



**GRET**

Professionals for  
Fair Development

# Nutrimyanmar

Combining the commercialization of a manufactured complementary food product with the rolling out of a behavior change communication strategy to sustainably improve the food intake of children under two

GRET / Nutridev

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## Rationale

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Inappropriate food intake is one of the immediate causes of undernutrition. The period between 6 and 18-24 months of age is a critical period, where undernutrition starts for many infants and young children. The nutrient intake at this stage of child development is thus crucial to prevent undernutrition from appearing and setting in.

After 6 months, breast milk is no longer enough to meet the nutritional needs of the infant and complementary foods must be added to the diet until 24 months, when the child can be weaned and eat the family meal. The WHO describes the requirements of the complementary feeding, which should be: *timely* (introduced from 6 months), *adequate* (in terms of amounts, frequency, consistency and variety of food items), *safe* (given in a safe manner) and *appropriate* (texture according to the age, active feeding).

Achieving a successful complementary feeding requires not only the availability of the different types of foods at household level, but also dedicated time, appropriated knowledge and care from mothers and caregivers.

In Myanmar, the actors working on nutrition identify the following issues faced by families to improve the complementary feeding of their infants and young children.

- *Limited knowledge and limited access to skilled support*, which creates inadequate or not optimal practices for Infant and Young Child Feeding, such as limited exclusive breastfeeding (less than 6 months), introduction of unappropriated types of food (inadequate amounts or frequencies, not optimal recipes, early introduction of the family meal), unsafe practices...
- *Limited nutrient intake of home-made food*: even with improved recipes, it remains difficult to meet the recommended standards with locally available foods, especially for several vitamins and minerals. Moreover, the required types of food may not be available all along the year and the recipes can be costly and complicated to cook, especially if they're designed for meeting nutritional standards as much as possible.
- *Absence on the market of high quality and affordable manufactured complementary food solutions*: the Myanmar market offers a diversity of manufactured food products intended for young children, but these products, either imported or locally produced for some of them, are expensive and/or don't respect the expected quality requirements, especially in terms of nutritional value.
- *Limited time for mothers and caregivers* to provide the necessary care to their children, including breastfeeding, cooking specific and appropriated meals, paying attention to the sanitary environment...

Based on its experience and technical expertise developed throughout the 20 years of the so called Nutridev program in different countries, Gret developed the NutriMyanmar project. This project aims at sustainably improving the complementary feeding of young children in two targeted areas (peri urban and rural contexts). It's designed according to two complementary approaches: commercialize a high quality and locally manufactured complementary food product and provide skilled support and behavior change communication to mothers and caregivers.



*Mothers and children under 2 years old in Myanmar © GRET*

## Project approach

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The first pillar of the approach is the development and the marketing of a sustainable and alternative complementary food solution, adapted to the specific nutritional needs of children 6-23 months and respecting the international quality standards. This complementary food should also be adapted to local feeding practices and habits and to the purchasing power of poor families. To ensure the sustainability of the model, the product should be manufactured locally, with local raw materials and sold in the classic distribution network. The development, the production and the marketing of the product are done by a local producer, with the technical support of Gret.

The second pillar of the approach is to deliver appropriate messages and counselling to mothers and caregivers regarding the feeding and care practices from the pregnancy up to the second year of the child (the “1000 days” window of opportunity). The core tool used to develop this activity is a behavior change communication strategy, designed according to the initial assessment of practices, knowledge, habits and expectations, and according to the specificities of the given contexts.

The approach is based on the following four *founding principles*.

- The formulation of the complementary food product relies on an optimal balance between quality (macro and micro nutrients requirements, safety), cost (raw materials, packaging, production process and distribution strategy) and compliance with existing practices (feeding habits, acceptability).
- The partnership between Gret and the local private actor is based on a common agreement on the approach (social objective, compliance with international regulations, win-win partnership) and the expected type of social marketing model.

- The social marketing model should ensure the affordability of the final product and include an appropriate distribution and promotion strategy, based on the existing, and with respect to the international regulations regarding the marketing of baby food.
- The behavior change component is compulsory to ensure that mothers and caregivers targeted by the promotion strategy have access to independent information, in line with the Infant and Young Child Feeding national guidelines. That's why the behavior change activities and the promotion activities must be implemented separately according to distinct strategies.

## Set of activities deployed

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### Initial assessment

Given these founding principles, the action starts with a comprehensive initial assessment whose results are used to adapt the activities to the specificities of the context of work. The initial assessment looks at the production feasibility, the market, and the practices and perceptions of families.

- Production feasibility: at country level, the diagnosis identifies the existing and potential producers of manufactured complementary food. It looks at their capacities in terms of production (technical skills, equipment, quality management) and commercialization (existing and potential distribution network). Through interviews with the producers, the approach is discussed; the understanding and the motivation of the producer for the social objective are evaluated. Lastly, the conditions of supply for raw materials are assessed.
- Market: the existing supply of manufactured baby food products is evaluated (local or imported, the target, the nutritional composition, the price and distribution). This part of the initial assessment also informs on the types of business models developed for the key products identified (subsidised or not for example) and their notoriety and perceptions among the customers and retailers (the product is meant for which usage).
- Existing practices and perceptions: through quantitative and qualitative surveys (such as Knowledge, Aptitude and Practices, or Mother Survey), the project evaluates the feeding practices of the targeted population, the perceptions of families regarding child feeding and care, and the expectations in terms of complementary feeding. This survey will drive the behaviour change communication strategy and inform at the same time the marketing strategy by evaluating the specificities of the potential demand.

### Partnership with local private actor

In NutriMyanmar project, the company Gold Power has been identified as a relevant partner and Gold Power and Gret signed a partnership agreement. The principles of the partnership are shared by the two partners, especially the social objective of the approach, meaning that a minimum final price is expected, as well as the high quality of the product. Gret provides technical support and skills to Gold Power for the product definition, in collaboration with the IRD (French Research Institute for Development). Gret also supports the production process (production procedure, quality control), the distribution and the promotion of the product, based on the existing strategies of the company. Gret is also leading the monitoring of the project. At the same time, the company mobilizes its production and marketing capacities, especially the production unit, the staff, the supply of raw materials, the distribution and promotion network.

Once the partner is identified and agrees on the principles of the partnership, a more in-depth diagnosis is done to define precisely the type of support to be provided to the company and design an action plan.

## Product definition and production

To define the product, the entry point is the international standards which give the daily nutrient requirements for the targeted age (WHO and FAO standards). The assessment of feeding practices informs on the breastfeeding average and the potential other foods which make up the daily intake of children 6-23 months. The feeding habits also inform on the relevant meal frequency for the product to be developed. All these three parameters allow the definition of the nutritional objectives of the product, as presented in the Figure 1.

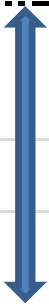
|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Daily Recommended Nutrient Intake (RNI) - Energy, macro and micronutrients         | Estimated composition of child daily nutrient intake from different sources in the given context   |   |
|  | Product Nutritional Objective (NO)   | <b>(NO) = (RNI) - (BFNI) - (OFNI)</b>                       |
|  | Average Nutrient Intake of Other Foods (OFNI)  | <i>Evaluated through initial assessment</i>                 |
|  | Average Nutrient Intake of Breastfeeding (BFNI)  | <i>Based on local practices and international standards</i> |
| Based on international standards (WHO, FAO)  | Premix is a complex of vitamins and minerals to be added to the raw materials to ensure the targeted micronutrients composition. Its formula is calculated based on the (NO) and the nutrient intake of raw materials. |   |

Fig. 1: Definition of the nutritional objective

Depending on the cost of raw materials, the premix formula is adapted to ensure at the same time the best possible compliance with the nutritional objective and the lowest possible cost.

Organoleptic tests of different formulas and flavours are then organized within the targeted communities to ensure the best acceptability of the product in terms of taste, smell, consistency and colour.

In the NutriMyanmar project, the product called May May Mitta (meaning Mom's love) has been developed. It's a "one-serving per day" product, meaning that in one meal per day the nutritional requirements are covered, in addition to breast milk and other usual foods. One portion is 35 gr; it's instant flour, based on soya, corn and rice. May May Mitta is fortified with 18 vitamins and minerals, following the calculation of the nutritional objective. Its nutritional composition is given below for the main nutrients; it has been submitted to the relevant services in Myanmar for official registration.

| Tab.1: Nutrition Composition Table of May May Mitta |      |          |
|---|------|----------|
| Content of main nutrients                           | Unit | Per 100g |
| Energy  | 375  | Kcal     |
| Protein   | 14,5 | G        |
| Lipid   | 8,8  | G        |
| Carbohydrates                                       | 59,3 | G        |
| Vitamin A   | 232  | µg RE    |
| Vitamin C   | 12   | mg       |
| Vitamin D   | 13   | µg       |
| Vitamin E   | 3,6  | mg       |
| Vitamin B1  | 0,5  | mg       |
| Vitamin B12   | 0,3  | µg       |
| Biotin  | 17   | µg       |
| Folic Acid  | 70   | µg       |
| Calcium   | 387  | mg       |
| Iodine  | 55   | µg       |
| Iron  | 17   | mg       |
| Zinc  | 9,7  | mg       |

Once the product is formulated, production tests are implemented in the production unit; the quality is controlled internally and externally. The different production and quality control procedures, guidelines and templates (such as check lists) are set up. The production process and the quality management system enable to comply with the international sanitary quality standards (such as Codex Alimentarius).



*Gold Power factory, production line of May May Mitta product © GRET*



## Marketing strategy

The marketing strategy includes the product, the price, the distribution and the promotion strategies. In order to develop those specific strategies, in-depth complementary marketing surveys are conducted to the company, wholesalers, different types of retailers and consumers.

To design the product strategy, Gret analyses the perceptions and expectations of mothers, in order to define the right design of packaging, which should be attractive, adapted to the targeted population and give clear information on the usage and the targeted age. It also enables to identify the best name, the slogan, the mascot and the specific promotion messages to communicate on advantages and benefits of the product.

The pricing strategy is designed in two stages. The first one is the estimation of the factory price, which includes the raw materials costs and all the charges linked to the production. This factory price includes as well the expected margin for the producer and a consensus is looked for between the two partners, in accordance with the principles of the partnership and the social objective of the business model. The second stage is the definition of the pricing chain according to the distribution strategy. The margins are estimated for all intermediaries, with the objective of ensuring a minimum price to the final consumer.

The design of the distribution network relies on the existing distribution network for the other products of the partner company. In the NutriMyanmar project targeted areas, Gret worked with Gold Power to identify which channels of distribution were the most relevant to reach the targeted population. A special attention is paid at this stage to the last link of the network, in order to find suitable complementary channels, to be able to make the product accessible at a very local level in the poor townships and villages. The result of this work is that the distribution network of the product is both specific (especially designed to reach a specific objective) and sustainable (based on the existing). The common design of the distribution strategy between Gret and the company ensures a good appropriateness and perfect knowledge of it by the two partners.

The promotion strategy is composed of the promotion tools and their way of dissemination. The promotion strategy is developed following two objectives: identify the relevant messages to encourage mothers to buy and ensure the respect of the international recommendations regarding the marketing of complementary food, in order to protect and promote adequate breastfeeding and feeding practices of infant and young children. As no international guiding principles on the marketing of complementary foods exist so far, Gret and his partner refer to the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes (WHO): for example ensure that the promotion tools and the packaging include messages for continuing breastfeeding, that the product is marketed and presented as suitable for children from 6 to 23 months only, that the instructions on how to use the product are clear, that everything is written in national language. The channels to disseminate the promotion tools exclude the public area, such as health structures. Gret ensures that wholesalers and retailers are trained on the specificities of the product, especially in areas where many food products intended for young children already exist.

In the NutriMyanmar project, Gret supported Gold Power for the design of the marketing strategy (illustrated through the Summary Product Range in the Table 2 and the packaging design in the Figure 2) and the production of promotion tools; Gold Power ensures the implementation.

**Tab.2: May May Mitta Summary Product Range**

| DESCRIPTION  |
|--|
| Individual sachet of 35g                                     |
| 9,5 cm x 14 cm   |
| Material PET + VM-PET + SIP Film (PE) Laminated Printed Roll |
| 10 sachets attached in a raw                                 |
| 2 lines of 10 sachets in 1 plastic bag                       |
| 15 plastic bags in 1 carton                                  |
| MERCHANDISING  |
| Hanged on a carton attachment display                        |
| Put in a table stand   |
| PLACE OF DISTRIBUTION  |
| Grocery stores   |
| Stores at the market   |
| Supermarkets   |



*Fig.2: May May Mitta packaging design*

## Behavior Change Communication

Through the initial assessment, the level of knowledge, the existing practices and the perceptions of mothers, caregivers, but also fathers, community health workers or community leaders, are known for each targeted area. This context-specific baseline enables to identify the gaps between the recommended practices and the existing ones, as well as the barriers for change, including gaps of knowledge, misperceptions, cultural barriers, economical barriers, time barriers... At this stage, the project team identifies the priority practices that may harm most the health and the nutrition of children and mothers and at the same time that could be changed positively or made optimal through a communication strategy. Key messages are then elaborated and tested within the communities. Those messages do not include any promotion of any product, the behavior change communication being totally disconnected from the promotion, which is a commercial activity. The specific tools, the targets and the relevant channels are designed, in the most sustainable way, meaning that existing community networks of volunteers or peers are the entry point of the dissemination strategy. In NutriMyanmar project, Gret organized training sessions for volunteers and committee members, and three types of communication activities were developed (mother support group, movie show session, health education session).





*Behavior change communication session on nutrition © GRET*

## Project follow-up

In order to monitor, adapt and evaluate the approach, component by component and also as a whole, a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation system is developed and implemented. The project looks at processes, effects and impact for the following core criteria:

- For the commercialization of the complementary food product: quality control of the product, sales follow up, monitoring of the distribution network (supply of points of sale for example), access to the product for the targeted population (in terms of cost, coverage of points of sale, availability in the points of sale), perception and notoriety of the product for consumers and retailers, usage of the product at home.
- For the behavior change communication: disaggregated attendance to sessions (pregnant women, mothers of children under two, fathers and other caregivers...), improved skills of volunteers and committee members, improved knowledge (through pre and post-tests at session level, through baseline and endline quantitative survey), change of practices and qualitative changes at household level.



*Interview of a mother in the scope of Gret survey © GRET*

## Further reading and contact

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### Websites:

[www.gret.org/themes/health-nutrition](http://www.gret.org/themes/health-nutrition) ; [www.nutridev.org](http://www.nutridev.org)

### Publication:

[www.gret.org/2015/10/public-private-partnerships-to-fight-against-malnutrition](http://www.gret.org/2015/10/public-private-partnerships-to-fight-against-malnutrition)

### Contacts:

Claire Costis, *Gret Nutrition Project Officer*, [costis@gret.org](mailto:costis@gret.org)

Phyo Min Swe, *Gret Myanmar Representative*, [gret.ygn.rep@gmail.com](mailto:gret.ygn.rep@gmail.com)



This project is run in the scope of SUSTAIN program



In 2012, GRET started NutriMyanmar project within the framework of a consortium with ACF and Welthungerhilfe, funded by the European Union, in the scope of SUSTAIN program (Sustainable Approaches for Improved Nutrition) with the aim of improving the nutritional status of vulnerable populations through a sustainable increased consumption of micronutrient-rich foods, and enhanced practices of optimal nutrition and care.



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