



# NIGERIA PROGRAMS

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## NUTRITION INTERNATIONAL IN NIGERIA



Malnutrition remains a significant public health problem in Nigeria. The country's population of nearly 218 million people is experiencing a double burden of malnutrition, where undernutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies, exist alongside overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases. Common causes of malnutrition in Nigeria include poor infant and child feeding practices, lack of access to healthcare, water, sanitation, and a high level of poverty.

The 2018 Nigeria Demographic Health Survey (NDHS 2018) found that 37% of children under five – more than 10 million children – are stunted, or too short for their age, and 17% are severely stunted. Nigeria has the most stunted children in sub-Saharan Africa and the second-most globally.

The NDHS 2018 also found that 7% of children under five are wasted, or too thin for their height, with 2% severely wasted, and 22% of children are underweight, with 7% being severely underweight.

Fifty-eight percent of women aged 15 to 49 have some degree of anaemia and 31% are iodine-deficient, while close to 30% of children under five are vitamin A-deficient and 20% are zinc-deficient. Only three out of every 10 children with diarrhoea were given zinc supplements.

While the NDHS 2018 did report increases in the percentage of children six to 59 months who received vitamin A supplements (from 41% in 2013 to 45% in 2018), the recent preliminary report of the National Food Consumption Survey in October 2022 revealed that only 25% of children six to 59 months received vitamin A supplementation (VAS) in 2021, which is far below the recommended levels.

For 30 years, Nutrition International has worked with a wide range of donors, governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, research institutions and other partners to promote, accelerate and facilitate the scale-up of nutrition interventions within health, food and education systems.

Nutrition International was established in Nigeria in 2007 and has become a trusted partner of the government and a leader in addressing the burden of malnutrition. Nutrition International Nigeria implements high-impact, low-cost interventions and solutions for malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies, through various projects and programs. With its strong team of experts in public health and nutrition, Nutrition International Nigeria works with partners to support the government to ensure people in the most vulnerable situations are reached with lifesaving and life-enhancing nutrition programming.

Nutrition International Nigeria works closely with the Nutrition Division of the Federal Ministry of Health, Ministry of Budget and National Planning, National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office, National Cash Transfer Office, states, development partners, donors and other key stakeholders to support nutrition programs.

Nutrition International's core programs in Nigeria are funded by the Government of Canada.



## PRIORITY OBJECTIVES IN NIGERIA

Nutrition International Nigeria aims to achieve six key and complementary strategic objectives by 2024:

- Improve the nutrition, health and survival of pregnant women and newborns
- Improve the nutrition, survival, health and development of children under five
- Improve the nutrition, health, and wellbeing of adolescent girls and women aged 20 to 49
- Improve the nutrition, health, development and productivity of the general population
- Leverage partnership to strengthen nutrition intervention coverage, access and reach
- Strengthen nutrition governance and increase resourcing for nutrition

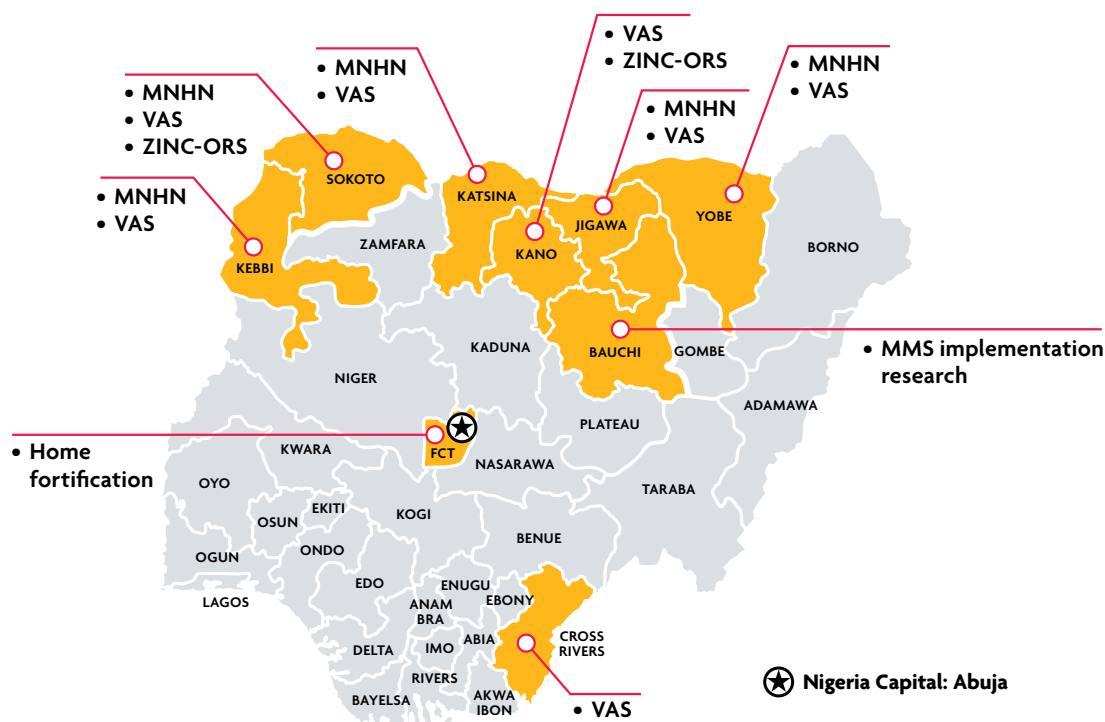
### Nutrition International's work in Nigeria

#### National programs currently supported in Nigeria

- Nigeria social safety net programs (SSNPs) assessment studies

#### Sub-national programs currently supported in Nigeria

- Vitamin A supplementation (VAS)
- Maternal and newborn health and nutrition (MNHN)
- Zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration salts (LO-ORS) supplementation for diarrhoea management
- Home fortification implementation research
- Multiple micronutrient supplementation (MMS) implementation research





## CURRENT PROJECTS

### MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The maternal and newborn health and nutrition program, implemented in collaboration with UNICEF and the state governments of Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa and Yobe, aims to ensure an adequate supply of iron and folic acid (IFA) is available in public health facilities and quality antenatal care services are provided to pregnant women, including pregnant adolescents.

The program sensitizes policymakers on MMS through sustained dialogue with government and other stakeholders. Nutrition International provided technical assistance and financial support to the review of the National Guidelines on Micronutrient Deficiencies Control and ensured that MMS was included in the guidelines and adopted in Nigeria.

Nutrition International has helped to improve the capacity, skills and motivation of frontline health workers, supply chain managers and community-based health volunteers through in-service trainings and supportive supervision.

In partnership with Forward in Action for Education, Poverty and Malnutrition (FAcE-PaM) and the Society for Women Development and Empowerment of Nigeria (SWODEN), Nutrition International aims to generate increased demand for IFA supplements through the implementation of an evidence-informed behaviour change intervention strategy in the target states. Behaviour change messages are being disseminated through radio jingles aired three times daily and drama skits aired once a week on local radio stations in the target states as well as through posters and flyers in health facilities.

From 2016 to 2019, Nutrition International partnered with Plan International, UNICEF, the Federal Ministry of Health and state governments to improve IFA availability and adherence in Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Zamfara states. By March 2019, with Nutrition International's support, 319,100 additional pregnant women had received any IFA supplements from the public health system.





## CURRENT PROJECTS

### OPTIMIZING ADHERENCE TO MATERNAL MULTIPLE MICRONUTRIENT SUPPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA

The three-year (2022-2025) implementation research project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will provide evidence to support the Federal Ministry of Health in transitioning from IFA supplementation to MMS within antenatal care. Nutrition International, in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria, Bauchi State Government and other implementing partners will:

- Elevate and advance maternal nutrition by improving adherence to micronutrient supplementation during pregnancy.
- Generate evidence through implementation research on MMS (to replace IFA) for pregnant women that responds to the needs of the Government of Nigeria while advancing the National Guidelines on Micronutrients Deficiencies Control.
- Optimize adherence with an equity lens through employing human-centered design, co-creation strategies, adaptive implementation and other innovative approaches.
- Strengthen maternal programs to effectively deliver micronutrient supplements to pregnant women through public health system platforms.
- Adopt a women-centered approach that prioritizes quality of care, respect and dignity, while ensuring that the unique needs of pregnant adolescents are considered and fostering both health and wellbeing.
- Contribute to national and global knowledge, evidence and operational guidance on improving micronutrient supplementation adherence.





## CURRENT PROJECTS

### VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTATION

Through the in-kind assistance program in partnership with UNICEF, Nutrition International procures vitamin A capsules and donates them to all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) so they can be distributed during biannual Maternal Newborn and Child Health Weeks. In 2021, Nutrition International donated a total of over 76 million capsules of vitamin A.

Nutrition International also provides operational support for delivery of vitamin A supplementation (VAS) at the national level and in the states of Kano, Kebbi, Katsina, Sokoto, Jigawa, Yobe and Cross River. Nutrition International implements the VAS program in partnership with the NPHCDA, state primary healthcare development agencies, state ministries of health and UNICEF.

At the state level, Nutrition International provides technical and financial support to states and local government areas for planning of the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Weeks and implementation of micro-plans developed to improve service delivery, equity, quality of data collected and reported, and VAS coverage. Nutrition International also supports monitoring and evaluation of VAS campaigns through independent monitoring and post-event coverage surveys.

Nutrition International will support the roll-out of the VAS social and behaviour change communication strategy in Katsina and Kebbi states, as well as a pilot project in Bauchi state to demonstrate the requirements to transition to routine VAS delivery across the country.

At the national level, Nutrition International supports the NPHCDA to effectively coordinate, plan and collate quality data for two semesters of VAS through all delivery platforms. Nutrition International will also support the national government to effectively transition to routine VAS delivery using the most efficient approach.

From 2015 to 2022, Nutrition International worked with a total of 14 states and the federal government to improve planning for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Weeks, including getting to hard-to reach populations, training, monitoring and supervision, and creating demand. Nutrition International pioneered and developed the first ever VAS-specific behaviour change intervention strategy in Nigeria, including job aids for health workers, which was rolled out in nine states.

By March 2022, nearly 23 million children had received two doses of VAS.





## CURRENT PROJECTS

### ZINC AND LO-ORS FOR DIARRHOEA TREATMENT

Nutrition International works with partners to provide both technical and financial support to Kano and Sokoto states to address key factors associated with increased diarrhoea morbidity and mortality, including promoting prompt care-seeking for children with diarrhoea and adherence to treatment with zinc and LO-ORS.

Nutrition International provides technical and financial support to improve the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of healthcare workers to provide zinc and LO-ORS, as well as appropriate interpersonal communications for the treatment of all diarrhoea cases seen at health facilities or community-level service points.

Nutrition International is working to improve the commitment of state actors, such as health managers and policymakers, to implement complementary Drug Revolving Fund schemes to ensure the availability and sustainability of health commodities, including zinc and LO-ORS.

In collaboration with the state governments of Kano and Sokoto, Nutrition International partners with the Wellbeing Foundation Africa on health systems strengthening, FaCE-PaM on behaviour change interventions, and SWODEN on the gender aspects of diarrhoea management.

From 2016 to 2022, Nutrition International partnered with Plan International Nigeria to scale up the use of zinc in diarrhoea treatment in Katsina, Jigawa and Zamfara states. The project focused on increasing availability of zinc and LO-ORS at the state, local and health facility levels, increasing the number of children treated with zinc and LO-ORS, and increasing commitment to tackle childhood diarrhoea by state-level policymakers. By 2022, about 901,400 additional children were treated with zinc and LO-ORS in public health facilities, at least in part due to Nutrition International's support.



## CURRENT PROJECTS



### SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAMS ASSESSMENT STUDIES

Nutrition International is supporting the relevant agencies of the Government of Nigeria to identify opportunities in its main social protection programs to provide greater nutritional benefits for children and women.

Nutrition International provided technical assistance to conduct an in-depth assessment of the social protection programs in Nigeria and assess behaviour change communications in the National Cash Transfer Program to identify gaps and opportunities to embed nutrition.

Nutrition International has previously provided technical assistance to the Government of Nigeria, through the Technical Assistance for Nutrition project, funded with UK aid from the UK government, including:

- Costing of the National Multisectoral Strategic Plan of Action on Nutrition
- Planning and implementation of the National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey through support of diet intake related pre-survey activities
- In-depth institutional review for effective coordination and implementation of the multisectoral nutrition actions in Nigeria
- In-depth nutrition assessment and system review of social protection programs in Nigeria

### ENHANCING INFANT AND YOUNG CHILDREN'S NUTRITION IN NIGERIA THROUGH HOME FORTIFICATION

Nutrition International's Home Fortification implementation research project (2021 – 2023) was focused on two main interventions: micronutrient powders (MNPs) and small quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements (SQLNS). The interventions were implemented in the context of public health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited in-person contact. The project, implemented in select urban informal settlements within the FCT provided valuable insights into effective delivery methods of MNPs and SQLNS amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Major achievements included:

- 272,250 packs (8,167,500 sachets) of MNPs donated to the FCT Administration
- 58,066 children (aged 6-23 months) reached with a full six-month supply of MNPs
- 1,617 integrated community outreach clinics activated
- 111 health workers trained on MNP protocol for Nigeria
- 21,750 cartons (930,930 sachets) of SQLNS donated to the FCT Administration
- 5,823 children (aged 6-23 months) reached with SQLNS

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