Author's response to reviews

Title: Food consumption patterns and associated factors among Vietnamese women of reproductive age

Authors:

Phuong H Nguyen (P.H.Nguyen@cgiar.org)
Garrett Strizich (gms2171@columbia.edu)
Alyssa Lowe (alyssaelowe@gmail.com)
Hieu Nguyen (hieunt1234@gmail.com)
Hoa Pham (hoapham461@yahoo.com)
Truong Truong (truongviettruong@gmail.com)
Son Nguyen (vansonyk@yahoo.com)
Reynaldo Martorell (rmart77@emory.edu)
Usha Ramakrishnan (uramakr@emory.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report
Title: Food consumption patterns and associated factors in Vietnam
Version: 1 Date: 4 March 2013
Reviewer: Santosh J Passi

Reviewer's report:
• The review and methodology are good; and more than sufficient statistical analysis of the data have been carried out adding credibility to the paper; the sample size is also more than sufficient. Thank you for your encouraging comments on the paper.

• However, since the study is covering only the women of reproductive ages (WRA), which is rather pertinent, this issue does not reflect in the title of the paper. Perhaps the title could be “Food consumption patterns and associated factors: A study among women of reproductive ages in Vietnam” or “Food consumption pattern and associated factors among women of reproductive ages - A study in Vietnam”.

We have revised the title based on the reviewer’s comments (page 1). The new title now is “Food consumption patterns and associated factors among Vietnamese women of reproductive age”

• Has the paper been edited by the language expert? I wanted to show some points in the track changes which in view of the pdf file is not possible, could you please send me the word file at your earliest. Further, I feel the paper can be looked into by a language expert and perhaps even by the authors, if you feel so and then sent to me, I shall very much like to re-look into this paper once again.

The paper has been reviewed and edited by senior co-authors who are fluent in English.

• Please suggest if anything else is expected from me.
• The paper could highlight that only the energy and macro-nutrient intakes have been addressed while micro-nutrient analysis has not been carried out due to

The micronutrient analysis is the subject of a different paper.

• May be some tabulation of the usual dietary patterns, if felt ok, could also be included

We used food frequency consumption data and serving size information to calculate energy and macro- nutrient intakes. Because we have 107 foods and beverages, we did not report the frequencies for each food.
Reviewer's report
Title: Food consumption patterns and associated factors in Vietnam
Version: 1 Date: 12 March 2013
Reviewer: Pattanee Winicahgoon

Reviewer's report:

1. General: The question posed by the authors was well defined, but not new. It, however, may be useful for Vietnam since no such data are available in the previous large scale surveys, as described by the authors. Caution that the study confined to only one ecological area of the country and interpretation of data when compare/contrast the results to the national surveys need to be clearly explained.

Thank you for your comments on the research questions and the useful application of the data for Vietnam. We now provide additional information on the generalizability of the study results in the discussion (page 17)

2. Methods:
   1. The data used in this study is from baseline of a larger study. Hence, the context and what the study population may/may not ‘represent’ are needed. More (but brief) information should be provided about the study population and the context.
   We have included additional information about the study population and the context (page 5)

   2. The FFQ used as the key tool for data collection was claimed to be validated (with reference to a thesis which is not accessible). Since the tool is used on a confined area (mountainous, northern area of Vietnam), it should clarify whether the 107 food items in the FFQ is applicable for region-specific population.
   The FFQ was developed based on the population in communes in North Vietnam which are similar to our study population. While the results of the validation study for FFQ are not yet published; they have been endorsed by the Scientific Committee of the National Institute of Nutrition. The FFQ is considered to be widely applicable North Vietnam, including Thai Nguyen.

   3. Use of FFQ for deriving energy and macronutrients are possibly overestimated, whereas only weight and height were accounted for in the derived equation. It is now known that body composition of Asians and Caucasians differ significantly. This may also affect the validity of the EER equation – please discuss.
   While the EER does not account for body composition differences among Asians and Caucasians population, it provides us a rough estimate of energy balance. It is true that one would have liked to have actual body composition data, which may differ between Caucasians and Asians, in adjusting for body size. We have added this argument the discussion (page 13- 14)

   4. The validity of adoption of AMDR which is derived from US population for Asians needs to be verified, due to differences in dietary patterns, dietary quality/diversity, disease risk (e.g., body composition), physical activities, etc. This issue needs some discussion since they are among key outcomes from this analysis.
   We did not use the Vietnam AMDR recommendations [1] because of the lack values for adults for protein. For fat, the suggested ranges are similar in Vietnam [1] and IOM [2]. The only differences are with respect to carbohydrates, which are given as 45-65% by the IOM and as 61-
70% for Vietnam. The narrow range for carbohydrates in the Vietnamese recommendation leads to an estimated 26% of women with deficient carbohydrate intakes, compared to only 0.6% using the IOM and to 2.2% using the WHO recommendations [3]. It seems unlikely that around a quarter of Vietnamese women have deficient carbohydrate intakes. For these reasons we decided to use the ranges recommended by the IOM [2]. We have added these comments in the discussion (page 15).

References:

5. Generally speaking, food composition table may be rather incomplete for specific components, especially, relevant to this study is the fatty acid contents. It should be assured that the low intake of fatty acid intakes is not due to incompleteness of FC database. In particular, please provide some specific information as to completeness of FC database for fatty acids. This is a valid concern and has been clarified on pages 15. We used the updated Vietnamese food composition table (2007) which has been improved significantly and which includes detailed information on the fatty acid composition of foods that were estimated by chromatography.

3. Results:
1. Are data on anthropometry also available? It is useful to at least present BMI (mean and distribution) as descriptive in Table 1.
We have added BMI information in Table 1

2. Due to large sample size, the statistical significances, especially in the bivariate analyses may not be very meaningful. This should be discussed focusing on which ones (if any) have public health significance. Similarly, for multiple and logistic analysis, the statistical vs public health significance of the differences of key parameters should also be discussed.
We agree with the reviewers and have clarified the public health significance of the differences in key parameters with a focus on the results from the multivariate analysis (page 16)

4. Discussion and conclusions
• See several comments under ‘Method’ and ‘Result’ above.
We have revised the discussion

5. Title and abstract
• Title should be modified to more specifically reflect the study, e.g., include key words: Reproductive age women in a northern mountainous of Vietnam; food security and socio-demographic and economic determinants.
We have revised the title including key words “Vietnamese women of reproductive age” (page 1)
• Abstract:
A sample size of 5011 was indicated, which differ from that in the main MS
We have corrected the numbers. A total of 5011 women were included in the baseline survey, and the analytical sample for this paper is 4983 based on data availability.

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable  
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.  
**Declaration of competing interests:**  
I declare that I have no competing interests.