

# Association between Maternal and Child Minimum Dietary Diversity in Urban Informal Settlements of Mumbai, India

**Melinda Mastan**

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

**Sushmita Das, Sheetal Rajan**

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research-SNEHA Mumbai

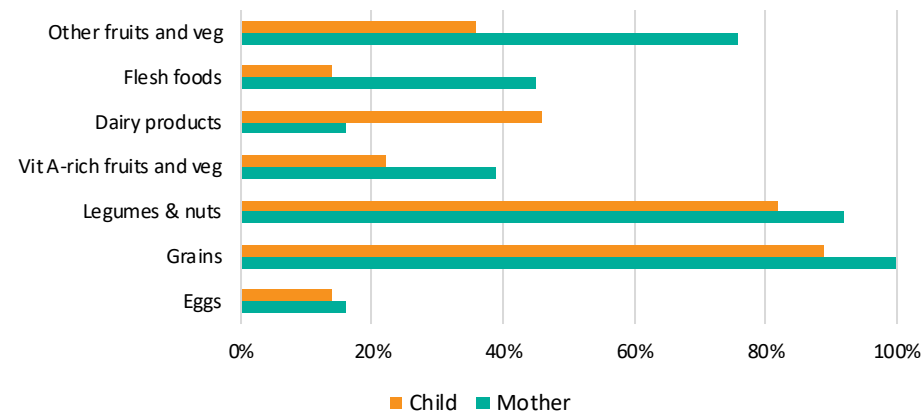
**Background**

- India still faces high malnutrition rates. In 2021, only 23% of children aged 6-23 months met minimum dietary diversity (MDD), a key indicator for malnutrition.<sup>1</sup>
- Mothers play the most vital role in children’s diets, not only because they are preparing it, but their diets can influence the child’s dietary diversity too.<sup>2</sup>
- However, behavior change communication (BCC) interventions often focus only on improving children’s diets.<sup>2</sup>
- This study explored the link between maternal and child MDD in urban informal settlements in Mumbai, India.

**Methodology**

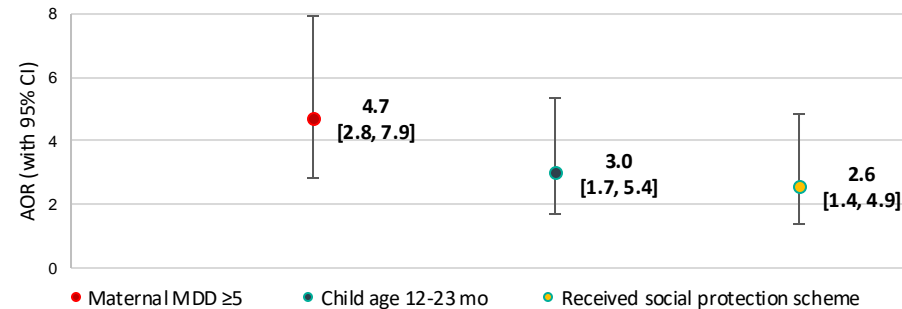
- The study involved 454 mothers with children aged 6-23 months who participated in a community-based intervention in urban settlements of Mankhurd, Mumbai.
- Data collected in May 2024, categorized child MDD as adequate if ≥5 out of 8 food groups (including breastmilk) were consumed, and maternal MDD ≥5 out of 10 food groups were consumed in a 24-hour recall.
- Ethical approval: Sigma Research & Consulting Pvt Ltd. New Delhi

**Dietary diversity consumption comparison between mothers and children**



After adjusting for covariates, **maternal MDD, child's age, and social protection schemes** were significantly linked to child MDD, with maternal MDD being the strongest factor.

**Factors Associated with Child's MDD**



*Covariates: child sex and age; maternal characteristics: maternal age, education, religion, occupation, parity, ANC, wellbeing; Households characteristics: SES, HH members, HH type, husband's support, education and occupation*

**Results**

- Only **31.4%** of children aged 6-23 months achieved MDD, compared to **43.5%** of mothers.
- When comparing dietary patterns between mothers and their children, notable differences emerge.
- Legumes, grains, and eggs are consumed at similar rates, mothers tend to eat more fruits, vegetables, and flesh foods, while children consume more dairy.
- This discrepancy suggests selective feeding practices, where mothers share certain foods but exclude others, leading to gaps in dietary diversity.

**Recommendations**

- **BCC strategies** should ensure that children received the full variety of family meals, rather than a selective subset.
- **Interventions should also focus on improving maternal dietary diversity** as a strategy to enhance child dietary diversity.
- **Expanding social protection schemes** and food security can help families, especially in the vulnerable urban areas to have better access to diverse foods.