

sight and life

Action in Brief

Our partnership with DSM and UNICEF

Increasing access to vital nutrients for children

Guided by the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals' target of zero hunger (SDG 2), *Sight and Life*, Royal DSM and the UN children's agency UNICEF entered into a new partnership agreement in September 2017. The updated partnership established in 2017 is designed to deliver better nutrition to at-risk children and mothers in Nigeria. Its three members each draw on their individual resources and skills to provide these groups with vital nutrients during the critical first 1,000 days of life, from conception to the age of two years. They also advocate on a global level the importance of increasing access to vital nutrients for children.

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The importance of good nutrition

Good nutrition during the first 1000 days plays a vital role in supporting children's physical and cognitive development, delivering lifelong benefits. Nigeria was chosen as the focus of the partnership's activities due to the country's pressing problem of malnutrition. Fewer than 20% of children in Nigeria have access to diets that meet the minimum adequacy standards for healthy growth and development, and nearly 40% of children under 5 have stunted growth – a condition caused by chronic malnutrition, among other factors.¹

Achievements 2013–16

The original partnership had the objective of creating an enabling policy environment and strengthening the capacity of the Government of Nigeria to implement and scale up micronutrient supplementation in order to reduce micronutrient deficiencies in children and women in the country. It also aimed to improve the

quality of foods available to young children and to improve feeding practices within this section of the population. Key achievements involved:

- having micronutrient powders (MNP) included in the Nigerian Micronutrient Deficiency Control Guidelines (MNDC);
- Developing a national work plan in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to ensure collective action to move the agenda forward in Nigeria;
- conducting formative research to gather the necessary information for guiding the MNP program;
- scaling up the MNP program in 2015 and 2016 in response to the humanitarian emergency in north-eastern Nigeria caused by the Boko Haram insurgency;
- ascertaining the cost of the national MNP program and identifying potential benefits both for children and for the country as a whole; and
- documenting the experience of designing, initiating and

¹ UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/nutrition> (accessed 3 June 2020).



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scaling up the MNP program, and publishing the results in *Sight and Life* Magazine in 2015.²

Developing a national strategy and scale-up plan

The current phase focuses on developing scalable models and driving innovation with the goal of delivering better nutrition to at-risk children and mothers in Nigeria. The partners have committed to activities in three areas:

1. creating commitment on the part of public and private actors in Nigeria to increase access to nutritious foods for young children;
2. increasing access to MNP in Nigeria in order to improve the dietary quality of complementary foods for 1,000,000 children; and
3. implementing a global advocacy program for making food systems sensitive for optimal micronutrient nutrition for children.

Key activities comprise:

- > developing a behavioral change communication strategy (BCC) and a package of social and behavioral change communication strategy (SBCC) materials;
- > expanding the MNP programme into additional states of Nigeria and exploring various delivery platforms;
- > strengthening the monitoring of the MNP program; and
- > building institutional and political commitment for scaling up the MNP program as part of efforts to address micronutrient deficiencies in Nigeria.

² Kodish S, Chitekwe S, Imohe A, Mathema P, Osunkentan T, de Wagt A. Integrating Formative Research into Nutrition Interventions: Using micronutrient powders (MNP) within an integrated IYCF program in northern Nigeria. *Sight and Life* Vol. 29(2) 2015, pp. 14–16.

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DSM and *Sight and Life* support UNICEF.

Directly impacting lives

The partners actively seek cooperation with existing initiatives such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network (SBN) and GAIN. Their experiences to date were used to inform the development of a national strategy and scale-up plan organized by the Nigerian Government targeting children aged 6–23 months.

Preliminary findings

The partnership has laid a strong policy foundation in the country by having MNP included in strategic national documents including the MNDC, the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Strategy, and the Essential Medicine List for Nigeria. The partnership has also built momentum within both public and private sectors under a common vision, culminating in the largest ever nutrition conference organized in Nigeria, which was dedicated to the theme of increasing awareness of the importance of micronutrients. Over 1 million children aged 6–23 months were reached with micronutrient powder in five states of Nigeria as a result.

UNICEF and *Sight and Life* are also collaborating in India as part of a unique public-private engagement called IMPAct4Nutrition (I4N). For more information, see our **Action in Brief** entitled *Private sector joins forces with Government of India to combat malnutrition*.

Further information

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