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# Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition (EFSN) Programme **Outcome Assessment Report**

April 2022

## Highlights

- WFP conducted an outcome monitoring assessment to monitor the food security and nutrition status of its Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition (EFSN) Programme beneficiaries in Ukhiya and Teknaf.
- Overall, the proportion of households with acceptable food consumption is high (78 percent). Beneficiary households living in Teknaf had slightly better adequate food consumption (80 percent) than in Ukhiya (76 percent). There were no differences in food consumption between female- and male-headed households.
- Comparisons with findings from the 2021 Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA 5) indicate that EFSN beneficiaries have better food consumption scores than the general population, pointing to the potential positive influence of WFP's assistance in improving beneficiary households' food access.
- Further, REVA 5 indicated that, in the general population, women-headed households reported inadequate consumption compared to male-headed households (48 versus 36 percent, respectively). The EFSN program targets only women and- this study found no differences in adequate consumption between male-headed and female-headed households. This potentially indicates the program's benefit in empowering women-headed households to attain food security status comparable to other population segments.
- More than half of households consume vitamin A-rich foods (63 percent), and beneficiaries reported better dietary diversity since joining the EFSN programme.
- The consumption of protein-rich foods is low (32 percent), with the consumption of iron-rich food even lower (6 percent). Seasonal income drops threaten households' ability to maintain a consistent and diverse diet.
- Less than half (48 percent) of female beneficiaries under the EFSN program reached minimum dietary diversity (MDD)<sup>1</sup>. Women in Ukhiya had better dietary diversity (58 percent) than Teknaf (36 percent). These findings indicate that while beneficiary households Teknaf have high acceptable food consumption, women in the households do not have micro nutrient adequacy , indicating household resources are not allocated proportionally.
- Only 26 percent of beneficiary households spent more than 65 percent of their monthly budget on food, indicating reduced levels of economic vulnerability following receiving WFP assistance.
- Over half of the households (59 percent) employed a coping strategy one week before the survey. Households that include people with disabilities were almost twice as likely to use coping strategies.
- At least 37 percent of households used a crisis or emergency strategy, while almost half (46 percent) used stress coping strategies.
- Most beneficiaries (94 percent) reported that their incomes increased due to the livelihood opportunities and skills received through the EFSN programme.
- Beneficiaries reported that increased income and the skills developed from the programme have empowered them and improved how family and community perceive them.

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<sup>1</sup> Minimum dietary diversity is a proxy indicator that measures diet diversity to predict the likelihood of micronutrient adequacy for groups of women of reproductive age. It is used to study intra-household allocation of resources to ensure household benefits are shared by all members.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Programme Overview

The World Food Programme (WFP) started the Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition (EFSN) programme in 2014 to improve vulnerable women's food security and nutritional status in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts (*upazila*) of Cox's Bazar. In 2021, the programme then expanded to include three additional sub-districts; Moheshkhali, Pekua and Kutubdia. Through EFSN, women are given access to entrepreneurial skills development and life-skills training, and supported with a monthly subsistence allowance of BDT 1,050 (USD 12). They are organized into self-help groups (SHG), which act as a platform for enhancing financial accountability through monthly group savings, linking with existing national social safety nets, and creating the most profitable environment to become micro-entrepreneurs. Following the completion of training and the submission of a business plan, each group member receives an income-generating activity (IGA) grant of BDT 18,000 (USD 212) to start independent income-generating activities. Additionally, women receive a group grant (5,000 BDT per beneficiary) to be invested in a joint venture. The programme supported 45,000 beneficiaries and programme graduates in 2021.



**Figure 1: EFSN Beneficiary working on pottery**

## 1.2. Outcome Assessment

WFP conducted an outcome monitoring assessment to understand EFSN beneficiaries' food security and nutrition status. The assessment's objectives were to:

- I. Identify intermediate outcomes resulting from programme activities
- II. Gather beneficiary feedback on programme implementation approaches
- III. Document best practices and develop recommendations for programme adjustments.

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1. Study Approach and Sampling

The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample was selected following a proportionate stratified random sampling approach among beneficiaries in Ukhiya and Teknaf. A total of 312 beneficiary households were sampled. The sample size is representative at the programme level with a 95 percent confidence level, 50 percent response distribution of indicators, and a 9 percent margin of error.

**Table 1: Sample Distribution**

Upazila	Union	Surveys
Ukhiya	Haldia Palong	68
	Jalia Palong	27
	Raja Palong	28
	Ratna Palong	22
	Palong Khali	23
Teknaf	Baharchhara	30
	Nhila	26
	Sabrang	18
	Teknaf	32
	Whykong	38
Total	<b>Ukhiya</b>	<b>168</b>
	<b>Teknaf</b>	<b>144</b>
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>312</b>

## 2.2. Data Collection

Six monitoring assistants from WFP conducted face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire in late December 2021. Following quantitative data analysis, seven focus group discussions were conducted in February 2022 to triangulate data and fill in the gaps identified from the quantitative analysis.

A digitally structured questionnaire collected data on essential food security indicators, and beneficiary perspectives of food assistance, safety, and empowerment. The questionnaire included hints and controls to ensure standardization and accuracy of data collected.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Demographic Information

Since the programme only targets women, all respondents were female, with a majority between 31-40 years. The majority (83 percent) are married, while a small proportion have disabilities (4.8 percent).

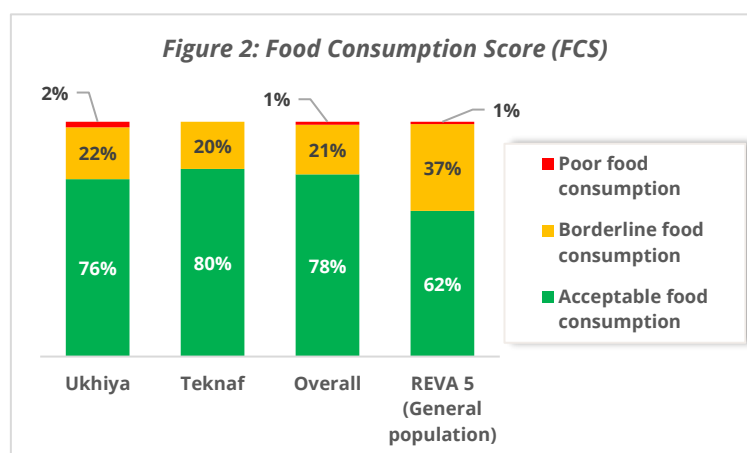
**Table 2: Respondent Age**

Upazila	Age Groups					Total
	19-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	50-50 years	60+ years	
Ukhiya	22%	21%	8%	1%	1%	54%
Teknaf	23%	15%	6%	2%	0%	46%
Total	46%	36%	14%	3%	1%	100%

## 3.2. Food Security Outcomes

### 3.2.1. Food Consumption Score (FCS)

Overall, the proportion of households with acceptable food consumption is high (78 percent). In most households, milk and dairy items, followed by fruit, are the least consumed, while cereals/tubers and oil/fats are consumed most. There were no differences in food consumption between female- and male-headed households. Comparisons with findings from the 2021 Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA) indicate that EFSN beneficiary



households have better food consumption scores than the general population, pointing to the potential positive influence of WFP's assistance in improving beneficiary households' food access.<sup>1</sup> Further, REVA 5 indicated that women-headed households reported inadequate consumption compared to male-headed households (48 versus 36 percent, respectively). The program targets only women and this study found no differences between male-headed and female-headed households. This potentially indicates the program's benefit in empowering women-headed households to attain food security status comparable to other population segments.

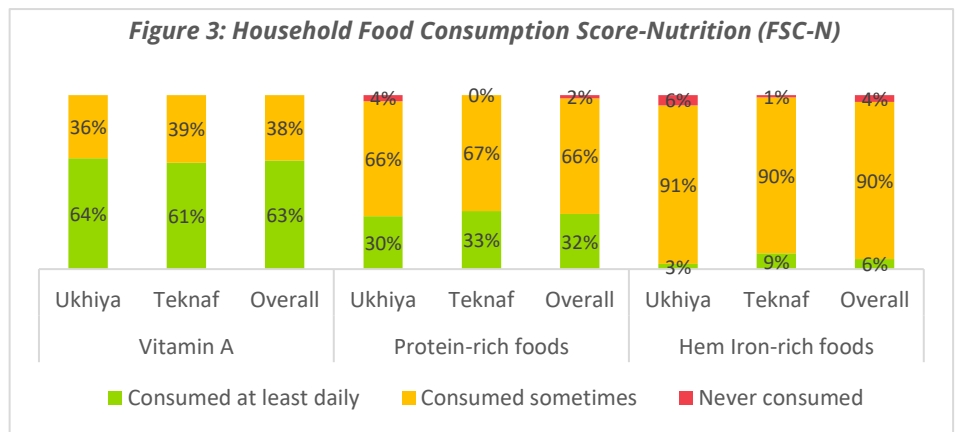
**Table 3: Average number of days of consumption of key food groups**

Food groups	Average Consumption Days (in a week)		
	Male Headed Households	Female-Headed Households	Overall
Cereals/Tubers	7.00	7.00	7.00
Pulses/Nuts/Seeds	1.33	1.88	1.46
Milk/Dairy	.81	.95	.84
Eggs/Meat/Fish	4.83	4.86	4.84
Vegetables	5.94	5.38	5.81
Fruits	2.35	2.12	2.30
Sugar	1.72	1.55	1.68
Oil/Fats	6.87	7.00	6.90

### 3.2.2. Food Consumption Score-Nutrition (FSC-N)

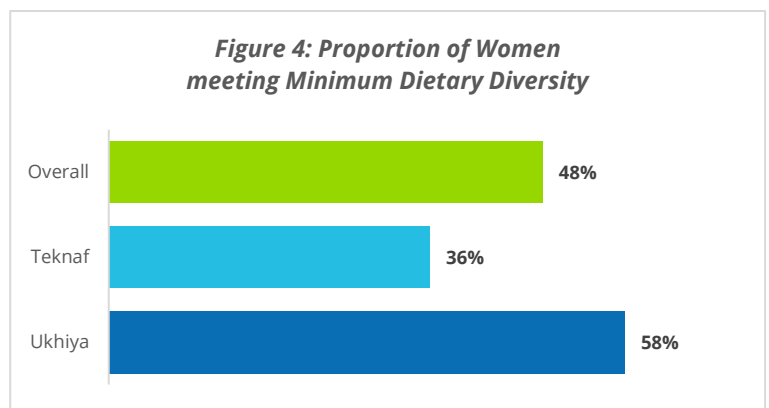
<sup>2</sup>More than half of households consume vitamin A-rich foods (63 percent) with no significant differences between Teknaf and Ukhiya beneficiaries. In focus group discussions (FGDs), there was consensus among beneficiaries that they are consuming better diets since joining the programme, indicating the benefit of WFP's assistance. However, the consumption of protein-rich foods is low (32 percent) with the consumption of hem iron-rich food even lower (6 percent). FGDs point to several factors, including due to seasonal drops in income, when beneficiaries face difficulties maintaining a consistent diet with the purchase of more expensive, protein-rich foods dropping in low-income seasons. An exercise in which beneficiaries described a typical daily food plate shows that cereals are consumed most often, followed by pulses and limited amounts of animal protein, milk, and green vegetables. This food plate analysis showed lower iron and vitamin A-rich vegetable consumption, likely due to persistent, cultural dietary practices and limited

knowledge of good nutrition. Additionally, these findings imply that, while beneficiaries' diets have improved, reliance on unstable livelihood sources such as casual labour continues to affect food security outcomes for beneficiaries. Sensitization of healthy diets, combined with support to boost income and build beneficiaries' resilience capacities, is crucial in the next phase of the programme.



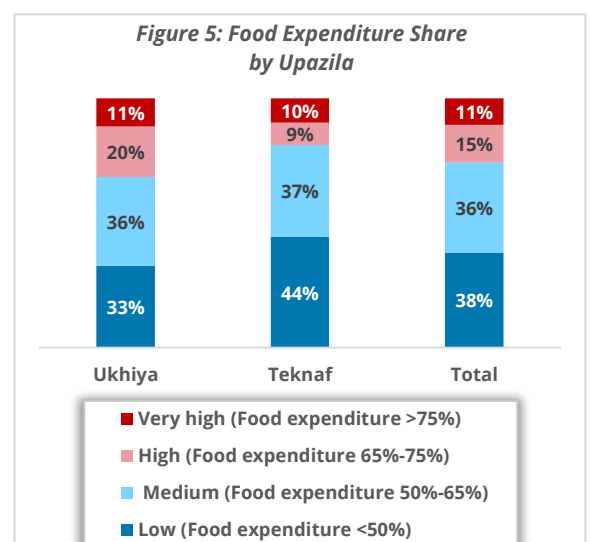
### 3.2.3. Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W)

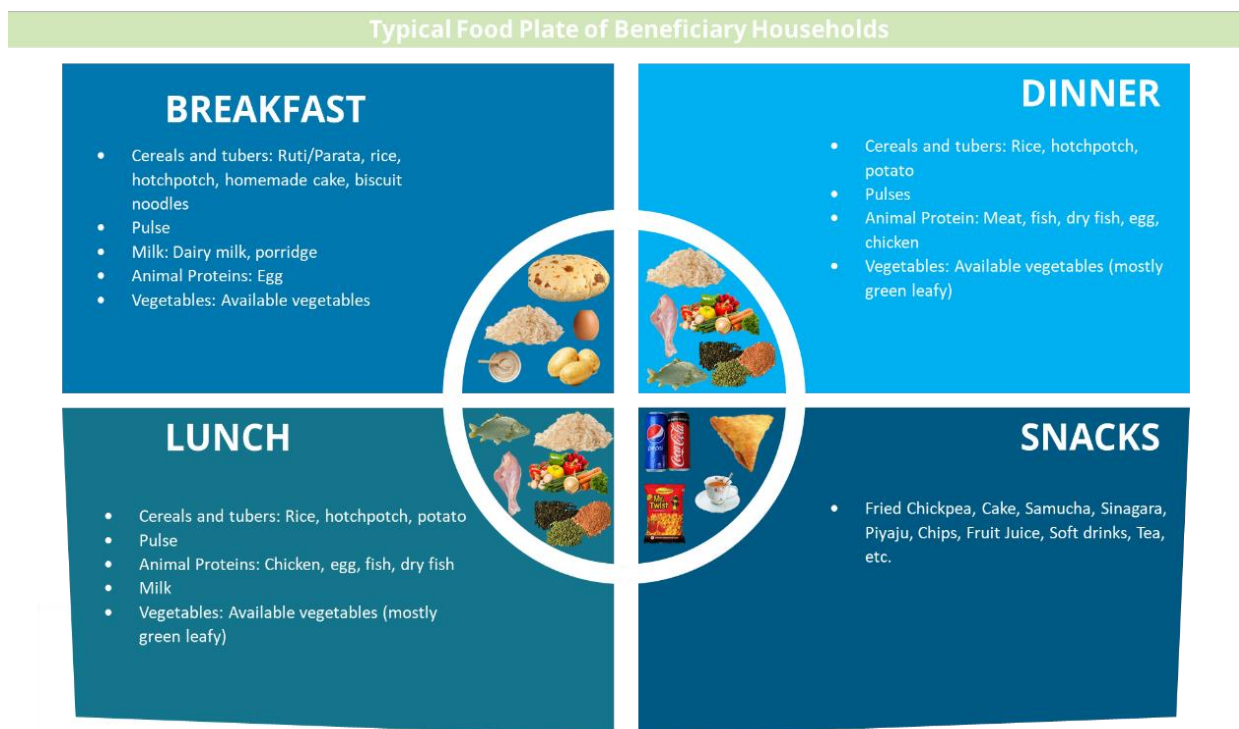
Less than half (48 percent) of the women surveyed reached minimum dietary diversity (MDD) thresholds.<sup>3</sup> Beneficiaries in Ukhiya had better dietary diversity (58 percent) than Teknaf (36 percent). Although in-depth discussions with beneficiaries indicate no gender differences in how food is shared within households, the fact that less than half of women beneficiaries attained MDD-W indicates disproportional allocation of resources and is concerning.



### 3.2.4. Food Expenditure Share (FES)

The FES is a proxy indicator for the economic vulnerability of a household. The higher the food expenses in relation to other consumed items/services, the more economically vulnerable the household.<sup>4</sup> Households spending more than 65 percent of their monthly budget on food are considered economically vulnerable. Overall, 26 percent of the surveyed beneficiary households fall in the economically-vulnerable category. The low proportion of economically-vulnerable beneficiary households indicate the positive benefits of WFP assistance. However, beneficiary households in Ukhiya were more likely to have high food expenditure than Teknaf. Future programme efforts should consider this variability when designing beneficiary support approaches.

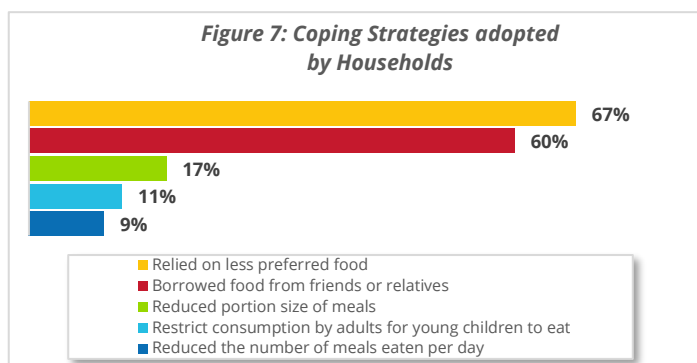




**Figure 6: Typical Food Plate of Beneficiary Households**

### 3.2.5. Consumption-based coping strategies (rCSI)

The average reduced coping strategy index (rCSI)<sup>2</sup> among beneficiary households is 2.98 higher than that of the general population (2.5<sup>3</sup>). This indicates that beneficiary households are potentially experiencing more stress due to food shortages- not surprising considering the program targets vulnerable households. Over half of the households (59 percent) used at least one coping strategy a week before the survey. Households with persons with disabilities were almost twice as likely to use coping strategies. The main strategies were relying on less-preferred foods (67 percent) and borrowing food from friends or relatives (60 percent).



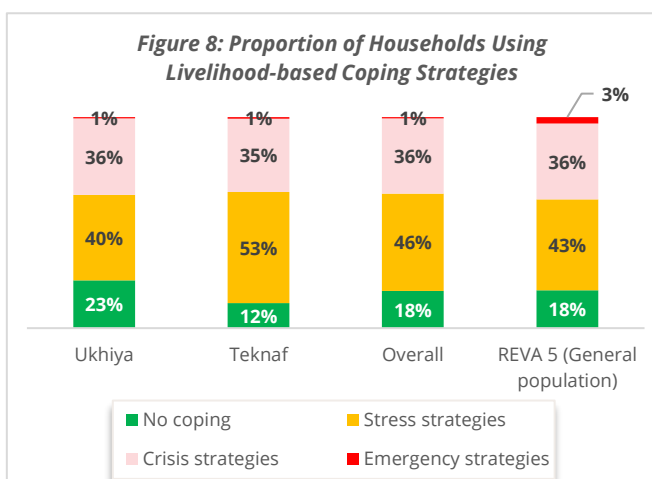
<sup>2</sup> The rCSI measures the stress level a household is facing when exposed to food shortage by assessing the frequency of adoption of 5 food-related coping mechanisms, as well as their relative severity. The higher the stress, the higher the behavioural responses and the index.

<sup>3</sup> REVA 5



### 3.2.6. Livelihood-based coping strategies index (LCSI)

At least 37 percent of surveyed households used either one crisis or emergency strategy, while almost half (46 percent) used stress coping strategies. In Teknaf, more households used coping strategies than in Ukhiya. The main reasons for using the strategies were to meet household needs for food (84 percent) and medical care (48 percent). These findings indicate beneficiary households still struggle to meet their essential needs, possibly due to the slow economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the continued adoption of stress coping strategies by almost half of the households indicates that households remain vulnerable to shocks in the future despite the WFP assistance provided.



## 3.3. Livelihood and Income Generation

### 3.3.1. Livelihood Opportunities Created

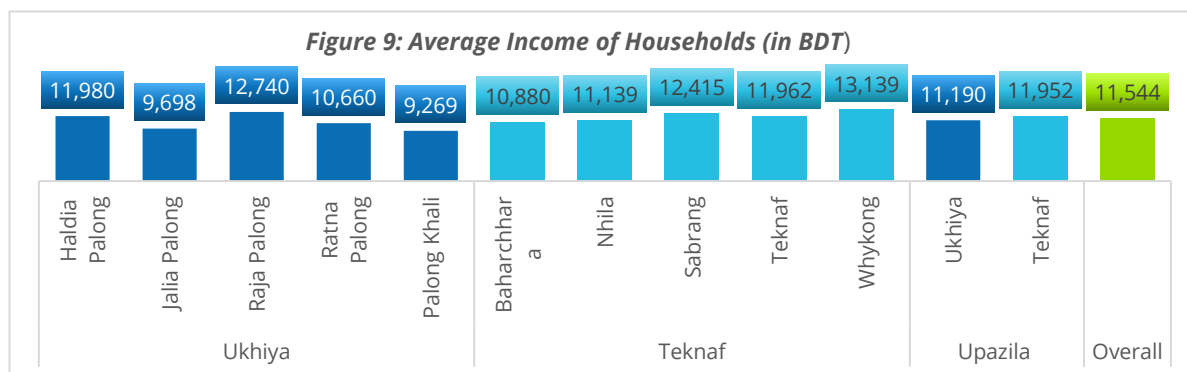
As mentioned in the Introduction, the EFSN programme provides beneficiaries with a package of entrepreneurial skills training, a monthly subsistence allowance, one-time grants, and self-help groups to improve their incomes, access to microfinance, and livelihood opportunities. At the time of the survey, almost all beneficiaries (99.7 percent) were implementing an income-generating activity indicating high utilization of skills provided through the programme. The sale of fish/poultry is the primary activity, followed by the sale of agricultural produce.

**Table 4: Income Generating Activities by Gender of Household Head**

Types of income-generating activities	Gender of the household head		
	Male	Female	Overall
Sale of agricultural crop	8.7%	16.0%	10.4%
Sale of animals/fish/poultry products	69.9%	65.0%	68.7%
Agricultural wage labour	0.0%	1.0%	0.2%
Non-agricultural labour	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Self-employed (carpenter, electrician, cobbler, etc.)	6.1%	4.0%	5.6%
Irregular daily labour/casual worker	0.3%	1.0%	0.5%
Sale of handicrafts	1.6%	2.0%	1.7%
Petty trade	5.1%	3.0%	4.6%
Others	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%

### 3.3.2 Programme contribution to Beneficiary Income

The average monthly household income was BDT 11,544 (USD 137) with no significant differences between Ukhiya and Teknaf. On average, beneficiaries reported contributing 20 percent (BDT 2,252) of the overall household income. Further, a considerable proportion of beneficiaries (94 percent) reported that their incomes increased due to the livelihood opportunities and skills received through the EFSN programme. In FGDs, beneficiaries highlighted how vital this income boost has been in putting more nutritious food on their plates. However, while beneficiary income increased due to EFSN participation, only 10 percent have a bank account and only 8 percent have access to microfinance.

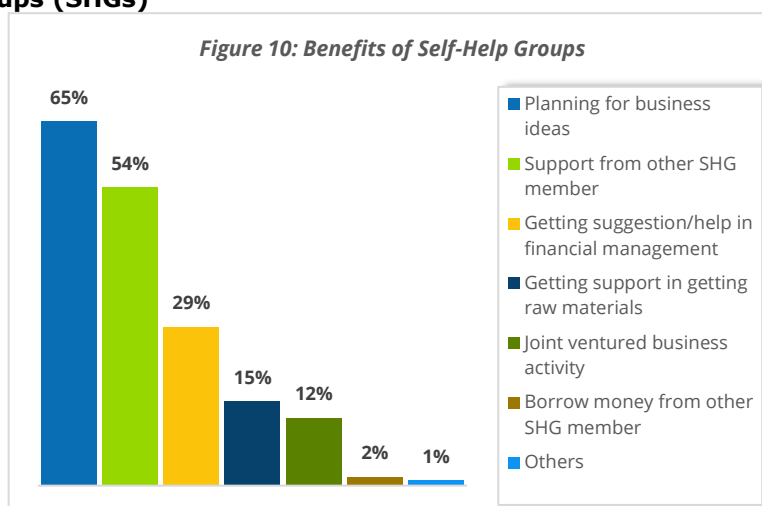


## 3.4. Beneficiary Perception of Programme Approaches and Activities

As mentioned above, the programme uses a combined approach (formation of self-help groups, monthly subsistence allowance, skills training, and provision of one-time grants) to boost the livelihoods and incomes of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries were asked about their perception of these approaches during the study with results outlined below.

### 3.4.1 Benefits of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

The main benefits of SHGs were joint development and planning of business ideas followed by support from other members. Beneficiaries mentioned that regular meetings, during which they share business ideas and plans, are instrumental in building relationships with each other. The SHGs are also seen as a haven where beneficiaries receive support to respond to emergencies and learn skills on topics such as nutritional practices, basic literacy, agriculture, livestock rearing, medical treatment, gender-based violence, and disaster preparedness and response.

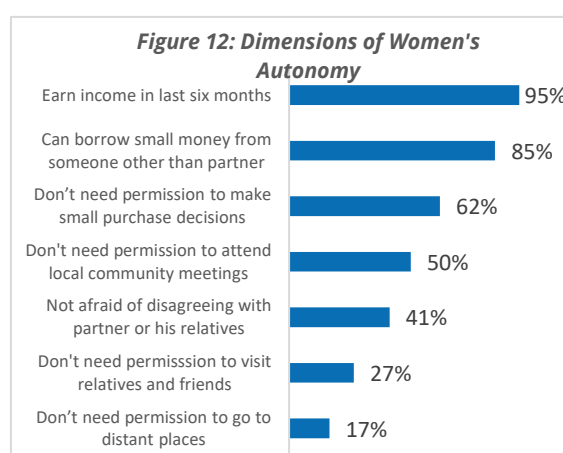
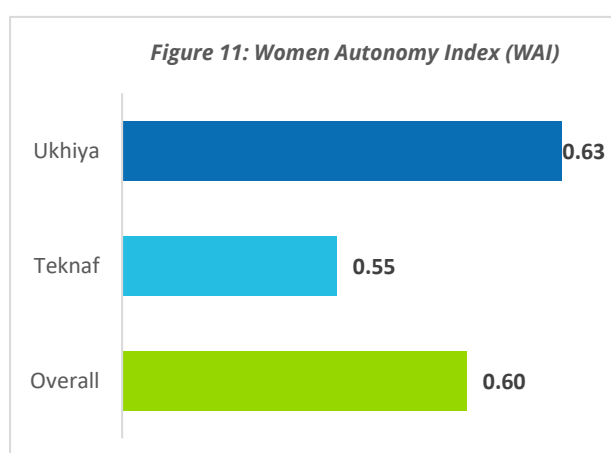


## 3.5. Empowerment Outcomes

### 3.5.1. Women Autonomy Index

The study used the women autonomy index (WAI) as a proxy to measure women's empowerment. The index is a self-reported measure of women's autonomy through several dimensions such as access to income, mobility, and freedom of expression. The closer the average score is to one, the higher the woman's autonomy.

The average score among beneficiaries is 0.6, indicating moderate autonomy. Beneficiaries in focus group discussions said that because their income increased due to the programme's activities, their family and community's perception of their social value improved. For example, they reported being able to take part in important family decisions after time spent in the programme. Additionally, due to increased income, beneficiaries reported improved mobility and involvement in activities outside the home, such as community events. Some beneficiaries also mentioned that their economic empowerment led to a reduced incidence of domestic violence in their homes.



### 3.5.2. Decision-making about spending earnings

In over half of the households (60 percent), decisions on how income is spent are made jointly by men and women. This corroborates the findings above in which beneficiaries highlighted improvements in their status owing to their increased contributions to household income. As noted by beneficiaries, the increase in joint decision-making is viewed positively, indicating increased control of essential household decisions.

Table 5: Household Decision Making on Income Expenditure

Who makes decisions	Percentage
Men	6%
Women	34%
Both men and women	60%

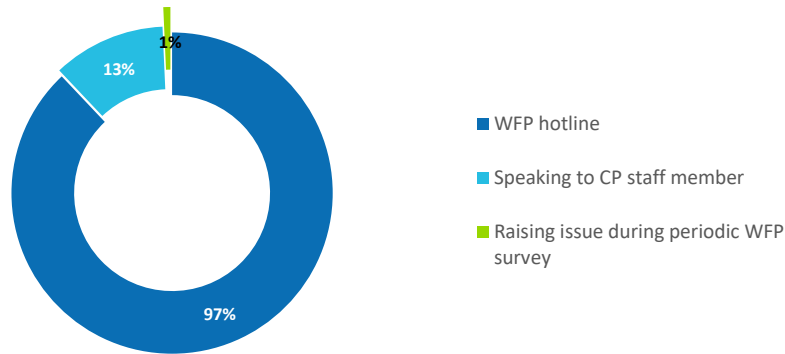
## 3.6 Protection and Safety of Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries were asked if they faced any safety problems while accessing or participating in programme activities. Overall, a high number of beneficiaries (98.7 percent) reported they had not faced any safety problems.

### 3.6.1. Knowledge of and use of Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFM)

Around four out of five (82 percent) beneficiaries know at least one channel through which they can provide feedback about WFP services. Most beneficiaries know about the WFP hotline (97 percent). However, when asked what steps they would take if they had an issue to raise, only slightly over half (55 percent) said they would call the hotline, possibly indicating a gap between Knowledge and use. While Knowledge of available CFM channels seems high, the programme should regularly monitor potential barriers to their use to ensure issues faced by beneficiaries do not fall through the cracks.

Figure 13: WFP CFM channels known to beneficiaries



## 4. Recommendations Moving Forward

- **Strengthen the implementation of nutrition-sensitive approaches within the programme:** While acceptable food consumption is high, suggesting better food access for EFSN beneficiaries than non-participants, the consumption of protein and iron-rich foods is low. Further, less than half of female beneficiaries attained MDD-W. Increased nutrition messaging and strengthening of nutrition-sensitive approaches are essential to further improving dietary diversity.
- Most beneficiaries do not hold a bank account or have linkages to financial institutions. Programme strategies aimed at the financial inclusion of female beneficiaries should increase financial literacy and identify impediments to their inclusion in the formal and informal financial sectors.
- More than half of households use coping strategies to meet food needs due to drops in seasonal income and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme should continue to strengthen beneficiaries' capacities to cope with seasonal economic shocks, focusing on building sustainable livelihoods.
- Programme implementation approaches should consider geographical variabilities influencing beneficiaries' food security indicators.
- Although beneficiaries scored highly on the women's autonomy index, the majority still face restrictions in moving outside the home, potentially limiting their ability to engage in livelihoods and income-generating activities fully. Keeping in mind local sensitivities, the programme should explore culturally- and socially- sensitive ways to increase women's participation.

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<sup>1</sup> The [REVA-5](#) covered the general host community population in Ukhiya and Teknaf, not only EFSN beneficiaries.

<sup>2</sup> FCS-N measures a household's adequacy of essential macro and micronutrient-rich food groups.

<sup>3</sup> Minimum diet diversity is a proxy indicator that measures dietary diversity to predict the likelihood of micronutrient adequacy for women of reproductive age. Minimum dietary diversity is defined as the consumption of five or more food groups out of ten in the last 24 hours.

<sup>4</sup> According to the WFP indicator compendium.

<sup>5</sup> The Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI), also called CSI food, is used to assess the level of stress faced by a household caused by a shortage of food. The higher the stress, the higher the behavioural responses and the index.

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