

MYANMAR

Reaching the Hard-to-Reach

By Wendy Myint-Myint Hla

Northern Rakhine State, MYANMAR, 8 April 2009 – A busy early morning for midwife Than Than Khine as she wakes up before dawn to prepare herself to immunize more than 300 women of child-bearing age in Kye Hnote Thee village.

Kye Hnote Thee village, a population of 1665, is in Buthidaung township of Northern Rakhine State, which is situated near Bangladesh border, and is accessible only by two to three hours of boat ride from Buthidaung town.



Midwife Than Than Khine in Kye Hnote Thee village of Buthidaung Township during MNTE campaign held in April 2009

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Midwife Than Than Khine is immunizing with tetanus vaccine to women of childbearing age in Kye Hnote Thee village of Buthidaung Township during MNTE campaign held in April 2009

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As Than Than Khine arrived at the immunization post, a converted class room of a primary school, she found a crowded women waiting to be vaccinated. At Kye Hnote Thee village, Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs) are being carried out as part of the Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Elimination (MNTE) Campaign which will take place for a period of two weeks.



Women of child-bearing age at Kye Hnote Thee Village of Buthidaung Township are waiting at the immunization post for vaccination

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It is not an easy task for Than Than Khine to bring women aged between 15 to 45 years in Kye Hnote Thee village to the immunization post. *“Before, women here don’t come to receive vaccination because they don’t know the benefits of it. So I had to mobilize them by explaining that this vaccine prevents tetanus, a shield for infectious diseases. Then, gradually they accept and come to receive the vaccination.”* said Than Than Khine.

In order to overcome the traditional culture and social barriers in Northern Rakhine State, 100-household heads, 10-household heads and also TBAs play an important role in bringing the targeted women to the immunization post for vaccination, so that the vaccination coverage can be raised.

Reaching Vulnerable Women

Due to its low tetanus vaccination coverage and weak antenatal care in the past years, Buthidaung Township is one of the seven high risk townships in which the Supplementary Immunization Activities are carried out to vaccinate 70,000 women of child bearing age. Moreover, Buthidaung Township of Rakhine State is a vulnerable township due to high population density and mobility of the people living there. Many outbreaks like cholera, measles and polio have already occurred there in the past years.

“Buthidaung Township is an epidemic-prone township because the population there is very dense compared to other Townships” said Dr. Khin Moe Moe Oo, Field Officer for Rakhine State in UNICEF Myanmar.



Toryobar, 35 years, from Kye Hnote Thee Village of Buthidaung Township is registering her name for TT vaccination during MNTE campaign in April 2009. Local village leaders are assisting in registration

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A woman is taking Tetanus vaccine at rural health centre in Phaung Daw Pyin Village of Buthidaung Township during MNTE campaign in April 2009. Our basic health staff is giving TT injection.

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