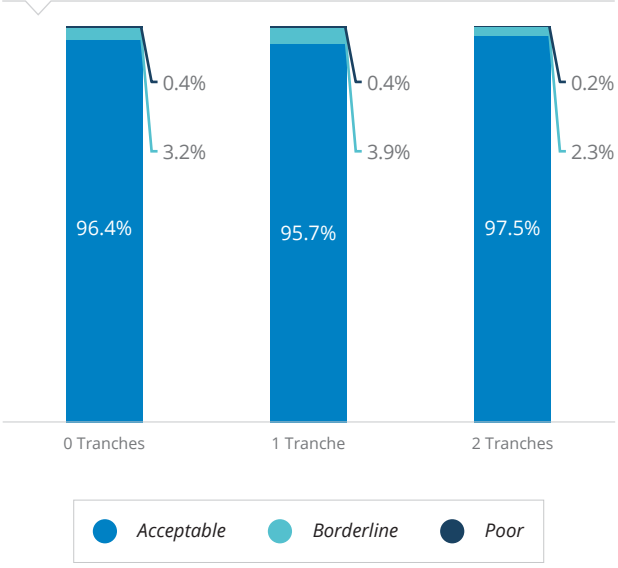


Figure 26. Food Consumption Score by Type of Beneficiaries

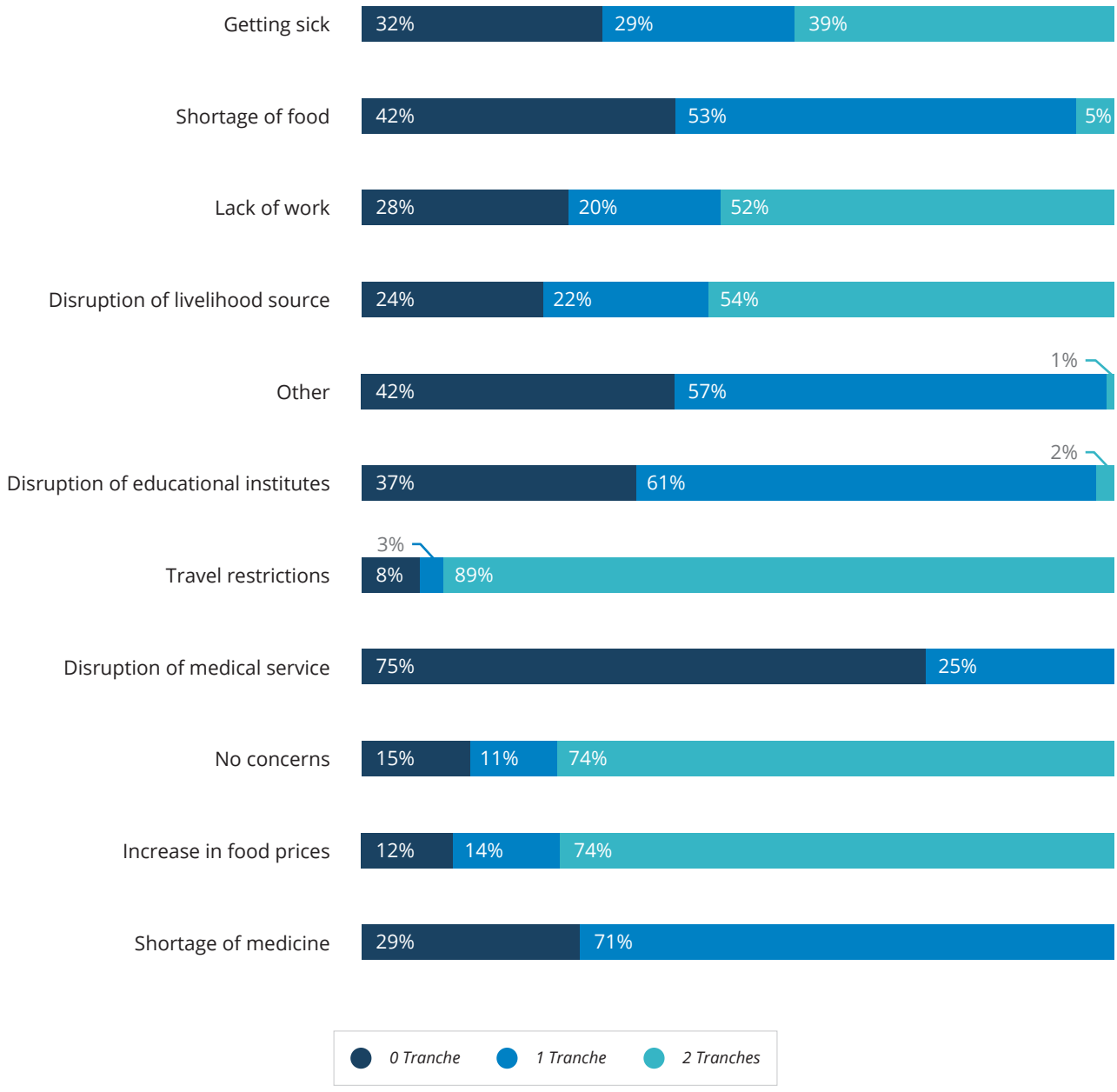


15 The discussion on food shortages in this section is based on the question "In the past 2 weeks, has there been any time when your household did not have sufficient quantities of food needed for the family?" The qualitative responses to the question were used to compute for the multi-dimensional deprivation index on food security.

Aside from the medical concern, what worried more the SAP beneficiaries who got two SAP grants from the government were travel restrictions (34%), lack of work (22%), disruption of livelihood (22%), and increase in food prices (8%) (see *Figure 27*).

Among the non-SAP beneficiaries, additional concerns were lack of work (12%), disruption of livelihood (10%), disruption of educational institutions (3%), travel restrictions (3%), and increase in food prices (1%).

Figure 27. Proportion of Household Debt Prior to Receiving SAP



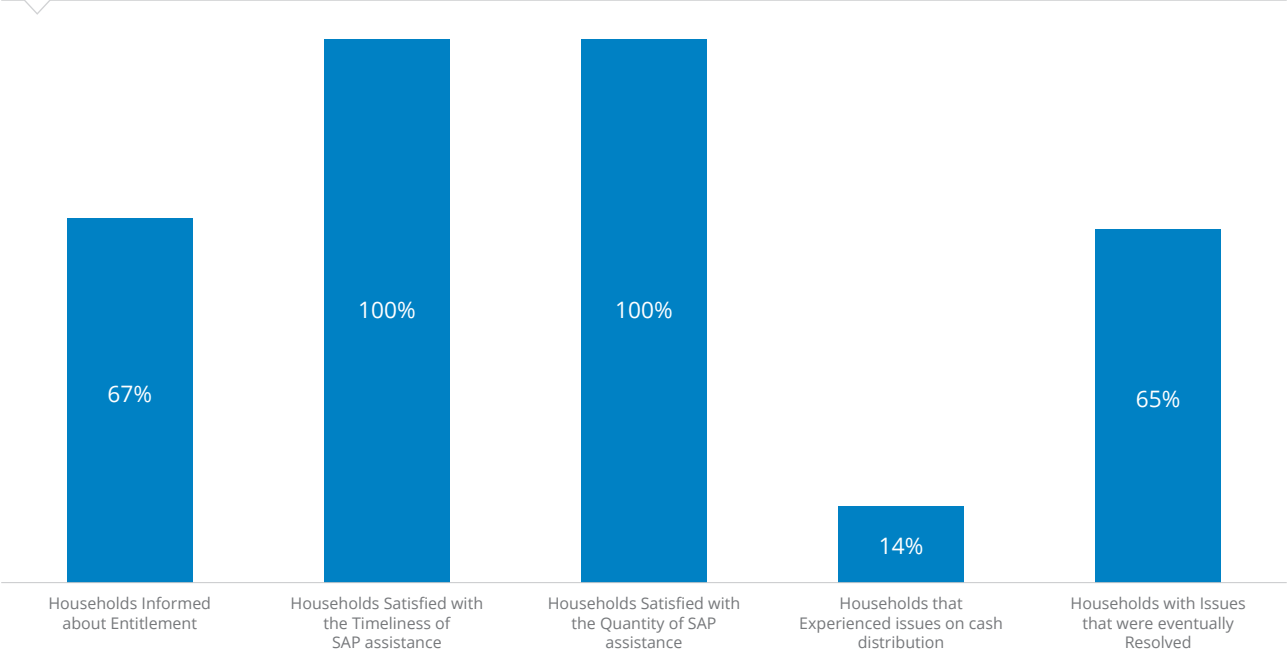
D. Beneficiary Feedback and Level of Satisfaction on SAP

This section presents the feedback provided by the SAP beneficiaries on the effectiveness of SAP implementation, particularly on the timeliness, amount of assistance, and the presence of issues in availing of the grant. It also contains information about the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries with the programme. In the conduct of the surveys, the set of questions the pertains to this section was solely asked to the SAP beneficiaries.

In the first round of data collection, around 67 percent of the SAP beneficiaries said they were informed about their cash entitlements from the SAP. Only 14 percent reported experiencing issues associated with the programme. The issues identified by the respondents were generally categorized into four themes, namely: (1) Beneficiary targeting/selection (i.e., issues were raised by neighbors who did not receive SAP grants; questions on why only 4Ps members were always getting assistance; questions about not being included in the second tranche; and concern about not directly getting assistance because it was the spouse who was in the beneficiary list; (2) discrepancy between amount received and announced in public (i.e., some reported getting only Php6,500 but they heard that they were supposed to get Php8,000); (3) delay in the distribution of assistance, and (4) other concerns which included automated teller machines (ATMs) not having 100-peso bills or always offline. Of these, 65 percent stated that their issues were eventually resolved.

When inquired about their views on the timeliness and SAP cash transfer amount, all SAP beneficiaries voiced out absolute satisfaction with the programme (see ***Figure 28***). Some of the issues previously raised were not captured in these questions. To address this limitation, the TWG made some refinements on the questions in the survey tool as discussed in the next section.

Figure 28. Beneficiary Feedback and Level of Satisfaction on SAP, Round 1 Data Collection



In the second round of data collection, the same set of questions on beneficiary feedback were asked. However, the questions on the level of satisfaction were changed from categorical type (answerable by yes or no) into Likert-type (answers are ranked according to the level of agreement on a scale or range of options such as very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neutral, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied). Also, questions about the processes of beneficiary selection and cash distributions were added to the original categories of timeliness and quantity of SAP assistance. These adjustments were done to have a more nuanced understanding of the actual levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries to SAP.

The proportion of households who said they were informed about their entitlements rose to 72 percent while the percentage of households who reported experiencing issues with the program declined to 10 percent. Of those with issues, 64 percent mentioned that their concerns were eventually resolved (see ***Figure 29***).

In response to adjusted set of questions on the survey form for the second round of data collection, 43 percent of the SAP beneficiaries said they were very satisfied with the timeliness of the distribution of assistance. Another 32 percent mentioned that they were somewhat satisfied with the timeliness of the SAP (see ***Figure 30***).

In terms of the quantity of assistance received, half of SAP recipients said they were very satisfied while 31 percent reported they were somewhat satisfied.

Regarding the beneficiary selection process, 50 percent declared that they were very satisfied while 29 percent stated that they were somewhat satisfied. Lastly, when asked about the SAP distribution process, 49 percent claimed that they were very satisfied while 31 percent were somewhat satisfied.

Overall, the levels of satisfaction with the program ranged from around 75 percent to 81 percent. While these are low compared to the absolute values generated in the first round of data collection, these are much better in getting the real views of the beneficiaries regarding SAP. These are also good indications of the level of appraisal of the beneficiaries since those who expressed high (very satisfied) and moderate (somewhat satisfied) were still higher than the proportions of those who were neutral and not satisfied (very and somewhat) with SAP.

Figure 29. Beneficiary Feedback on SAP, Round 1 Data Collection

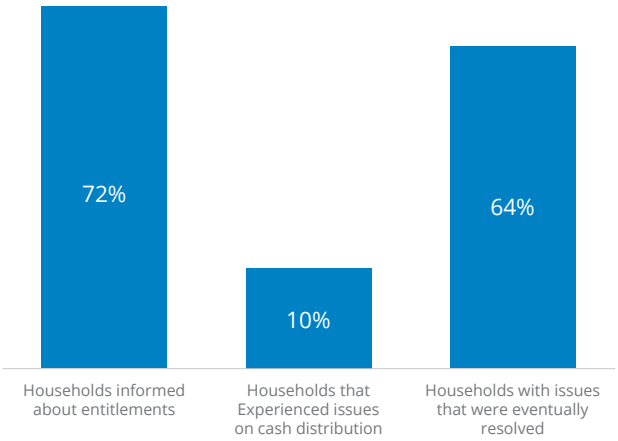
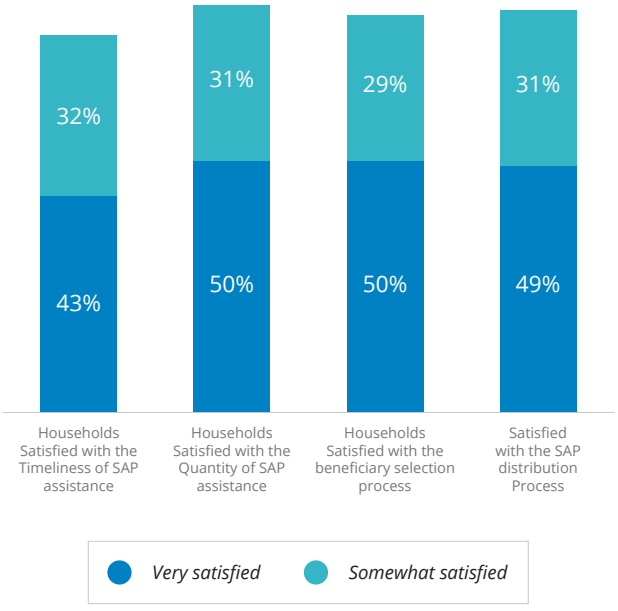


Figure 30. Level of Satisfaction of Beneficiaries on SAP, Round 2 Data Collection



DATA ANALYSIS

The study was carried out to 1) to collect valuable information on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis to food security and essential needs of the most affected population in the 17 regions in the country, and 2) to support the government in monitoring the impact of SAP to its beneficiaries.

At the time of the pandemic, there was a breakdown in the food supply chain due to the community lockdowns imposed by the government. This affected the food availability as agricultural produce from the rural areas were not easily transported to the urban centers. However, the impact of the pandemic on food availability did not really post a problem based on the narratives of the respondents. Food shortage in the market and grocery stores was not mentioned as a concern by about 99 percent of the households. Access to these commercial establishments was also not considered to be a problem by a big majority of the respondents (see Figure 12). This is because part of the government directives is the opening of markets, groceries, and other commercials establishments. It should likewise be noted that in many instances in the country, food assistance was provided by other national agencies, local government units, and private institutions to the affected population thus food availability is not a big issue.

Among the four pillars of food security, COVID 19 has mainly affected access to food due to loss of household income and the increase in unemployment. Lack of financial resources (or as the respondents said, "no money") was the main concern for about 80% of households (see Figure 12). About the same number of households (78%) in the first round and about half of the households (47%) in the second round of data collection reported experiencing diminished household income. The reduced income is related to the three-percentage increase in the proportion of unemployed and the decreases in the percentages of people having work across livelihood sectors between the first and second data collections. The reduced income due to dwindling job opportunities is a major problem because in the Philippines, a sizable proportion of households primarily rely on market transactions to access food. This is based on the findings of the 2015 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) conducted by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) (see ***Table 2***). Thus, any disruption on the purchasing power of most households would have consequent negative effect on their food security situation.

Table 2. Food Sources in the Philippines (FNRI National Nutrition Survey, 2015)

Food Groups	Purchased	Own Produce	Given/Free	Others
Cereals	87.4%	9.3%	1.9%	1.5%
Vitamin A-Rich Vegetables and Tubers	83.7%	10.8%	4.8%	0.8%
White Tubers & Roots	77.4%	15.4%	5.8%	1.4%
Dark Green Leafy Vegetables	42.8%	46.0%	6.6%	4.6%
Other Vegetables	72.7%	21.0%	4.6%	1.7%
Vitamin A-Rich Fruits	54.3%	31.6%	9.4%	4.7%
Other Fruits	72.4%	19.4%	6.8%	1.5%
Meats	91.5%	3.8%	3.8%	1.0%
Organ Meats	89.7%	4.7%	4.8%	0.9%
Eggs	93.7%	5.0%	0.8%	0.5%
Fish & Shellfish	92.2%	1.8%	2.4%	3.6%
Legumes, Nuts & Seeds	91.9%	4.8%	2.7%	0.6%
Milk & Milk Products	98.1%	0.7%	0.9%	0.4%
Oils & Fats	98.4%	0.9%	0.5%	0.2%
Sweets	98.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.3%
Spices, Condiments & Beverages	98.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.2%

There is not enough data to allow for a substantial discussion about food utilization at the time of the pandemic.[16] However, based on the typical diets generated using FCS, it was observed that there is not enough nutritious food in the diets being consumed by the households. This is because the minimum wages across regions in the country (which is the basis for calculating the amount of SAP grants) are not enough to cover the cost of nutritious food based on the results of the WFP Fill the Nutrient Gap study. (WFP, 2018).

[16] One limitation of the study was the absence of a nutrition module in its research design because it was felt that some of the nutrition assessment tools (for instance, anthropometric measurements) may not be possible to undertake in a remote data collection setup.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Continue the use of the SAP model as a response measure to future emergencies but consider improving its beneficiary targeting and delivery system

The study found that the SAP cash assistance provided by the DSWD played an important role in ensuring food access to vulnerable populations for at least two months. The SAP assistance found to have reduced reliance on borrowing and have increased the capacity of households who incurred debts to pay off their loans.

In the context of the current global crisis caused by the increases in prices of fuel, food and fertilizers, it is recommended that the program be continued to provide cash support to the most affected population The continued provision of the SAP cash assistance will help address the negative long-term impact of the livelihood-based coping strategies that were employed by the most food insecure and vulnerable households during the pandemic and at present due to the global crisis.

However, the study also found that some population, like those in the transport sector and those not covered by the SAP, have been greatly affected by the pandemic. It is critical to factor this in the future formulation and implementation of SAP to improve the targeting of social protection systems and reach the most food insecure and vulnerable populations.

2 Include the cost of nutritious food in the computation of SAP assistance

The SAP cash assistance was computed based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rates, taking into account the subsidy amount given under the 4Ps cash grants and rice subsidy. While the continued cash support is laudable, it is recommended that the computation of cash assistance be improved to consider the cost of nutritious diet. A separate study of WFP (2018) found that the minimum wage is not sufficient to buy nutritious diet.

3 Institutionalize the use of remote data collection and analysis tools in the government to further strengthen the monitoring and analysis systems during emergency

The study showcased the good collaboration between DSWD and WFP in the utilization of available technologies to undertake monitoring of SAP during emergency. Given the experience of both agencies, it is recommended for the government to institutionalize the remote data collection and analysis tools like the mVAM and rM&E for the continued monitoring of COVID-19 and future shocks to map food insecurity among the most vulnerable populations in the country.

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ANNEX 1

Project Timeline and Milestones

The project was a joint undertaking of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) of the regional government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and the World Food Programme (WFP). As such, the various research activities were designed as collaborative engagements between the technical staff of DSWD at the national office, MSSD at the BARMM region and WFP.

The initial engagements between WFP and DSWD technical staff began in March 2020 with the development of the project concept note and the submission of a research proposal by WFP to DSWD central office.[17]

Upon the approval of the research proposal by the management of DSWD, a technical working group (TWG) was formed in the month of April 2020. It was composed of representatives from the WFP country office and regional bureau in Bangkok (BKK) and the central office of DSWD and regional office of MSSD to enable close coordination between partner agencies and provide a platform for the discussion of technical concerns of the project. Likewise, joint development of framework and research tools, and actual transfer of knowledge on remote monitoring and food security and vulnerability assessment and skills on the use of monitoring tools were carried out in by WFP and DSWD.

As a PDM project, the data collection activities of the project were designed to be carried out after each of the planned distributions of the SAP cash assistance was completed by the government. Initially, the project's TWG arranged for three household surveys following the earlier public announcements that three tranches of SAP cash assistance were being planned. Later, the number of data generation activities was reduced to two following the decision of the government to do only two cash distributions of SAP assistance. The design to have at least two data collection points helped the study perform a comparative analysis on the impact of the two tranches of cash distribution on the food security and other essential needs of SAP and even non-SAP beneficiaries over time, even in the absence of baseline data prior to the time of the pandemic.

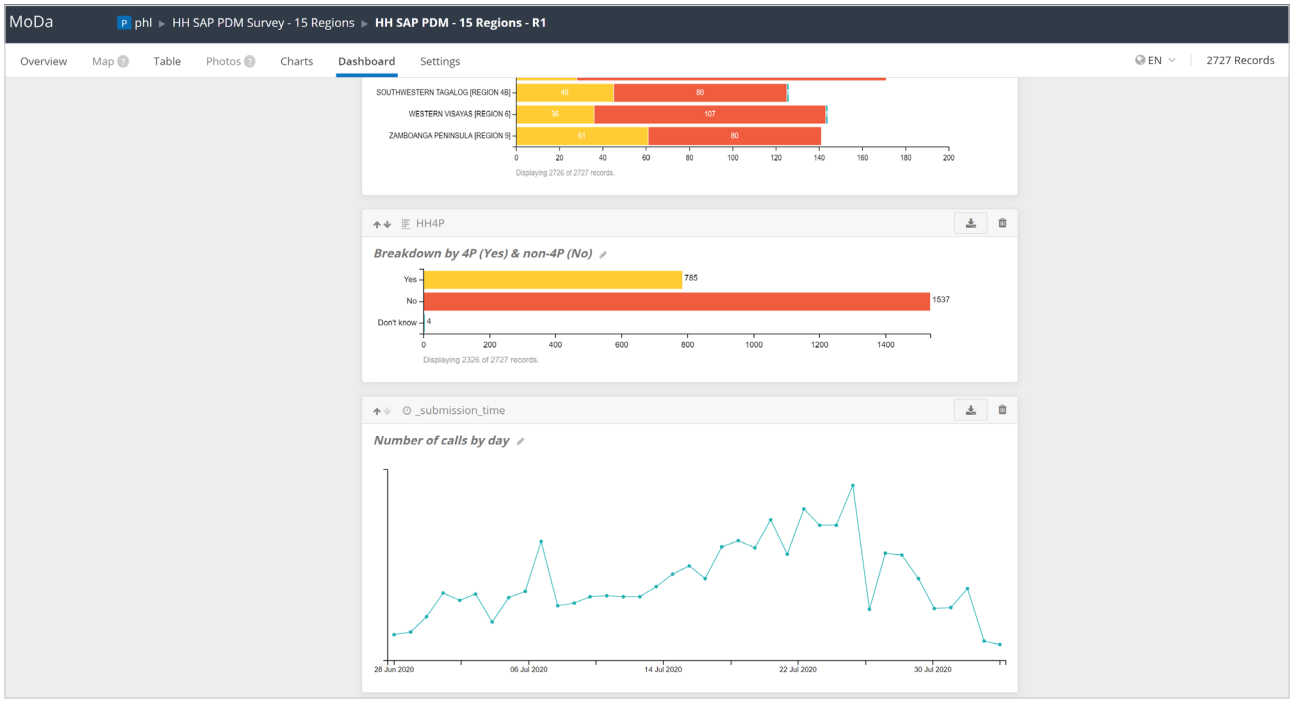
[17] WFP submitted a concept note on the proposed project on 24 March 2020. DSWD reviewed the document and approved the proposal on 30 March 2020.

Prior to the first round of data collection, WFP prepared the survey form using its web-based and mobile-based platform called MoDa (Mobile Operational Data Acquisition). For the second round of data collection, the WFP technical team in coordination with DSWD partners, likewise reviewed and revised the questionnaire using MoDa. The revision included changing the recall period for some of the questions to make them more appropriate for panel survey analysis and adjusting the set of questions on the level of beneficiary satisfaction with SAP.

After the questionnaire has been prepared, WFP led the conduct of a series of online training courses on remote data collection. For the first round of the survey, the training was done in the months of May to June 2020 with DSWD staff as participants. For the second round of the data collection, the enumerator's training was held in 11-12 November 2020 with JVOFI team members as attendees.

The first round of data collection was conducted in the months of June to August 2020 while the second round of data collection was carried out in the period of November 2020 to January 2021. MoDa serves as the online platform for data collection and for monitoring the daily accomplishments of the enumeration team using the system's built-in dashboard facility (see ***Figure 31***).

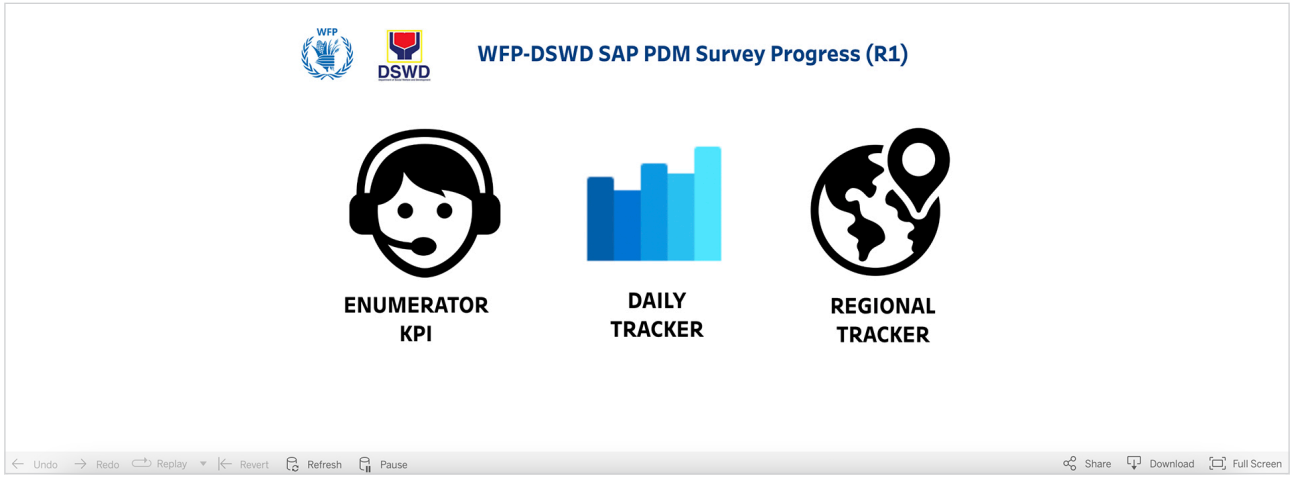
Figure 31. Sample MoDa Dashboard

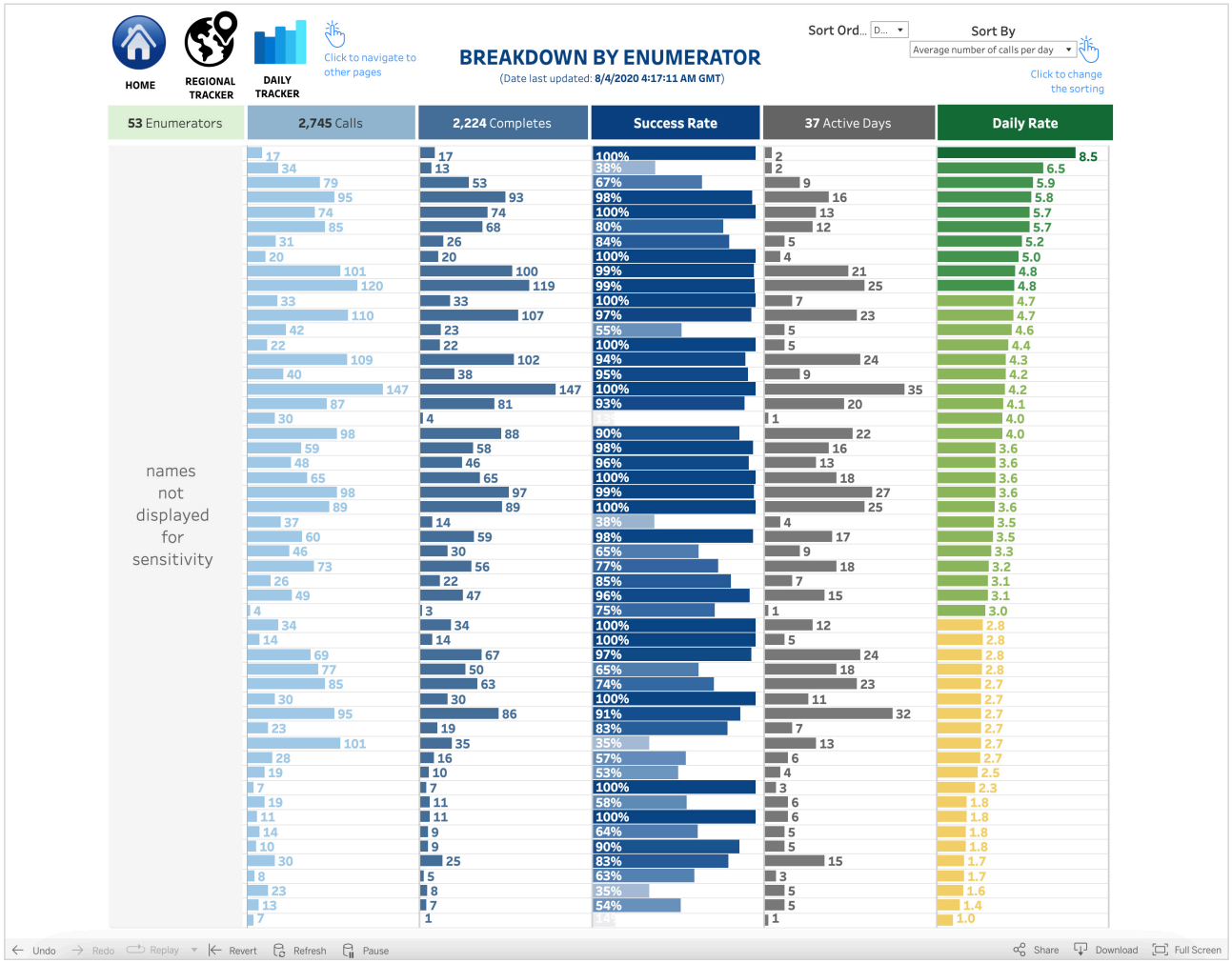


Aside from the MoDa, WFP through RBB technical developed a real-time online tracker/dashboard to further complement MoDa's system for keeping track of the daily outputs. The additional tracker has three tabs:

Enumerator KPI: Designed to track different key performance indicators (KPI) such as the number of active days and average number of complete surveys per day. This information was generated to help the team manage its resources efficiently (see *Figure 32*);

Figure 32. Real-time Online Enumerator KPI Tracker

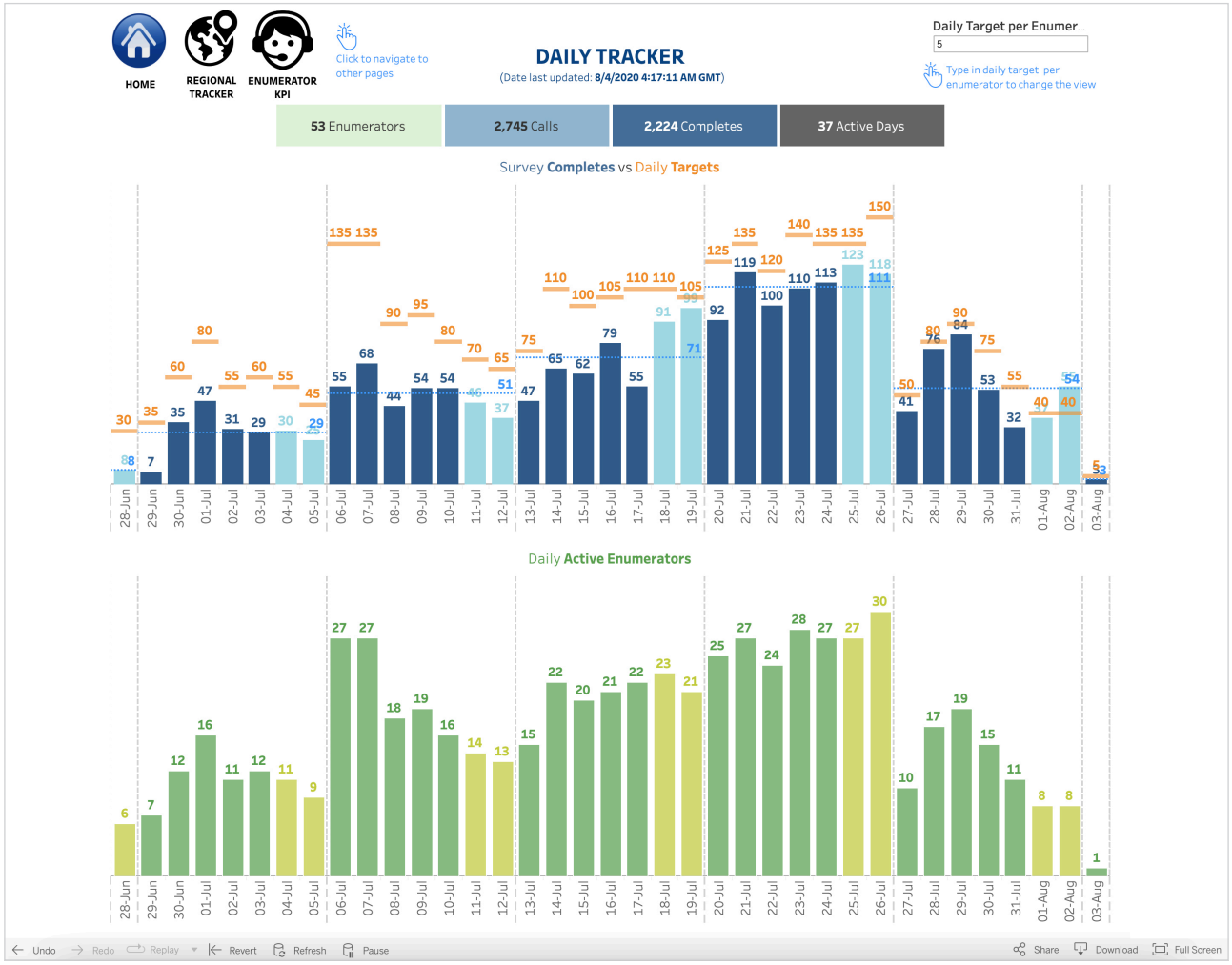




Daily Tracker: Designed to monitor the daily totals against the expected output and overall target (see *Figure 33*); and

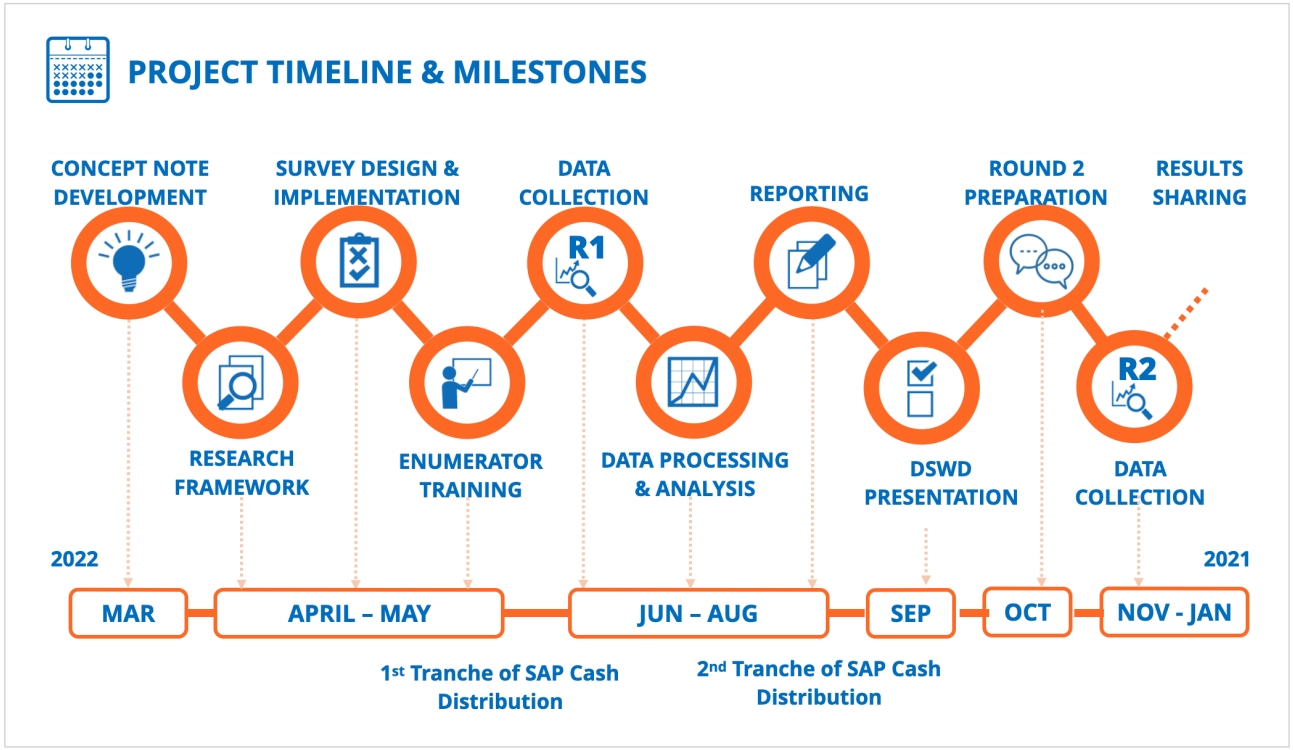
Regional Tracker: Designed to monitor the completed interviews in relation to the target number by region and sliced by 4Ps and non-4Ps beneficiaries. This helped the members of the enumeration team get timely information about where to focus their attention once they have achieved their specific quota.

Figure 33. Real-time Online Daily Tracker



After each round of data collection, WFP technical staff processed the survey data and performed data cleaning, processing, and analysis. In partnership with DSWD technical team, a series of presentations were done to share the initial findings of the first round of data collection (see *Figure 34*). The presentation of the initial project results to the DSWD officials in the central office was done in September 2020. A similar presentation was organized with the officials and staff of MSSD as audience in October 2020. And then in December 2020, the initial project results were presented to the regional officials and staff of various government agencies in Regions 1 and 4A. Likewise, the results of the study were shared to WFP colleagues in the PHCO and RBB, as well as to the members of the country's Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), and the Social Protection Cluster.

Figure 34. Project Timeline and Milestones



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