

## **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Maternal, Newborn, Child Health and Nutrition Indicators in Miagao, Iloilo and Sibunag, Guimaras, Philippines**

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**Abstract :** COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the delivery of health care services, but its impacts on Maternal, Newborn, Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) programs in rural municipalities in the Philippines remains understudied. Thus, this study explored the effects of the pandemic on MNCHN indicators in the municipalities of Miagao, Iloilo and Sibunag, Guimaras. A cross-sectional design was employed to compare the MNCHN indicators before and during the pandemic, and between Miagao and Sibunag. Key informant interviews (KII) were performed to identify the factors affecting access to MNCHN programs. During the pandemic, Miagao had a significant increase in positive outcomes of eight out of ten maternal health indicators, while Sibunag showed a significant decrease in six indicators. For child health and nutrition, Miagao obtained significant improvements in five of seven indicators, while Sibunag showed a significant increase in positive outcomes for six. KII data showed that the primary concern of mothers in Miagao is accessibility, while mothers in Sibunag raised concerns on accessibility, availability, and affordability of these MNCHN services. Miagao MHO employed various strategies such as telemedicine, activation of barangay health workers, and decentralization of health services to Barangay Health Centers, which can explain the improvements in MNCHN indicators. Sibunag also decentralized its health services, but its limited resources might have led them to prioritize child health and nutrition services. The findings suggest that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on MNCHN depend on local health measures employed by the municipality, while telemedicine is a very useful tool in mitigating the negative effects of disrupted health services.

**Keywords :** maternal, child, COVID-19, Miagao, Sibunag, nutrition

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