

Action brief

Empowering mothers as Nutrition Champions in Myanmar

Country: Myanmar

Themes: Social mobilization, advocacy and communication

Sub-themes: Engaging nutrition champions

Date: 2023



Overview



Nutrition is one of the most effective entry points for human development, poverty and economic development, with high economic returns. Nutrition champions are individuals who use their platforms to influence the position of nutrition as a key political priority. They contribute to raising awareness and changing negative attitudes and behaviours related to nutrition, and they help foster collaboration. Nutrition champions play a vital role in influencing nutrition practices, encouraging proper nutritional knowledge and changing attitudes.

In 2022, the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance Myanmar engaged with breastfeeding mother champions actively involved in the *May May Cho Cho* (Mother's Milk) Facebook group. This group was initiated by the Healthy and Happy Families consultancy firm in collaboration with CSA member FHI 360 through its Alive & Thrive initiative.

Advocacy and communication can help create demand and build awareness about the importance of nutrition. In the promotion of optimal breastfeeding and proper infant and young child feeding, the role of nutrition mother champions is to inspire and motivate other mothers and to advocate for change among a wider audience. These champions can engage with some of the most hard-to-reach or unheard communities, making them a key asset in meeting the challenges of nutritional knowledge inequalities and a source of rich intelligence and experience for key message delivery.



Objectives of the action brief

After the military takeover in Myanmar in February 2021, the SUN CSA in Myanmar suspended any ongoing and initiative engagements with Members of Parliament, the media and youth, instead adapting its engagement and advocacy priorities with civil society organizations and nutrition stakeholders in the Multi-Stakeholder Platform. To increase advocacy for nutrition at the community level, the CSA steering committee adopted the approach of empowering mothers as nutrition champions via social media to influence their peers. This action brief shares the CSA's experience in engaging with mothers and using social media as a communication platform for transferring key nutritional messages among mothers.



Period covered

August to December 2022



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What action was taken?

In 2018 and 2019, the SUN CSA worked closely with parliamentarians and journalists to advocate for nutrition needs in Myanmar. In early 2021, this became impossible because of the military takeover. In 2021, the CSA steering committee engaged in advocacy through civil society organizations, and in 2022, the engagement of nutrition champions was proposed.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the military takeover presented a double burden for health services in Myanmar. Nutrition champions, however, had been leveraging social media to provide practical information on breastfeeding to expectant and new mothers, with support from Alive & Thrive, member and co-chair of the SUN CSA steering committee.

[Healthy and Happy Families](#), a social enterprise developed by nutritionists and inspired by a successful Alive & Thrive initiative in Viet Nam, established a Facebook group named [Mommy's Milk](#) (*May May Cho Cho* in Burmese). The

group started with about 20 friends who wanted to share information on breastfeeding after COVID-19 hit Myanmar in March 2020. The group has since grown to more than 12,000 members who post questions daily. A group of about 15 volunteers trained by Healthy and Happy Families, many of them mothers themselves, provide answers to mothers posting questions in the group. In October 2021, these volunteers completed a nine-day training covering topics such as essential breastfeeding knowledge, basic counselling skills, and techniques for supporting mothers with breastfeeding problems.

In August 2022, the SUN CSA in Myanmar engaged Healthy and Happy Families and the breastfeeding mother champions to advocate for nutrition promotion and the SUN CSA Network in Myanmar. After orienting them to the SUN Movement, the CSA engaged with them to conduct nutrition promotion campaigns via the Facebook group to organize breastfeeding story contests and develop nutrition videos on key nutritional messages.



What would the country do differently?

After the engagement, the SUN CSA in Myanmar strengthened the existing mothers' group and supported breastfeeding mother champions in becoming more effective influencers:

Social media nutrition promotion campaigns with breastfeeding mother champions

Facebook is the main social media platform in Myanmar. In fact, it is frequently understood as the whole Internet by the majority of the population. The SUN Myanmar Facebook target audience is caretakers, including mothers, fathers and grandmothers. Followers of the Happy and Healthy Families Facebook page and members of the *May May Cho Cho* group were invited to participate in a contest via an [announcement on Facebook](#). The campaign received a total of 72 stories, 65 photo stories and 7 video stories. Among them, some of the stories were posted by fathers. Ten stories selected as winners,

[announced on 1 September 2022](#). Each winner was awarded K 100,000 (equivalent to nearly \$50, roughly one month's salary for many workers). All entrants also received telephone top-ups as an honorarium for their participation. The campaign reached 172,629 people and received 7,177 page visits and 1,196 new page likes. The Facebook group also received 573 new membership requests during the campaign period, and the number continues to grow. There were 130 posts, 1,351 comments and 3,701 reactions in the group during this period.

Development of nutrition promotion videos

The Happy and Healthy Families team had an agreement with the SUN CSA to develop eight nutrition promotion videos. The recorded videos are available [here](#). These videos were posted on Facebook Pages in collaboration with the SUN CSA in Myanmar and Healthy and Happy Families.



Further information



Website: www.suncsamyanmar.org



Website: <https://www.facebook.com/SUNCSAinMyanmar/>



Mommy's Milk (May May Cho Cho in Burmese)
Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mother.milk.mm/>



Adaptation and Applicability

- **Nutrition promotion campaigns via social media are key to reaching a wider audience on key messages for maternal nutrition and infant and young child feeding. These campaigns can reach thousands of people – and not only mothers, but also fathers and youth.**
- **Nutrition promotion videos can be used not only on social media but also via mass media to raise awareness about key nutritional messages.**



Next steps

August is Nutrition Promotion Month in Myanmar, and the SUN CSA plans to provide technical and financial assistance to nutrition promotion campaigns. The SUN CSA also will share videos with CSA members (82 members to date) for use in their own nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming.

This Good Practice was developed in collaboration with the SUN Civil Society Network (SUN CSN). For more information about the SUN CSN, please visit their website: <https://www.suncivilsociety.com/>

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