

HAFL Master's Thesis Abstract

Year: 2018

Student's Name: Carole Liechti

English Title: **Influences, Barriers and Possible Improvements regarding Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices among Women from Northern Shan, Myanmar.**

English Summary: Myanmar, which is a developing country in Southeast Asia, is among the 20 countries where 80% of the world's malnourished children live. Especially Northern Shan State with a poverty rate of 33%, shows high rates for wasting (9.4%), stunting (46.9%) and underweight (24.1%). An important underlying cause is the inadequate infant and young child feeding practice. Malnourished children during their first 1000 days after birth, are at increased risk for impaired physical and mental development, which may affect negatively their later life and also country's productivity and growth. Children are the future of Myanmar and therefore it is crucial to prevent from malnutrition and to improve infant and young child feeding practices. Furthermore, improved infant and young child feeding practices will contribute to the Sustainable Developments Goals to end hunger and poverty and to ensure a healthy life by 2030. In the framework of the "Northern Shan Food Security Project" from CARE International in Myanmar, this study examines the influences, barriers and possible improvements regarding infant and young child feeding practices among local women from Lashio Township, Northern Shan State Myanmar.

Besides a literature review, 60 in-depth individual interviews, four focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted. The data collection took place in four villages in Lashio Township, Northern Shan State, in October 2017. For the individual interviews, women with at least one child not older than 3 years were selected using purposive sampling. Analysis of quantitative data was done using the Chi-Square Test and z-Test with Bonferroni correction as second deeper analysis. Qualitative data was analysed by content analysis.

The main results indicate that individual- (low knowledge level regarding feeding practices), economical- (low socio-economic status, working away from home)-, cultural- (false believe without scientific evidence) and environmental (no access to information regarding feeding practices) factors were associated with a lower rate of exclusive breastfeeding and a higher rate of early introduction of complementary food.

Main perceived barriers regarding feeding practices were: The lack of support from their husbands, family and friends and the early start of work after delivery, in some cases even within the next three days. As a consequence, infants were fed with food like rice and milk powder and liquids such as water instead with breast milk.

In the surveyed villages there is a great need to provide effective education and raise awareness regarding infant and young child feeding practices for mothers, as well as for their social environment. The education should be provided in different ethnic languages and accessible to all, preferably focused on cultural beliefs and especially addressed to remote areas, where a high number of displaced people with low socio-economic status live.

Original Title:

Influences, Barriers and Possible Improvements regarding Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices among Women from Northern Shan, Myanmar.

Summary in original language:

Myanmar, which is a developing country in Southeast Asia, is among the 20 countries where 80% of the world's malnourished children live. Especially Northern Shan State with a poverty rate of 33%, shows high rates for wasting (9.4%), stunting (46.9%) and underweight (24.1%). An important underlying cause is the inadequate infant and young child feeding practice. Malnourished children during their first 1000 days after birth, are at increased risk for impaired physical and mental development, which may affect negatively their later life and also country's productivity and growth. Children are the future of Myanmar and therefore it is crucial to prevent from malnutrition and to improve infant and young child feeding practices. Furthermore, improved infant and young child feeding practices will contribute to the Sustainable Developments Goals to end hunger and poverty and to ensure a healthy life by 2030. In the framework of the "Northern Shan Food Security Project" from CARE International in Myanmar, this study examines the influences, barriers and possible improvements regarding infant and young child feeding practices among local women from Lashio Township, Northern Shan State Myanmar.

Besides a literature review, 60 in-depth individual interviews, four focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted. The data collection took place in four villages in Lashio Township, Northern Shan State, in October 2017. For the individual interviews, women with at least one child not older than 3 years were selected using purposive sampling. Analysis of quantitative data was done using the Chi-Square Test and z-Test with Bonferroni correction as second deeper analysis. Qualitative data was analysed by content analysis.

The main results indicate that individual- (low knowledge level regarding feeding practices), economical- (low socio-economic status, working away from home)-, cultural- (false believe without scientific evidence) and environmental (no access to information regarding feeding practices) factors were associated with a lower rate of exclusive breastfeeding and a higher rate of early introduction of complementary food.

Main perceived barriers regarding feeding practices were: The lack of support from their husbands, family and friends and the early start of work after delivery, in some cases even within the next three days. As a consequence, infants were fed with food like rice and milk powder and liquids such as water instead with breast milk.

In the surveyed villages there is a great need to provide effective education and raise awareness regarding infant and young child feeding practices for mothers, as well as for their social environment. The education should be provided in different ethnic languages and accessible to all, preferably focused on cultural beliefs and especially addressed to remote areas, where a high number of displaced people with low socio-economic status live.

Keywords: Myanmar, Infant and Young Child, Feeding Practices, Food and Nutrition Security, Health, Education

Principal advisor: Dr. Alessandra Giuliani