

Meeting a Fundamental Need

Social Marketing of Micronutrients Prevents Anemia, Saves Lives

The social marketing of micronutrient supplements, pioneered by Population Services International (PSI) in seven developing countries, is preventing anemia in women of reproductive age and averting maternal deaths due to lack of iron. In 2002, PSI sold 16.3 million micronutrient supplements.

PSI has assessed micronutrient supplement markets in all regions of the world with consistent findings: Although shelves are crowded with vitamin products, they are high-priced and typically containing so little iron that they are useless in addressing iron deficiency. Most are not packaged attractively or promoted actively, nor is any effort made to target low-income groups. In every country where PSI has conducted market research, there is a clear unfilled niche for micronutrient supplements affordable to low-income people.

PSI markets supplements for women of reproductive age in Bolivia, India, Pakistan, Paraguay, Togo, Venezuela and Zambia, and iron folate tablets in India.

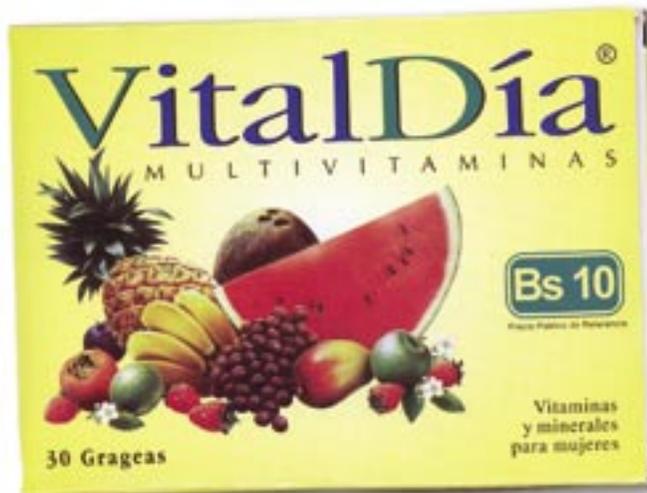
Micronutrient Deficiencies

Over 3.5 billion people worldwide — more than half the world's population — are affected by iron deficiencies. Rates of iron deficiency in developing countries are staggering — 44% of women, 42% of preschoolers, 53% of school-age children and 33% of men. Iron deficiency is the leading cause of anemia and severe iron deficiency is an underlying cause of childbirth-related death, responsible for as much as 20% of maternal deaths. Iron deficiency can impair fetal development and anemic infants are at risk of an irreversible reduction in intellectual capacity. Iron-deficiency anemia likewise reduces adults' mental acuity and causes fatigue, resulting in reduced productivity, but is entirely preventable and treatable by increasing iron consumption.

Many countries' attempts to combat iron deficiencies during pregnancy with the distribution of iron folate through prenatal clinics has proved less than successful because many women in developing countries do not seek prenatal treatment or do so too late to take advantage of iron folate. Social marketing targets women outside the reach of public health programs by creating informed demand — improving knowledge and practices — and making supplements more widely available at pharmacies and non-traditional outlets. Marketed attractively, priced affordably and distributed widely, the promotion of high-quality micronutrient supplements through social marketing leads to health impact.

Pioneering Multivitamin Social Marketing in South America

PSI and its Bolivian affiliate PROSALUD launched the world's first multivitamin supplement (called *VitalDía*) social marketing project in Bolivia in 1999 in a project made possible by the Academy for Educational Development's LINKAGES project and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).



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Bolivia is a country with high anemia rates and the highest maternal mortality in South America. Social marketing was found to be an excellent means to increase awareness and use among low-income women. The project's objective was to create an appealing, affordable, iron-containing multivitamin supplement available to low-income women of reproductive age for the prevention of iron deficiency and to improve knowledge and teach basic nutrition to women.

The attractive package, fruit logo, VitalDía name, tablet size and key messages were selected based on the findings of focus group discussions and interviews with target group women. A consistent theme for low-income women was that the product appear natural, and this feeling is echoed in the brand's character.

VitalDía was made widely available in pharmacies (a distribution survey confirmed that VitalDía was available in 90% of urban pharmacies as well as 58% of rural pharmacies), markets and PROSALUD clinics. Communication strategies included TV spots and radio spots and dramas. Promotional events were held in PROSALUD clinic waiting rooms, educational seminars were held for medical professionals and medical promotions were conducted with doctors. A campaign to improve knowledge about food sources of iron and other essential micronutrients was implemented.

A knowledge, attitudes, practices and behavior study conducted one year after the launch of VitalDía found that PSI's social marketing clearly succeeded in reaching low-income women, including those in the very lowest income strata. Among women with the lowest income, those with less than four years of education, awareness of vitamins increased from 53% to 78%; ever-use of vitamins rose from 43% to 54%; and ever-use of vitamin supplements jumped from less than 1% to 12%.

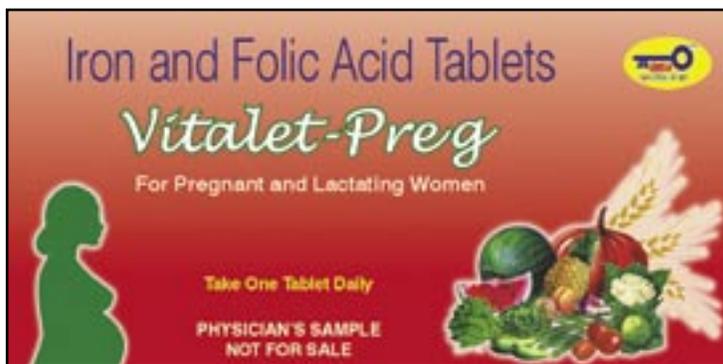
In 2000, PSI capitalized on its Bolivian experience to launch VitalDía in neighboring Paraguay, where demand for the product became so high that at one point that advertising for the product had to be temporarily suspended, sales rationed and production increased to meet the unexpected demand.

Filling the Iron Folate Gap in India

Anemia is a serious health issue for women and young children in India, where 74 % of children and over 50% of adolescent girls and women of reproductive age are anemic. **Vitalet-Preg** iron folate tablets have been launched in six Indian states, most recently with the support of USAID. Vitalet-Preg tablets are targeted to benefit pregnant and lactating women and provide iron and folic acid in the quantities stipulated by the Indian Ministry of Health. Initial sales of Vitalet-Preg far exceeded forecasts, and in the first nine months of 2003, sales have exceeded the annual goal of 4 million units by 169%.

Iron folate is a prescription product in India, and because current laws regulating the promotion of vitamin supplements prohibit branded communication for pharmaceutical products and the product can only be distributed through licensed chemists, PSI's promotion strategy for Vitalet-Preg targets medical practitioners and chemists who serve low-income areas.

Communication materials center on the slogan "Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby," and depict visually a pregnant woman and iron-rich fruits and vegetables. Materials directed to medical practitioners emphasize the importance and role of Vitalet-Preg in preventing anemia during pregnancy and lactation, dispel iron folate myths and provide information on how to counsel for side effects associated with increased iron intake. PSI/India's



sales officers are equipped with materials detailing technical information on anemia and iron folate, physician samples of Vitalet-Preg, prescription pads and a promotional item containing product information. Chemists are also informed of the benefits of consistent iron folate intake and the negative health consequences that can occur when anemia is present during pregnancy. Branded posters and stickers signal the availability of Vitalet-Preg in their outlets.

Through its campaigns and products, PSI provides the education and tools that enable low-income people to prevent and treat iron-deficiency anemia and lead healthier lives. Promotion of multivitamin and iron supplements such as VitalDía and Vitalet-Preg increase knowledge, change behavior and save lives.

PSI's Core Values:

Bottom Line Health Impact • Private Sector Speed and Efficiency •
Decentralization, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship • Long-term Commitment to the People We Serve