



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/mothers-embrace-new-approach-nutrition-through-maternal-cash-transfers-burma>

Mothers Embrace a New Approach to Nutrition Through Maternal Cash Transfers in Burma



LIFT/Tat Lan

A village Mother-to-Mother Support Group, where women regularly come together to discuss how to best care for themselves and their children.

Six-month-old Sue Latt Nwe is an energetic infant, sharing her thoughts in squeals and shouts. Despite the birth deformity in her right hand, she's getting a healthy start in life thanks to the Tat Lan Programme, a project focused on reducing child stunting in Rakhine State, a western region of Burma.

The project, supported by Feed the Future and other development partners through the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund, provides cash transfers to improve the health and diets of pregnant women and women with young children during the critical first 1000 days of a child's life.

The Rakhine pilot has been remarkably successful: mothers in the program deliver heavier and healthier babies, exclusive breastfeeding among mothers in the intervention group has doubled, and stunting rates decreased by five percent. The Fund is introducing similar projects in the Delta and the Dry Zone in Burma.

Sue Latt's mother, Aye Aye Nwe, has embraced the approach. When she became pregnant, Aye Aye started receiving a monthly cash transfer of about \$11 U.S. dollars to ensure she was well-nourished. After her daughter was born, the stipend made it possible for her to afford nutritious food for Sue Latt. These first 1,000 days are the most critical for Sue Latt's growth and development and the most opportune time to prevent stunting.

Aye Aye also belongs to a village Mother-to-Mother Support Group, where she regularly joins other women to discuss how to best care for themselves and their children. In many villages in Burma, some traditions—such as not allowing new mothers to eat anything other than rice and salt for the first month after birth, and feeding newborns powdered rice mixed with breastmilk—contribute to the high rates of childhood stunting. The support groups aim to change that by teaching new and

expectant mothers about the importance of a varied and nutritious diet and encouraging them to access health services.

Mar Mar Soe, a support group leader who works closely with 16 women from her community, can see the difference already. Lately, she's been talking to mothers about the importance of colostrum, or first milk. Rich in protein and vitamin A, colostrum also contains antibodies that help build a baby's immunity and prevent jaundice. Than Than Win, a mother of 2, now knows first-hand about the importance of feeding colostrum to her newborn and breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months. She fed her first baby rice mixed with breast milk because it's the local tradition, but after learning about the difference first milk makes, she's taken a different course with her second child.

Looking at the children in this support group, there is no doubt the cash transfer and the newfound knowledge have made a difference. The babies are well fed and full of vitality, and the mothers feel empowered to make healthier decisions for themselves and their families. For Aye Aye, the group is also a source of confidence. "Before the meeting I didn't dare talk to other mothers, but when I realized I knew the answers to the tutor's questions, my confidence grew. After my baby was born I could afford a chicken egg with rice. My baby is exclusively breastfed and when she is really hungry, I let her feed more to stimulate my milk supply." What's more, she's now saving money to see a specialist about Sue Latt's hand.

A longer version of this story originally appeared on the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund [website](#).