

The background features a large, stylized number '1' in white, centered in the upper right. The background is composed of several overlapping, rounded shapes in vibrant colors: orange, green, red, and teal. The orange shape is on the left, the green shape is at the top, and the red shape is on the right. The teal shape is at the bottom. The overall style is modern and graphic.

1000 Days Journey

Healthy eating
for pregnant and
lactating mothers

What is The Thousand Day Journey?

The Thousand Day Journey is a flipchart story for all community members who are beneficiaries of projects funded by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT). The story, which is in two parts, aims to educate and stimulate discussion on key issues related to nutrition. The Thousand Day Journey raises issues such as cultural beliefs about food taboos, information from elders (that is not always accurate), maternal nutrition and infant and young child feeding practices.

The Thousand Day Journey is an illustrated story, which is to be read to a group by a facilitator. The group may include men and women, old and young. During and after each part of the story, the facilitator will ask the participants some

questions. These questions will generate a discussion among participants about the issues raised in The Thousand Day Journey. Please note that throughout the story, you will find additional discussion questions, which are *optional*. If you do not have time, you can skip these questions. Also included in this guide are 'key messages' to help the facilitator guide the discussion among participants.

The facilitator should begin by reading the story to a large group of no more than 20 people. When it is time to pose the questions for discussion, the facilitator will break the listeners into smaller groups of four to five people. The small-group format promotes an informal and relaxed atmosphere.

The story is not long, but it is important to plan plenty of time for discussion. The suggested time for the story and discussion is one hour. If you, as facilitator, find that you are only half way through the story after an hour, it is fine to stop the story and set a later date with the participants to come back and finish the story. Each community group will work through the story at different speeds, so the number of community meetings it takes to finish the story may vary.

Objectives

The Thousand Day Journey was developed in order to:

- Fill information gaps among community members in matters related to maternal and child nutrition.
- Encourage community members of all ages and gender to express their own challenges and concerns related to nutrition and to discuss these with their peers.
- Encourage community members to guide each other to seek further information and advice from others if required.

The facilitator's role

The facilitator, using the questions as a guide, should prompt and encourage discussion among group members. The facilitator should talk very little in order to allow community members to speak. It may be necessary to use follow-up questions if group members are reluctant to voice their thoughts, questions or concerns. Here are some suggestions for the facilitator for all community meetings where the story of The Thousand Day Journey will be discussed.

The facilitator should:

- Create an informal atmosphere where community members feel free to express their personal opinions honestly
- Respect the opinions of all community members
- Not judge what people say even if information expressed by community members is incorrect
- Give clear instructions and make sure that the community members understand what to do
- Encourage community members to ask questions or request clarification if they do not understand the information presented
- Make sure there is enough space for the group and that the size of the group is appropriate.
- Read the story with excitement and enthusiasm to engage the community members
- Allow adequate time for discussion. When going through the story, make sure that the group has finished the discussion on one section before moving on to the next



Ma San Htwe



Ko Tha Htoo



Daw Thaung Kyi



Ko Aung Myint
(Home Gardening
Teacher)



Ma Thuzar
(Ko Aung Myint's
wife)

Part 1:

Healthy eating for pregnant and lactating mothers

Objectives

to raise awareness about the importance of a healthy and diverse diet for pregnant and lactating women

Materials

- Storybook
- flip chart paper
- pens



At the end of the story, there is a section of key messages. Please familiarize yourself with these messages and share them during discussions, where relevant. These will also help you to correct any misconceptions or misinformation that may come up during the discussions.

Directions

Explain to the participants that:

1. You are going to read a story called The Thousand Day Journey.
2. Let them know how long the session will last (approximately one hour, but will depend upon the time available).
3. During the story they will be asked some discussion questions
4. There will be both large and small group discussions
5. You, the facilitator, will take notes or write on flip chart paper any key issues that are raised so that you can come back and discuss further at the end of the story



1

Story

Ma San Htway is suffering from weakness in her legs, which she has been feeling since she gave birth two months ago. She has been following the advice of her mother-in-law consistently so is confused as to why she feels this way.



Read the story out loud

Optional questions:

- Should Ma San Htway be worried about the weakness and pain in her legs?
- What do you think causes the weakness and pain in Ma San Htway legs?
- What can be done to help Ma San Htway?



2

Story

In the early days after her delivery, Ma San Htway did not touch cold water or soap (which her mother-in-law told her is the cause of weakness of the legs). She also followed the diet which her mother-in-law recommended. This was a diet of rice, salt and ginger soup only for two weeks after delivery. Now she is eating some more foods, but is still not eating many foods, such as beans, fish and vegetables.

Optional questions:

- Are there any special dietary rules or customs that women practice during pregnancy and lactation in your community? What are those practices?
- Who influences women's decisions about what foods to eat or to avoid during pregnancy and lactation?



3

Story

She begins to have doubts about her mother-in-law's advice. She asks her mother-in-law, Daw Thaung Kyi, whether her restricted diet is the cause of her weakness. Daw Thaung Kyi rejects this suggestion and tells her to listen to her elders, who know better than her since they have more experience and have raised children of their own. Daw Thaung Kyi reminds her daughter-in-law that because she followed her advice during pregnancy (to not eat too much, which can make the baby too big and can result in a difficult delivery), Ma San Htway successfully gave birth to a small baby without any complications.



4

Story

A few weeks ago, Ma San Htway's husband, Ko Thar Htoo, was selected by the village committee to participate in a home gardening training.



5

Story

When they found out, Ma San Htway and Daw Thaung Kyi were proud and happy, especially since they were told that he would learn to grow vegetables in the small area in front of their house. Daw Thaung Kyi thought that selling these vegetables would bring them extra income.

Optional questions:

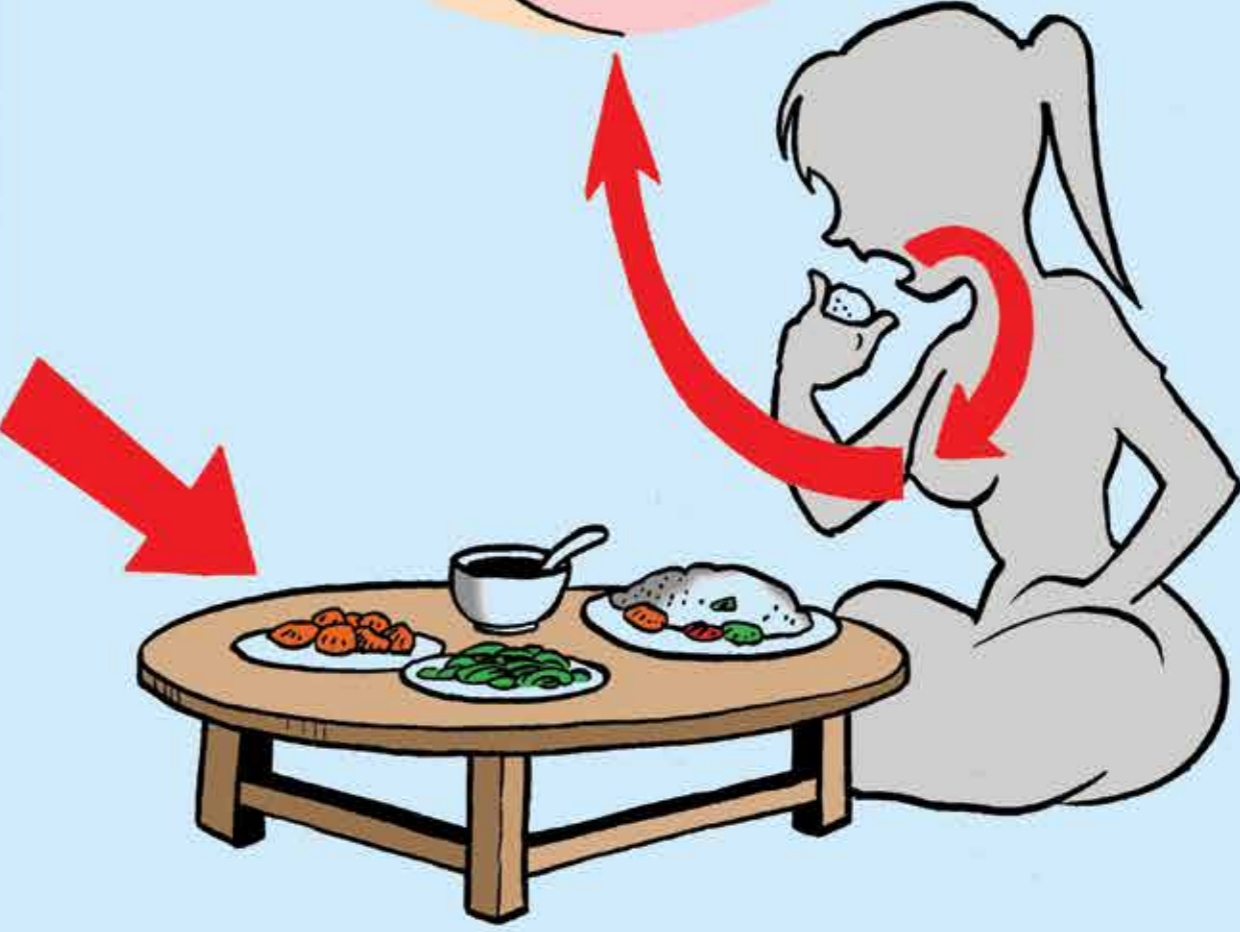
- Do people in your village do home gardening? Can you describe it?
- Who is in charge of the home gardens? Who decides what to plant in the home gardens?
- Is it possible to grow and harvest vegetables in the garden during all seasons?
- If you have a home garden, do you sell everything or save some food for your family to eat?



6

Story

One day, Ko Thar Htoo returns from the training and shares with Ma San Htway some of the lessons he has learned. After learning how to grow vegetables, Ko Aung Myint, the teacher, told them about the importance of eating foods from each of the three food groups in order to stay healthy and strong.



7

Story

The three food groups are energy-giving foods (which include many foods including rice, noodles and bread), body-building foods (including foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and beans) and disease-prevention foods (which include the different colorful fruits and vegetables that they plan to grow in their garden). He also learned that women who are pregnant and lactating need to eat more food than normal. Moreover, these women should eat from all three food groups every day, since what they are eating is also going to their baby through their breast milk. A woman needs to eat a diverse, healthy diet to ensure the baby gets all the necessary nutrients through breast milk.

Optional questions:

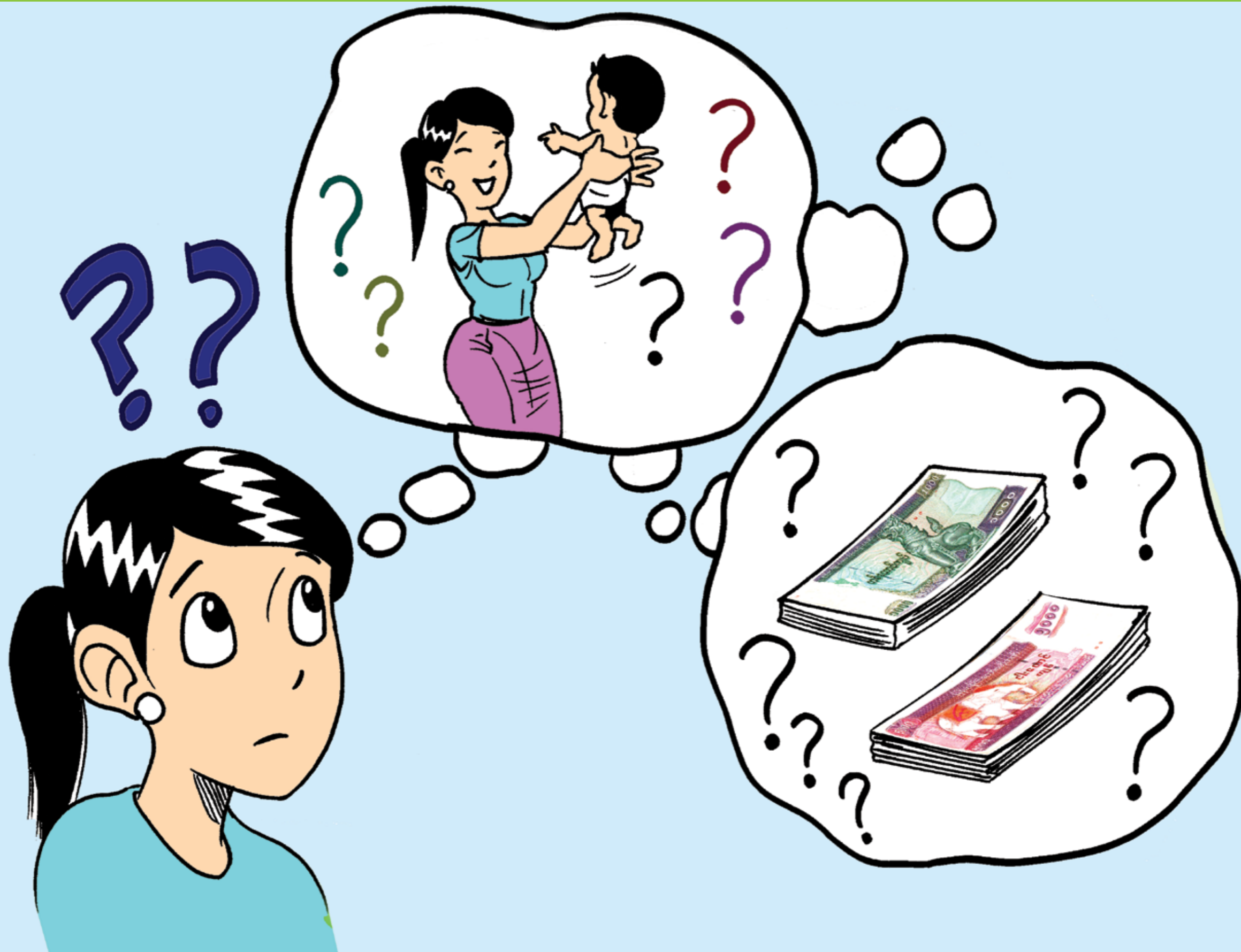
- Are there some foods that breastfeeding mothers in your community do not eat? Do you agree with these practices? Why or why not?



8

Story

Ma San Htway is interested to hear this information. She studies the flyer of the three food groups that her husband has brought home and wants to try following these recommendations, which might give her more energy. But she worries that doing so could be disrespectful to her mother-in-law.



9

Story

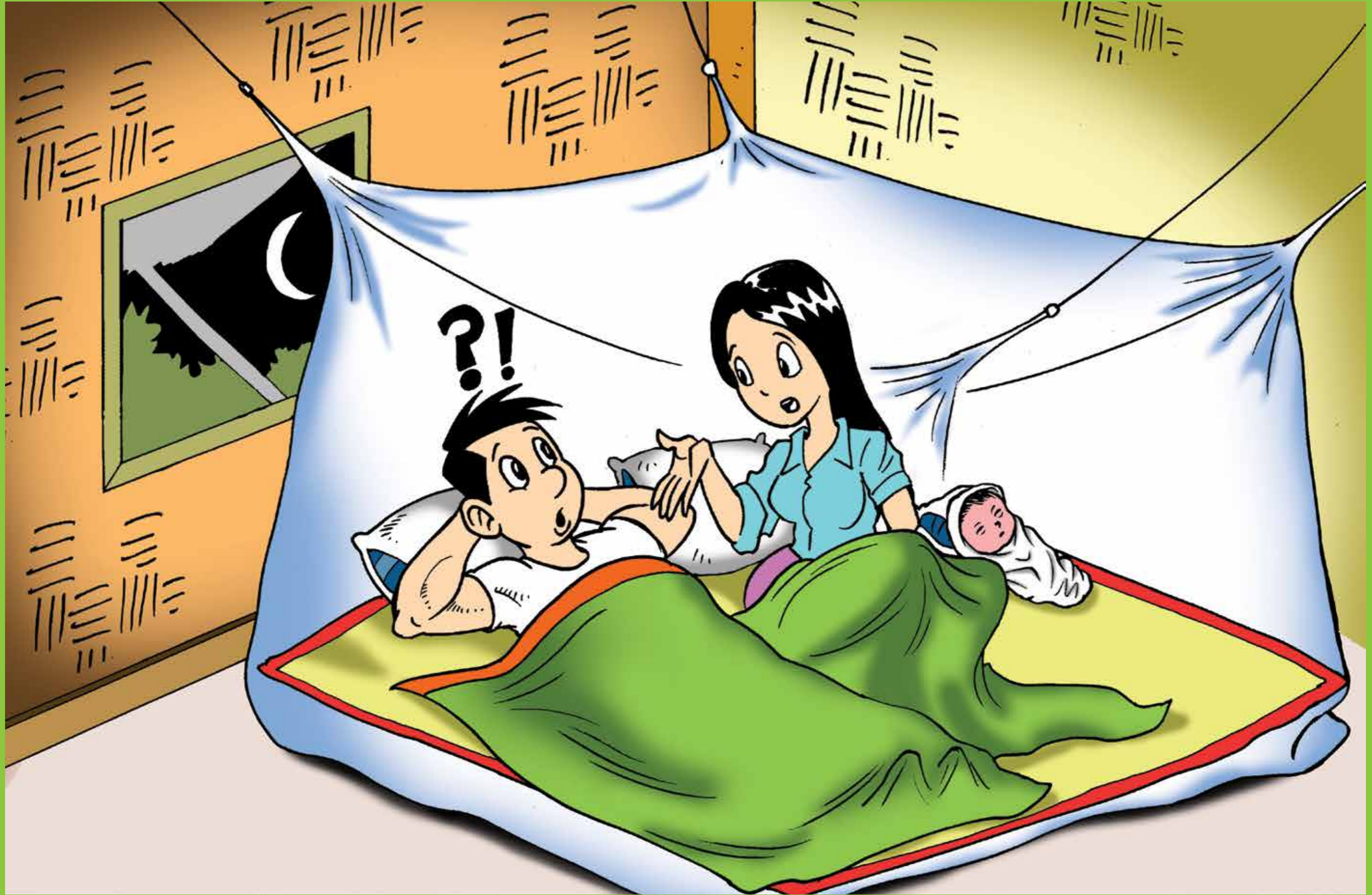
She wonders if eating more kinds of food would improve her health and the health of her baby, who has been small since birth. At the same time, she is concerned that it might cost more money for her to change her diet.



Stop the story here and have a discussion with the community members. The discussion should last approximately 15-20 minutes. When the discussion is over, continue reading the story

Optional questions:

- Why is Ma San Htway concerned about the expense of a diverse diet? Is this common in your community?
- What are Ma San Htway's concerns about her mother-in-law?
- What is some of the advice that elders in your community give to pregnant and lactating women?
- What do you think of that advice?
- What happens in your community if the advice of an elder is not followed?
- What are some of the solutions we could give Ma San Htway so she can practice a healthy diet?
- How do you think the story will continue?



10

Story

Ma San Htway discusses her concerns with her husband. He suggests that they first talk to Ko Aung Myint, the teacher from the home gardening training, before talking to his mother, Daw Thaung Kyi.



11

Story

The two of them go to the teacher's house in the village and are welcomed by the teacher, Ko Aung Myint and his wife, Ma Thuzar.



12

Story

Ma Thuzar tells them of her own experience with pregnancy and breastfeeding and the variety of food she ate. She tells them how she always felt strong and that her baby grew well. She also mentions that the most important time for a baby's development is from the moment the woman becomes pregnant until the child is two years old. This is called the Thousand Day Journey and it is especially important for the mother and baby to eat well during this time.

Ma San Htway expresses her concerns about the advice of her mother-in-law (and not wanting to show disrespect) and Ma Thuzar suggests to her husband that they organize a community session for elders to talk about healthy diets. Everyone thinks this is a good idea.

Optional questions:

- What do you think of the idea of a community education session?
- Who would you invite to the community meeting to talk about healthy diets for pregnant and lactating women?
- Should elders be involved? Would they come?



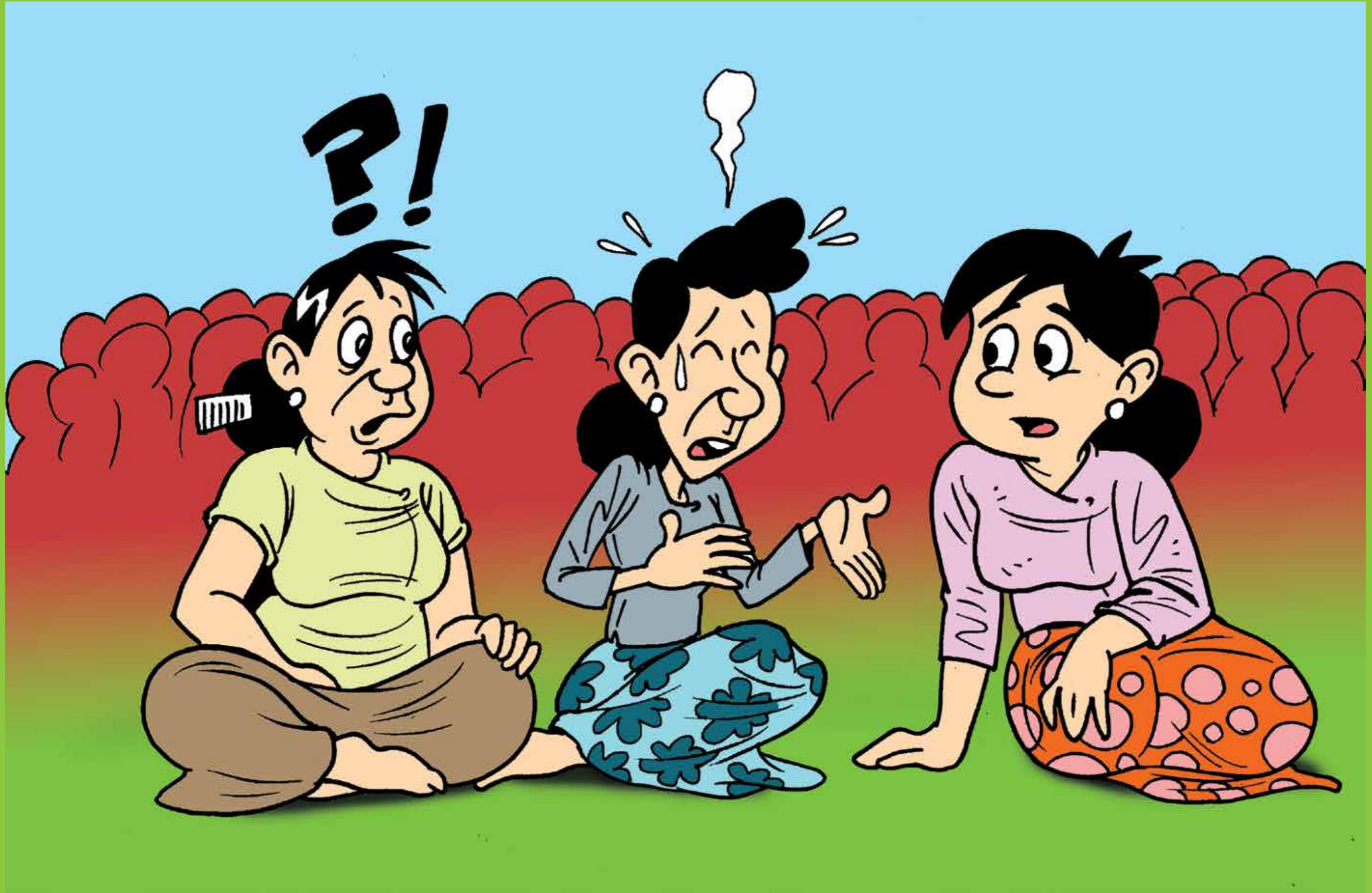
13

Story

In their village, Ywar Thar Yar, an education session is held. The meeting is organized by the home gardening teacher, Ko Aung Myint, and the village midwife. They talk about the importance of a healthy diet, especially for pregnant and lactating women.

Optional questions:

- Is community support important for Ma San Htway? Why or why not?



14

Story

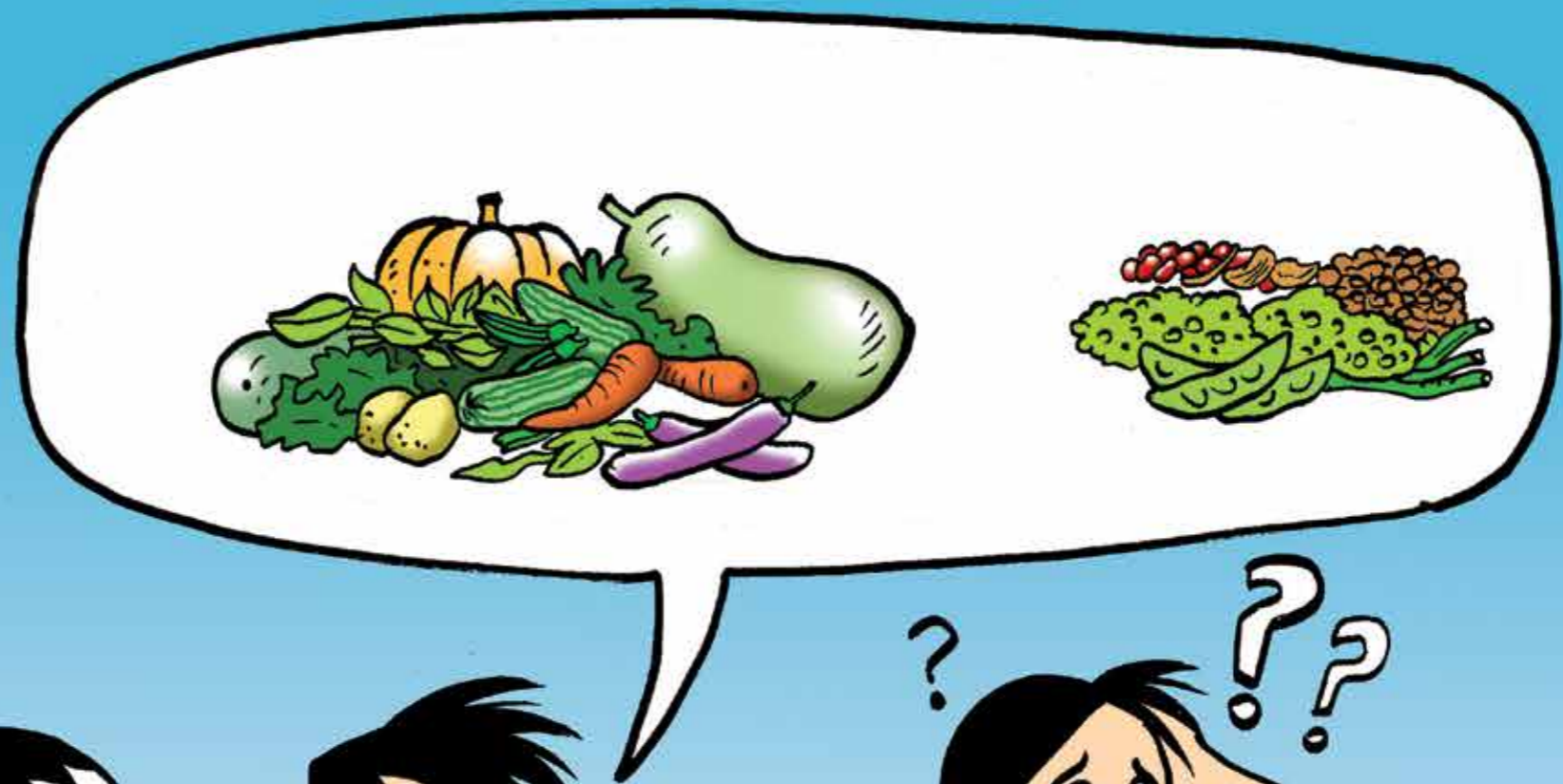
Daw Thaung Kyi attends but is skeptical. She overhears her peers (other grandmothers) saying that maybe the teacher and the midwife, who are more educated, know better than them. They mention that their own daughters have been complaining about weakness in the legs and their babies not growing well.



15

Story

On their way home, Ma San Htway and Ko Thar Htoo talk to Daw Thaung Kyi about the messages discussed during the training and the community meeting. They cautiously suggest to Daw Thaung Kyi that maybe Ma San Htway should follow this advice and try to eat more diverse types of food.



16

Story

Ko Thar Htoo mentions that Ko Aung Myint, the home gardening teacher, suggested that they save most of the vegetables they grow for the family to eat, especially for Ma San Htway. He suggested that they find other ways to eat a more healthy and diverse diet without spending a lot of money – such as buying fruit instead of fried snacks, gathering and cooking some of the edible green plants that grow wild in the community, and eating more beans when they can't buy much fish or meat. Daw Thaung Kyi agrees that they can try this.

Optional questions:

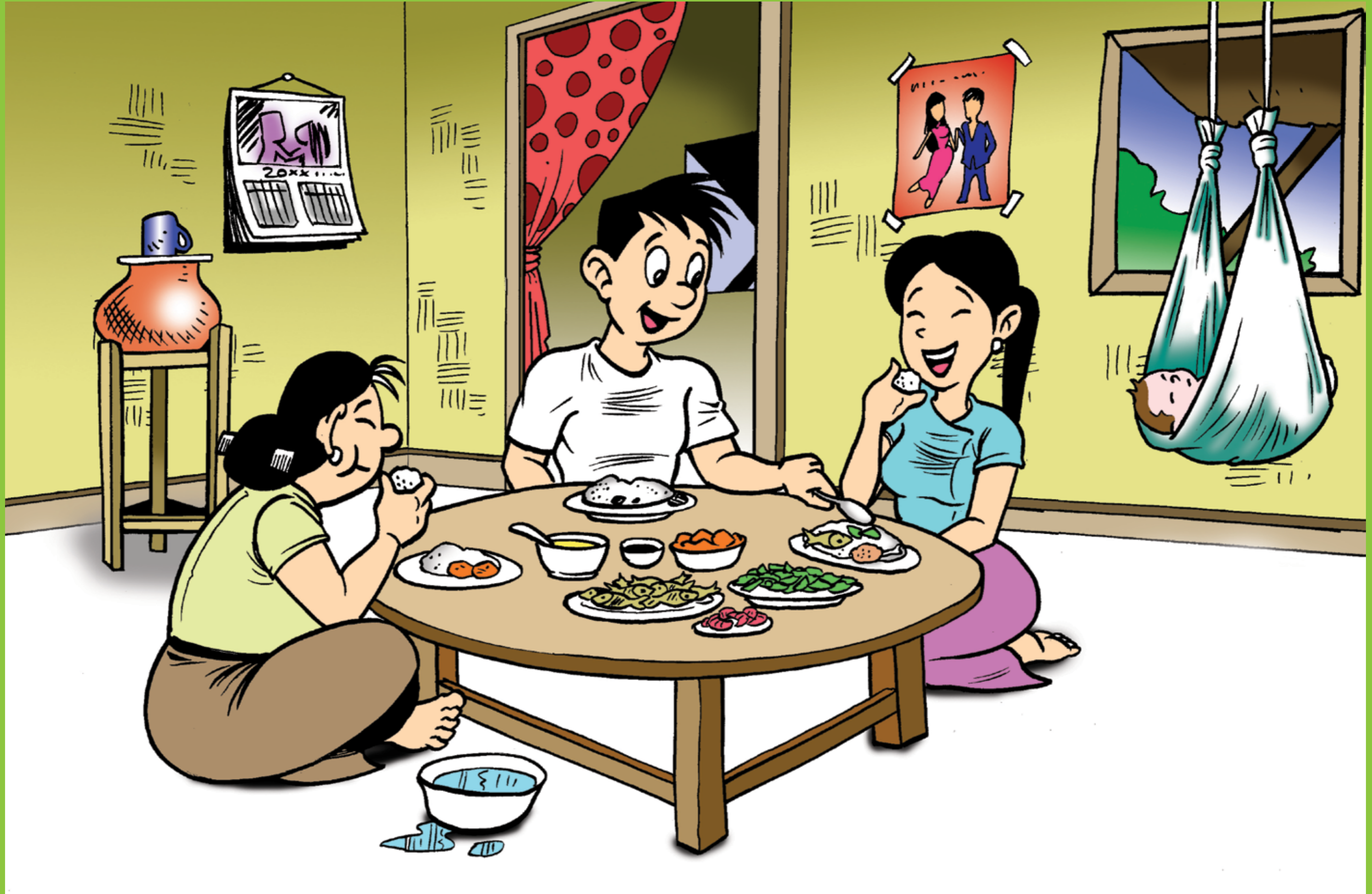
- Do husbands in your community support their wives and families to eat different types of healthy foods? Should they be involved? How can they be involved?



17

Story

However, she still has her doubts.



18

Story

A few weeks later, Ma San Htway is feeling and looking better and they are all sitting happily around a table eating a variety of foods. Daw Thaung Kyi says that maybe the teacher's lesson was right, since both Ma San Htway and her baby are looking healthier and more energetic. She admits that even grandmothers can learn something new.



This is the end of Part One. Have a discussion with the community members. The discussion should last approximately 15-20 minutes.

Discussion:

- How does a baby get nutrients from the mother? How does a mother's diet affect her baby?
- Do all people in your community have access to different kinds of foods?
- Does it cost more to eat foods from all three food groups every day?
- The home gardening teacher suggested to the family that there are ways they can eat a more healthy diet without spending too much money on food. Do you agree? What are some strategies you and other members of your community can take?
- Ma San Htway struggled when she questioned her mother-in-law's point of view. How could you engage elders in your community if you disagree with their point of view?



Ask the participants to reflect upon the lessons they have learned over the course of the story.

Reflections:

- Ask the participants to break into small groups of four to five people. Ask each group to discuss interesting or important lessons they have learned over the course of the story. Tell the groups that after a few minutes of discussion they will be asked to share two of the lessons they discussed with the larger group.
- As the groups share their lessons, the facilitator records them on the flip chart. If groups suggest similar lessons which are differently worded, the facilitator can combine them as one lesson.
- Once all groups have presented their ideas, the facilitator can open a large group discussion. What do people think of the lessons discussed? Do they agree? Do they have any questions? Are there any important lessons which have not been mentioned?
- After a group discussion, ask each person to think about which lesson they think is most important or meaningful for them or their family. Ask them what they can do individually to help

themselves or their families. Ask each person to find a partner and share with their partner at least one action they plan to take to try to apply this lesson individually or to their family. When one partner has finished, allow the other partner to share his or her idea.

- The facilitator can ask for volunteers to share what actions they plan to take with the larger group.

Key messages on maternal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation

1. Pregnant and lactating women should go to the health facility to get iron/folic acid pills to maintain their strength during pregnancy and prevent anemia.
- Pregnant women have increased needs for iron. Iron/ folic acid pills are important to prevent anemia and will help to keep her and the new baby healthy.
 - Pregnant and lactating women should ask their Health Worker for iron/folic acid tablets.
 - The six-month course of iron/ folic acid tablets can be carried over even after the birth of the baby.

2. Ensure that a pregnant woman consumes one additional meal every day to maintain her strength.
 - Pregnant women need to eat more food than usual rather than decrease their intake. This is because a pregnant woman is not only feeding herself; she is also providing nourishment to the fetus growing inside her.
 - If a woman does not eat enough during pregnancy, she puts herself and her baby at risk. Restricting food intake may result in the birth of an infant which is too small (under 5 pounds and 8 ounces). Babies born under 5 lbs and 8 oz are at greater risk of negative health consequences such as infection and undernutrition.
 - Pregnant women need to eat a wide variety of foods, particularly animal products (meat, liver, milk, eggs, etc.), colorful fruits and vegetables. Green leafy vegetables as well as orange and red fruits and vegetables are particularly healthy.
 - Husbands, elders and other family members have an important role to play in ensuring that women in their families who are pregnant have enough healthy food to eat.

3. A woman who is breastfeeding should eat two extra meals a day to maintain her health and the health of the baby.
 - The nutrients that a mother gets from the food she eats passes to her infant through breastmilk. Eating a variety of different foods means she is able to provide good nourishment for the baby. Healthy mothers all around the world safely consume all different foods.
 - Immediately after child birth, breastfeeding women need to continue to eat a wide variety of foods, particularly animal products (meat, milk, eggs, etc), fruits and vegetables and green leafy vegetables. Orange and red fruits and vegetables such as ripe papaya, ripe mango, carrot, and pumpkin are especially good for the breastfeeding mother.
 - Husbands, elders and other family members have an important role to play in supporting breastfeeding women in their families. One way they can be supportive is to ensure that these women have the diverse extra food they need.

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