

⋮ Pakistan programs





:: Nutrition International in Pakistan

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has achieved notable progress in health and nutrition. However, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies remain prevalent, especially among women and children. According to the National Nutrition Survey, nearly 40% of children under five are stunted, 17.7% are wasted and 28.9% are underweight.¹ Among women and adolescent girls, 14.4% are underweight, while 37.8% are overweight or obese. Micronutrient deficiencies are also widespread, with approximately half of all children under five suffering from anaemia, with similarly high rates of vitamin A and zinc deficiencies. These numbers reflect systemic barriers to accessing essential health and nutrition services.

Since 2001, Nutrition International has been a committed partner to the Government of Pakistan in advancing the health and wellbeing of populations living in vulnerable situations, particularly women and children, through improved nutrition.

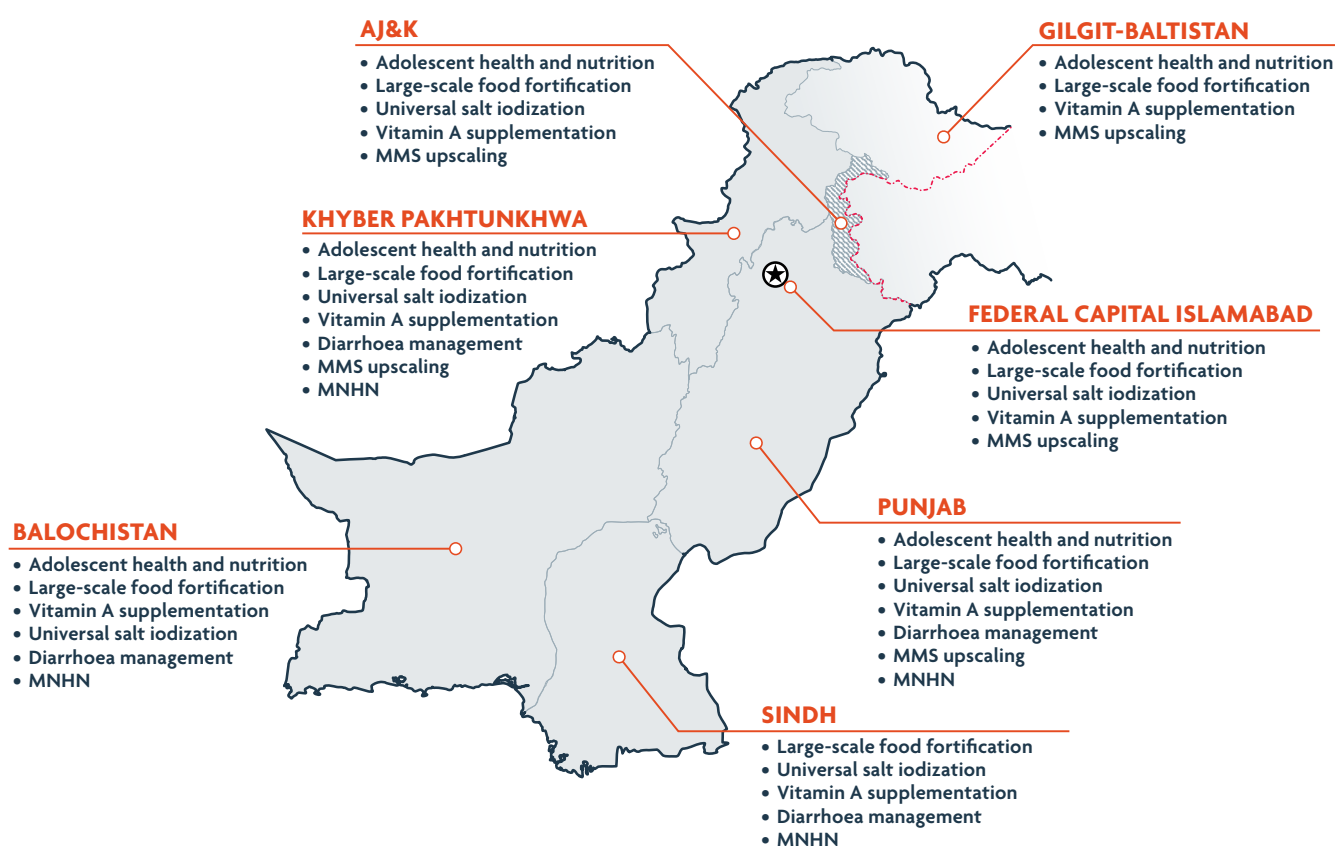
Our priorities focus on enhancing access to essential micronutrients via large-scale food fortification, supplementation programs, behaviour change campaigns as well as driving policy reform and advocacy initiatives. Working closely with the federal and provincial governments, we help strengthen nutrition policies and improve multisector coordination, particularly through our engagement with the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement.

Our efforts in Pakistan have been supported by the Government of Canada, German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) commissioned by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Gates Foundation and other valued partners.

Priority programs and geographic coverage

Nutrition International's goal is to respond to the high burden of malnutrition in Pakistan, guided by the following objectives:

- Improving the nutrition, health and survival of pregnant women and newborns
- Improving the nutrition, survival, health and development of children under five
- Preventing anaemia in pregnant women with multiple micronutrient supplementation (MMS)
- Addressing micronutrient deficiencies through large-scale food fortification initiatives
- Addressing iodine deficiency disorders through universal salt iodization
- Improving the nutrition, health and wellbeing of adolescent girls
- Improving the knowledge and capacity of healthcare providers in advancing maternal nutrition interventions across the country
- Supporting the government in integrating nutrition into existing social safety net programs



Programs supported by Nutrition International

As a longstanding and trusted partner, Nutrition International supports the Government of Pakistan to deliver various nutrition-related programs, including:

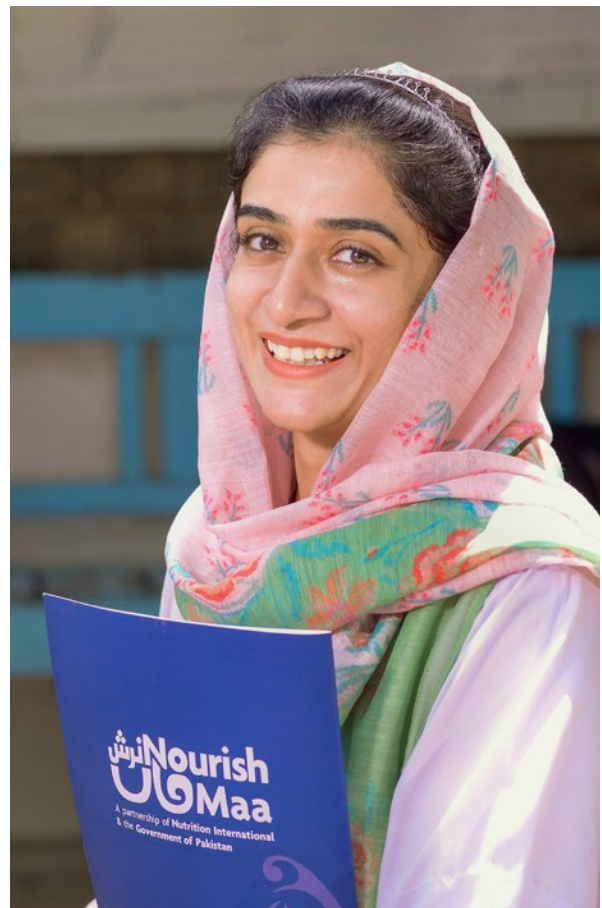
- Maternal and newborn health and nutrition
- Adolescent health and nutrition
- Vitamin A supplementation
- Nutrition Governance/Technical Assistance to Government of Pakistan
- Childhood diarrhoea management with zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration salts (LO-ORS)
- Large-scale food fortification (LSFF)
- Multiple micronutrient supplementation (MMS)



:: Maternal and newborn health and nutrition

Nutrition International supports the provincial and district governments to strengthen maternal and newborn health and nutrition services. Efforts focus on ensuring pregnant women receive iron and folic acid supplementation (IFAS) or MMS to reduce anaemia; strengthening referral and follow-up systems to provide a continuum of care from the household to the health facility; improving newborn survival through kangaroo mother care (KMC); and building the capacity of government health staff in maternal nutrition and supply chain management. Nutrition International is also working to integrate healthy timing and spacing for pregnancy (HTSP), and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) within the program.

In 2022, the Nutrition International-led NourishMaa campaign reinforced these efforts by generating national momentum for maternal nutrition. The initiative mobilized health professionals, policymakers and other stakeholders, culminating in renewed commitments through the Bhurban Declaration in 2024.





Multiple micronutrient supplementation

In line with updated World Health Organization guidelines, Nutrition International is supporting the Government of Pakistan to transition from IFAS to MMS for pregnant women through implementation research and nationwide scale-up efforts.

In 2021, we led the Advancing Maternal Health through MMS Implementation Research in Pakistan (AMMI) project, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services and other partners. The project demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of delivering MMS through public antenatal care services. Following a successful randomized controlled trial in Swabi district, the initiative expanded to a district-wide model focused on sustainability, government ownership, and gender- and adolescent-responsive antenatal care.

Building on the findings from the AMMI project, and the Pakistan Maternal Nutrition Strategy (2022–2027), the government committed to scaling up MMS in 32 districts across the country. Nutrition International is supporting this scale-up in five focal districts to ensure that, over the next three years, all newly enrolled pregnant women receive MMS — whether at health facilities or through community-based providers. This includes health system readiness assessments, healthcare providers training, program monitoring and supportive supervision.

We are also working with the government to develop a costing implementation plan to guide national integration and long-term sustainability.

In the remaining 27 districts, Nutrition International is supporting the development and distribution of training materials, facilitating provincial training-of-trainers sessions to strengthen district-level capacity and funding cascade trainings to ensure effective rollout.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

- 16,585 pregnant women received IFAS in Nutrition International-supported areas
- 4,027 pregnant women received at least one 100-count bottle of MMS in Swabi, while approximately 15,000 pregnant women in five program districts received a 280-count bottle under the MMS SMART Scale-Up initiative.
- 1,781 frontline health workers were trained on IFA compliance, while 2,146 health service providers have been trained on MMS management.
- 917 low birthweight infants received KMC at Nutrition International-supported health facilities



:: Adolescent health and nutrition

Nutrition International is implementing a multi-pronged approach to improve adolescent girls' nutrition in Pakistan, focusing on supplementation, education, social protection and systems strengthening.

Building on a successful 2021 pilot in Lodhran, the weekly iron and folic acid supplementation (WIFAS) program for in-school adolescent girls was expanded to the remaining two tehsils of Lodhran and introduced in two new districts — Swabi and Pishin. The program provides WIFAS, delivers nutrition education, and strengthens the capacity of health and education officials to implement and monitor the intervention effectively.

To further advance national adolescent nutrition efforts, Nutrition International is supporting two pilot initiatives under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The Adolescent Nutrition Conditional Cash Transfer, which combines WIFAS, nutrition education and conditional cash transfers, is currently being evaluated by Nutrition International for feasibility, viability, fidelity and WIFAS procurement. Through BISP's Taleemi Wazaif program, Nutrition International is also supporting the Government of Pakistan in implementing the Social Protection Programs for Adolescent Girls' Nutrition (SOPRAN) project — a strategic, multisector initiative targeting adolescent girls aged 10–19 years from the lowest income quintiles to address anaemia

and other micronutrient deficiencies. Reaching over 100,000 girls across hundreds of schools, the project improves access to fortified wheat flour through local chakkis. By integrating health, education, food systems, and social protection, the initiative empowers girls as 'agents of change' for nutrition within their families and communities.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.68M WIFA tablets procured by Nutrition International for distribution across 672 schools
- 39,311 adolescent girls (aged 10–19) in eight districts received WIFAS
- 655 female teachers, 1,409 health officials, and 2,110 education officials were trained on the importance, delivery, and management of the WIFAS program.
- 1.8M people were reached with adolescent health awareness messages through television, cable and radio platforms.



:: Child survival

Vitamin A supplementation

To improve the health and survival of children living in vulnerable conditions, Nutrition International supports the Government of Pakistan to ensure that children aged 6–59 months receive two doses of lifesaving vitamin A each year.

We help sustain and expand vitamin A supplementation (VAS) coverage through technical assistance, including capacity building of district focal persons, biannual stakeholder coordination meetings, monitoring support, advocacy and public awareness campaigns. In districts with low coverage, we also deploy external monitors to assess training quality, oversee campaign implementation and conduct follow-up monitoring.

Since launching the program in 2001, Nutrition International has donated over one billion vitamin A capsules in Pakistan. Currently, 87% of children aged 6–59 months receive biannual vitamin A supplements with support from Nutrition International.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 35.7M children reached with two doses of vitamin A
- 315 master trainers (including 69 women) were trained on VAS protocols, enabling the capacity-building of over 340,000 frontline health workers nationwide
- Additionally, 214 government officials, were trained on VAS protocols to improve planning and implementation of VAS activities during the NIDs

Childhood diarrhoea management

Childhood diarrhoea remains a leading cause of child morbidity and mortality in Pakistan. While care-seeking increased from 61% in 2012–13 to 71% in 2017–18, only 8% of affected children receive the recommended treatment of zinc and LO-ORS.¹

To address this gap, Nutrition International launched a pilot program in Punjab province that was later scaled to additional districts in Punjab, and to Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. The initiative focused on increasing community awareness, closing policy and supply chain gaps, strengthening healthcare providers capacity, and improving program monitoring. As a result, nearly 1.87 million diarrhoea cases were treated and over 62,000 public and private sector healthcare providers were trained on the critical role of zinc and LO-ORS in diarrhoea management.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 16,274 episodes of childhood diarrhoea treated with zinc and ORS in one district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and two districts of Balochistan
- 141,110 caregivers of children under five in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa received leaflets distributed by Nutrition International with messages on diarrhoea and the use of zinc and LO-ORS
- 275,000 treatment courses of zinc and LO-ORS were procured by NI to address chronic stock-outs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province



:: Large-scale food fortification

Universal salt iodization

Nutrition International has been supporting universal salt iodization (USI) in Pakistan since 2006, working alongside the government, the salt industry and other key partners to reduce iodine deficiency disorders. Today, nearly 80% of all edible salt produced in the country is adequately iodized, with efforts underway to ensure it reaches the entire population and is sustained and institutionalized into the government monitoring and enforcement mechanism.

Household use of iodized salt has risen significantly, from 17% in 2001 to 80% in 2018, contributing to a marked reduction in iodine deficiency disorders among women aged 15–49, school-aged children and newborns. Nutrition International has played a key role in this progress, including establishing a revolving fund to ensure a steady, uninterrupted supply of potassium iodate, the fortificant used in salt iodization. Each year, iodized salt reaches approximately 200 million people across Pakistan.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 89.3M additional people reached with adequately iodized salt
- 2.4M newborns protected from iodine deficiency disorders by ensuring the iodine status of their mothers
- 260,873 MT of adequately iodized salt was produced with Nutrition International's technical support
- 993 (635 male; 358 female) Salt Processors, Food Safety Officers, and laboratory personnel were trained on salt iodization, including its processes, monitoring, and enforcement in Punjab and Sindh.
- 448 Lady Health Supervisors and District Coordinators from the Health Department were trained on salt sample collection and qualitative assessment of the samples for presence of iodine



Wheat flour fortification

Nutrition International supports the fortification of wheat flour with iron, folic acid, zinc and vitamin B12 — an effective strategy to combat micronutrient deficiencies on a large scale without needing to change dietary habits.

Our technical support includes building the capacity of millers and key government departments, including the installation of 2,223 microfeeders in 1,000 flour mills and the provision of equipment to public and private laboratories to ensure rigorous quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) testing for wheat flour fortification.

At the policy level, Nutrition International has played a key role in advocating with national and provincial governments to create an enabling environment for food fortification initiatives. This led to the enactment of fortification laws in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with ongoing technical support to develop enforcement regulations.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 709,696 additional people had access to adequately fortified wheat flour
- 65,090 MT of additional fortified wheat flour was produced
- 790 government officials, chakki owners and laboratory staff across selected provinces were trained on fortification processes as well as QA/QC

Edible oil fortification

Nutrition International began supporting edible oil fortification with vitamins A and D in Pakistan in 2017, gradually scaling up to cover 100% of the formal sector through 158 mills nationwide. This initiative now reaches approximately 135 million people annually, with adequacy of fortification rising from 19% in 2017 to over 90% by 2024.

To ensure sustainability and effectiveness, Nutrition International is strengthening QA/QC systems, building the technical capacity of food regulatory authorities and supporting the enforcement of food safety and quality regulations for edible oil, such as the ban on sale of loose or unrefined oil sold by the informal sector. The program also provides technical assistance to millers to maintain internal quality standards and compliance. Ongoing collaboration with oil mills aims to extend coverage to over 155 million people annually by 2027.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Approximately 135 million people had access to fortified edible oil
- 2.4 MT of additional fortified edible oil was produced
- 881 government officials, mill owners, laboratory staff and lady health workers across Pakistan were trained on fortification processes as well as QA/QC



Nutrition governance

Nutrition International has been supporting the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement in Pakistan by hosting the Secretariat for the SUN Civil Society Alliance (SUN CSA) since 2015 and the SUN Academia and Research (SUNAR) Network since 2016.

Through SUN CSA, Nutrition International advocates for the implementation of multisector nutrition strategies, nutrition-related legislation, inclusion of nutrition in political manifestos, and increased budget allocations for nutrition programs, while strengthening civil society's capacity on nutrition advocacy and financing.

Nutrition International supports evidence generation for nutrition policy and planning through SUNAR Pakistan, a network of over 100 universities and academic institutions. As a leading nutrition advocate in the country, Nutrition International serves as the Co-chair of the Development Partners for Nutrition Group and is a member of the International Coalition for Advocacy Nutrition.



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