NUTRITION

Community of Practice for Home Fortification

*Home Fortification Technical Advisory Group* Briefing Note

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While there has been great interest and rapid implementation of home fortification programmes using micronutrient powders (MNP) in the last five years, many obstacles still exist to its introduction and scaling up. Nonetheless, many countries already have a wide range of experiences on overall implementation of home fortification programmes that can potentially foster inter-country learning, making programme scale up faster and more efficient.

In addition, innovations and operations research provide important answers to pertinent questions that inform nutrition strategies and programme implementation (e.g. exploring market based approach as a sustainable mechanism to meet public health objectives, delivery of MNP through Child Health Days, etc.).

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE - AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTER-COUNTRY LEARNING

Inter-country and inter-agency collaboration and coordination already takes place. Five regional home fortification workshops have contributed to this, but in absence of any planned other workshops, there is a need to create platforms for discussion and support. Therefore, the idea of a community of practice was created to continually provide and facilitate dialogue and stimulate learning. The community of practice (CoP) aims to connect people to capture and diffuse existing knowledge, introduce collaborative processes, help people organize and generate new knowledge. The proposed CoP for home fortification is being developed through a partnership between UNICEF and PSI and focuses on multi-country learning by implementers who are scaling up MNP programmes. Being part of the HFTAG website, the purpose of the CoP is to facilitate discussion between ‘the community’, enhance exchange of country experiences, and avail useful resources and tools. The information posted can facilitate program oversight, identify issues requiring support, inform strategic direction, and identify and enable documentation. It is important to describe who is envisaged to be part of ‘the community’. The community is comprised of the programme implementers at country level, support providers, knowledge centers, regional and global staff of implementing agencies, procurement and supply sections of implementing agencies, manufacturers of home fortification products, but also third parties who look for information like donors, the media or research institutions. The CoP is an open forum and will specifically:

- Provide an opportunity and space for the exchange of information and experiences between and within countries, regional and global stakeholders on home fortification interventions and to document these exchanges;
- Provide a direct link between those requesting information, support, guidance and those that can meet this specific request, in a real-time, more efficient manner;
- Enhance learning and document lessons on best practices, innovations, operations research, etc.;
- Provide programme implementation feedback on the successes, challenges and needs. This will offer a continuous reality check on the quality of support provided, identified needs and opportunities. Information collected can feed into programme oversight and inform programme strategies and support mechanisms; and
- Enhance coordination, harmonization and support to the scale up phase of home fortification programmes.

HOW WILL THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FUNCTION?

It is envisaged that the community of practice will have two components, an open forum accessible to anyone, and a closed forum, reserved for the community working on market based approaches, which is an innovation.

  a) Online platform

The online discussion forum will have two tiers; a) open site for all stakeholders in the community and b) closed site for the community implementing market based approaches of MNPs. As this is the best way to generate learning, staff working on MBA in a few countries will be included as well as supporting agencies including PSI, UNICEF, GAIN and MI. The site is closed so as to optimize free sharing of ideas among these stakeholders. While every effort to encourage information sharing will be made, any sensitive information will remain confidential. The closed site will include guided discussions, and provide technical support. It is planned to have the closed site in place for 2 years, while the open site is expected to continue.
For the first 2 years, a moderator in the open forum will assist users by assuring their posts are published, coordinate the online discussion, screen questions and answers, categorize and structure the forum, highlight key findings, noteworthy information, and enable easy access in general. With the ultimate goal of making the forum as convenient to use as possible and to not create additional hurdles for users, the moderator will not screen posts prior to publication. He/she will also create linkages between the open and closed forum. Furthermore, in the initial start phase, a UNICEF consultant will promote and ‘market’ the CoP among potential home fortification community members, invite them to post questions, increase awareness and explain benefits of participation in the CoP. The forum will maintain an archive of previous discussions and also act as a depository for resource materials (programme guidance, tools, lessons learned, etc.) that have been validated by HFTAG. Figure 1 provides a schematic view of how the online forum will function and its different components.

**b) Interpersonal communication**

Online discussion for the countries implementing market based approaches will be supplemented by teleconference and in-person discussions during in-country short-term technical assistance visits. PSI/UNICEF will organize and facilitate scheduled experience sharing teleconferences that will be held every quarter. In addition, PSI/UNICEF will organize a workshop to amalgamate and document the lessons learnt from the learning project. In addition, interpersonal communication and in-person meetings will also be encouraged in the open forum to further facilitate this community and a “sense of place”. Nutrition webinars, conferences and meetings will also be used to promote use of the CoP and to grow connections between practitioners.

**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF UNICEF/PSI PARTNERSHIP AND HFTAG MEMBERS?**

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<tr>
<th>UNICEF/ PSI Partnership</th>
<th>HFTAG Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Manage and coordinate the development of the CoP</td>
<td>• Provide guidance to the architecture of the CoP during development.</td>
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<td>• Organize non web-based, routine communication and technical support</td>
<td>• Provide technical support and guidance to the CoP and the validation of documented lessons and dissemination.</td>
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<td>• Conduct regular monitoring of the CoP</td>
<td>• Stimulate and promote the use of CoP</td>
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<td>• Moderation of the CoP</td>
<td>• Global and country based communication and advocacy activities</td>
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<td>• Linking with technical experts for various thematic areas</td>
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Figure 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF ONLINE CoP
The DELTA model is a consumer-based marketing strategy that aims to understand the needs of a target group and the appropriate marketing messages for that target group.