For over a decade, Pakistan has been grappling with malnutrition. For every 10 children who are born in Pakistan, one will die before the age of five. Close to half of all children under five are moderately or severely stunted. 54% children under five are vitamin A deficient. 62% of children are anaemic, with some regions showing up to 86% prevalence of childhood anaemia. Such severe undernutrition can have long-term effects on their cognitive development, school achievement and economic productivity in adulthood. It is clear that there is a dire need to address the alarming levels of malnutrition in the country.

Nutrition International has been working in Pakistan since 2001 to improve the health of people in need, especially women and children, through better nutrition. Working in partnership with national and provincial government, Nutrition International focuses on improving access to much needed micronutrients for the most disadvantaged.
Nutrition International Pakistan will aim to achieve the following key and complementary strategic objectives between now and 2024:

- Improve and sustain the coverage of vitamin A supplementation for children under five across Pakistan
- Increase the coverage and utilization of zinc supplements and low-osmolarity oral rehydration salts (ORS) in the management of childhood diarrhoea
- Ensure that young girls, pregnant women, mothers and children aged 6-24 months residing in far-flung rural areas of Pakistan are reached with improved nutrition and healthcare
- Improve effectiveness of the national and provincial universal salt iodization (USI) program, improve the quality and increase the quantity of adequately iodized salt produced by medium scale salt processors and enhance functionality of Provincial Food Authorities to enable effective enforcement of adequately iodized salt
- Improve the capacity of Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) countries to design, deliver and track the progress of nutrition programs and to generate, learn from and adopt knowledge of what works
- Reach 50 million people with fortified wheat flour and 148 million people with fortified edible oil/ghee
- Improve the levels of iron, vitamin B12 and folic acid among women of child bearing age and children

National programs supported by NI:
- Vitamin A supplementation and capsules
- Iodization of salt

Sub-national programs supported by NI*:
- Maternal nutrition + birth and post-natal package
- Zinc and ORS

* Stripes indicate multiple NI-supported programs defined by colors noted above; this map presents a lower administrative level, therefore only sub-national districts supported by NI are named

Pakistan Capital: Islamabad
NI-TAN (Technical Assistance for Nutrition) — funded with UK aid from the UK government — seeks to improve the capacity of SUN countries to design, deliver and track the progress of nutrition programs and to generate, learn from and adopt knowledge of what works.

NI-TAN has been working in Pakistan since 2016 and has provided technical assistance to:

- The federal government to design and operationalize its National Advocacy Strategy for Nutrition;
- The Government of Punjab for the development of the Stunting Reduction Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan;
- The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the development of technical food safety and halal food standards and regulations for articles of food under the Provincial Food Safety Authority Act 2014;
- The SUN Secretariat, Punjab province, for advancing the SUN agenda in the province through multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral platforms;
- The SUN Academia and Research Network (SUNAR) to improve knowledge base and evidence for effective planning and implementation of nutrition actions at national and sub-national levels

Currently, Nutrition International is supporting the SUN Movement in Pakistan by hosting the Secretariat for the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUNCSA) and the SUNAR, Pakistan.

SUNCSA is coalition of over 170 CSOs working to support governments in addressing malnutrition. Nutrition International is engaged in advocacy for the implementation of multi-sectoral nutrition strategies, demanding enhanced budgetary allocations for nutrition and implementation of nutrition related rules/laws. The key activities undertaken by SUNCSA-Pakistan include nutrition budget advocacy to increase budgetary allocation for nutrition, engaging parliamentarians from national and provincial assemblies to sensitize them on the value of investing in nutrition, building capacities of alliance members by conducting trainings on mainstreaming nutrition in development programs, infant and young child feeding and resource mobilization for nutrition projects, and building awareness on nutrition related issues at the grassroots level.

Nutrition International is spearheading SUNCSA’s advocacy efforts as well as supporting evidence generating for nutrition policy formulation and planning through SUNAR, Pakistan. Over the years, Nutrition International has mobilized multiple resources for strengthening SUNCSA-Pakistan and SUNAR, Pakistan by securing grants from New Venture Fund, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Pooled Funds Grant through the United Nations Office for Project Services.

Leading nutrition advocacy in the country, Nutrition International is a member of the Development Partners for Nutrition Group and the International Coalition for Advocating Nutrition.
RIGHT START

Nutrition International’s Right Start Initiative, which is implemented in close collaboration with provincial health departments, the Federal Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination and the Ministry of Education, has three components: infant and young child nutrition (IYCN), maternal, newborn and child health and adolescent nutrition. The program, which will run until 2020, aims to reach 275,000 pregnant women and 20,000 adolescent girls with iron supplementation, 298,000 newborns with WHO recommended birth package and an estimated 546,000 children aged 0-23 months with IYCN services. It is being implemented in seven prioritized districts in three provinces (Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

Focusing on the First 1,000 days (from conception to a child’s second birthday), the initiative offers an integrated package of interventions for adolescent girls, pregnant women, newborns, infants and young children – to reduce mortality, anaemia, birth defects, low birth weight and stunting. The interventions encompass antenatal care, care at birth including optimal cord clamping, Kangaroo Mother Care, promotion of early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, provision and promotion of multi-micronutrients for children aged 6-23 months, encouraging exclusive breastfeeding supplemented with complimentary feeding, and nutrition counselling for in-school girls. Right Start addresses malnutrition by utilizing available government service delivery platforms at both health facility and community levels, lady health workers, community midwives, health facility staff and government school teachers.
With the objective to improve the health and survival of the most vulnerable children (between the ages of 6-59 months), Nutrition International continues to ensure these children receive two doses of life-saving vitamin A annually. In 2018, 32 million children received two doses of vitamin A. Nutrition International supports the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to scale up the vitamin A supplementation program by providing technical support as well as monitoring and training expertise.

Nutrition International has delivered 1 billion doses of vitamin A since the start of its vitamin A program in Pakistan in 2000. In 2018, Nutrition International provided 81 million vitamin A capsules. Currently, 96% of young children aged 6-59 months receive bi-annual vitamin A supplements.
CURRENT PROJECTS

UNIVERSAL SALT IODIZATION

Nutrition International has been working with the Government of Pakistan, the salt industry and other key partners since 2006, to support USI in the country, with an aim to reduce iodine deficiency disorders. Currently, almost 70% of edible salt produced in the country is adequately iodized.

There has been a significant increase in household use of iodized salt, from 17% in 2001 to 69% in 2011. This has resulted in a decrease in iodine deficiency disorders in mothers, school-aged children and newborns. Nutrition International has played a key role in the establishment of revolving fund for ensuring uninterrupted provision of the fortificant (potassium iodate) used for salt iodization. Nutrition International has also played a significant role in the formation of National Fortification Alliance for advocating for food fortification in Pakistan.

FOOD FORTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Food Fortification Program (FFP) Pakistan is one of the world’s largest fortification programs, funded by UK Aid and managed in partnership with Nutrition International and Mott McDonald.

Currently, FFP is being implemented in 40 districts in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, covering all wheat flour and edible oil/ghee mills. Since the start of the fortification activities in 2017, around 2 million metric tonnes (MTs) of edible oil/ghee have been fortified with vitamins A and D, and almost 300,000 MTs of wheat flour, maida and fine atta have been fortified with iron, folic acid, zinc and vitamin B12. Currently, the program is covering 450 wheat flour mills and 115 edible oil mills in the country.

Over the next two years, the program will gradually expand to cover all over the wheat flour and edible oil/ghee mills registered in Pakistan to ensure adequately fortified edible oil/ghee and wheat flour is available and consumed by the target population.
DIARRHOEA MANAGEMENT

Childhood diarrhoea is a major cause of child morbidity and mortality in Pakistan. The Demographic Health Survey in 2017-18 revealed that 19% mothers reported that their children suffered from diarrhoea in last two weeks. Overall 71% of children with diarrhoea were taken to a health provider for advice or treatment but less than 13% received zinc supplementation. There is an urgent need to spread awareness about diarrhea prevention, especially among the vulnerable population.

To increase the coverage and utilization of zinc and ORS in the management of childhood diarrhoea, Nutrition International developed a strategy, in consultation with the Government of Pakistan, to implement a demonstration program in Gujrat district of Punjab province. The strategy focused on building community awareness and bridging the gaps in policy formulation and supply chain management, capacity building and program monitoring. Since then, the project has been

WHEAT FLOUR FORTIFICATION IN THE STATE OF AZAD JAMMU & KASHMIR

With support from the World Food Programme, Nutrition International undertook a wheat flour fortification project in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) to improve the anaemia levels of the population, particularly among women of child bearing age.

As part of the project, Nutrition International will be providing technical assistance to the Food Department, Government of AJ&K and the private sector to ensure effective monitoring and adequate fortification. Nutrition International will also support in the facilitation of repair and maintenance of micro-feeders installed at mills and procurement of Iron Spot Test Kits for internal quality control.

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