

COMMUNITY
ACTION
FOR INFANTS
AND CHILDREN



INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD NUTRITION IN ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, malnutrition prevalence among children is among the highest in the world. In 2011, an estimated 44% of children under the age of five were suffering from chronic malnutrition (stunting), and 44% of children suffered from iron-deficiency anaemia.*

Poor infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices contribute greatly to the problem of undernutrition in Ethiopia. In some target districts, only 4.2% of children aged 6-23 months are fed an adequate diet, largely due to very poor dietary diversity.

The Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), in collaboration with the Micronutrient Initiative and partner organizations, developed the National Nutrition Program (NNP I and NNP II) in order to reduce the magnitude of malnutrition in Ethiopia.

From 2011 to 2016, the Micronutrient Initiative worked with key partners on two innovative demonstration projects in Amhara, Tigray, Oromya and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), to pilot community-based approaches to infant and young child nutrition (IYCN) and provide the Government of Ethiopia with recommendations to help scale-up IYCN across the country.

*Ethiopian Demographic Health Survey, 2011

PROJECT APPROACH

- Situational analysis to drive MI's approach: MI started with a landscape analysis and built collaborative relationships with stakeholders to identify and understand existing gaps in Ethiopia's IYCN.
- Technical assistance to the Government of Ethiopia: for integration of IYCN and for a micronutrient strategy in the NNP II.
- Coordination of IYCN program activities: at national, and regional level through stakeholder meetings to build on existing strengths, avoid overlap in activities and share lessons learned.
- Integrating community-based programs: combine promotion of IYCF practices with distribution of multiple micronutrient powders (MNPs), along with growth monitoring and local production of complementary foods in grain banks (community processing centres).
- Knowledge generation: implementation research to produce evidence to strengthen the program, and inform further scale-up and global policy.

PARTNERS

- Concern Worldwide
- UNICEF Ethiopia
- Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- Research-inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia and the Nile region (RiPPLE)
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC)
- Amhara Development Association (ADA)
- Oromo Development Association (ODA)
- Terepeza Development Association (TDA)
- Emory University
- Maternal and Neonatal Health in Ethiopia Partnership (MaNHEP)
- Ethiopian Public Health Institute
- Addis Ababa University and regional universities
- Wageningen University
- Center for Disease Control (CDC), Atlanta

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT

- Capacity building on IYCF counseling, complementary food production, technical assistance and monitoring.
- Developed and implemented evidence-based social and behavioral change strategy in collaboration with Population Service International Ethiopia to create demand for IYCF, grain banks and MNPs.
- MNPs introduced in Ethiopia in close collaboration with all stakeholders.
- Local grain banks (complementary food processing centres) established in the Concern Worldwide sites and Afar region.
- Strengthening of the Growth Monitoring Program and alignment with grain bank activities.
- Strategic research collaboration and local research capacity building to generate evidence for project input and recommendations for scale-up.

“ Before I received this training, I was lacking knowledge about nutrition. This training taught me knowledge and skills through demonstration-based training practices. This enables us to implement and transfer it to other potential and actual eligible women - mothers with children below 2 years - simply and easily. It is this training that enables us to bring change for ourselves and other community members.”

– Health extension worker in Tigray

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FINDINGS

- After six months of grain bank implementation, 88.9% of children had received a complementary food, compared to 48.8% at baseline.
- The project successfully built the mother’s knowledge and capacity on complementary feeding practices, as well as knowledge in the preparation of more appropriate complementary foods.
- Dietary diversity can be enhanced significantly by improved feeding recommendations using local foods. Supplementation with MNPs, in combination with improved feeding recommendations, further improved dietary adequacy for zinc, iron and niacin.
- Aflatoxin contamination may not be as prevalent as anticipated. Based on the findings of this study, revised Standard Operations Procedures were developed.
- MNPs were very well accepted, found easy to use and 74% of mothers reported to have provided all 15 sachets to their children. Positive effects on appearance, activity and appetite were reported. Two challenges during scale-up will be to increase the frequency of MNP delivery and improve instructions for use.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- **173,135 children** six to 23 months of age reached through two demonstration projects.
- **7 million** MNPs sachets procured, imported, and distributed in the four IYCN project regions (Oromia, Amhara, SNNPR and Afar).
- **144,000 care-givers** of children 0-23 months reached with SBCC messages on improved IYCF, grain bank and MNP use.
- **4,500 mother-groups** trained in local complementary food production and IYCF promotion.
- **194 grain banks** established in 34 woredas.

SUSTAINABILITY

Based on the experiences and lessons learned, MI is planning to expand the IYCN program in Ethiopia, focusing on complementary feeding demonstrations, improved IYCF feeding recommendations and MNP distribution. Future plans include reaching 96 woredas in five regions.