

SECURING SUSTAINABLE GOOD NUTRITION IN THE FIRST 1000 DAYS: THE SYNERGY OF LOCALIZATION, SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION AND MARKETS

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Background: The First 1,000 days of life is considered a crucial, nutrition-sensitive developmental stage during which gains in general and cognitive development can be made or irreversibly lost. Consequently, several partnerships are focused on preventing malnutrition during this period. In Ghana, such partnerships resulted in a reduction in stunting from 33% in 1999 to 18% in 2022. From 2009, the Ghana Nutrition Improvement Project (GNIP) was launched to contribute to such efforts.

Activities Tested & Methods: GNIP used an innovative approach to sustainably fight post-weaning undernutrition through: (a) the development of a protein and micronutrient powder (PMNP) based on the local food culture and the World Health Organization recommended intakes for micronutrients, protein and amino acids at 6-24 month; (b) an efficacy study to verify the impact of the product on undernutrition and stunting; (c) social behaviour-change communication (SBCC) for optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices; and (d) market-based distribution of the PMNP.

Key Findings: The product was shown to supply 35-55% of essential amino acids and 50-150% of the RNI of micronutrients based on WHO total daily requirements and has been accepted by the World Food Programme for their Ghana food basket. The efficacy study showed significantly higher length-for-age Z-scores (LAZ), reduced acute infection, and improved Hb among children fed the product from 6 to 18 months. The SBCC showed that caregivers record more knowledge of optimal IYCF practices than at baseline; children of caregivers who received IYCF information through SBCC were 15% less likely to have anaemia at follow-up; and caregivers recorded a higher purchase of PMNP (81.3% post-intervention vs. 60% at baseline).

Lessons: The findings highlight GNIP as a successful example of sustainable nutrition improvement through a combination of science-based, context-driven nutritious food product development, social behavior change communication (SBCC), and market-based distribution of the product.