Reaching the most vulnerable with vitamins: lessons from the FORTIFY West Africa program

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FORTIFY West Africa project, 2011 – 2016

**Goal:** Increased access to fortified cooking oil and wheat flour for at least 85% of the population of West Africa

**Funded by USAID:** $2.8 million

**Geographic Scope:** 15 ECOWAS countries

**Key Approach:**
- Harmonize fortification standards
- Advocate for mandatory fortification
- Build capacity for monitoring and quality control
Achievements

• Harmonized standard ratified in 2016
• 13 of 15 ECOWAS countries now mandate cooking oil fortification
• ~74% of the population have access (final project report, 2017)
Key elements of success

• Evidence was critical
• Enabling environment
• Strong collaboration and transparent communication among stakeholders
• Advocacy and communication
• Perseverance
Implementing the program

2008
- Fortification Steering Committee created

2009
- Fortification program launched
- Baseline survey conducted

2010
- Industries upgrading and trainings

2011
- Norms reviews and validation
- Fortification began [oil + wheat flour]

2012
- Interim impact evaluation

2013
- End of Donors supporting funds

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Some key achievements

- Mandatory vitamin A fortification of oil started in October 2011
- From the coverage survey in 2019:
  - 12 local producers are fortifying their oils and 90% complied with legislation
  - Markets in all 10 regions sell fortified cooking oils
Challenges

• High cost of premix and difficult procurement procedures
• Inadequate monitoring and enforcement.
  • 28 non-fortified imported cooking oil brands identified in 2019
  • unbranded and non-traceable “bulk oils”
• Difficult to keep all partners engaged all the time
• Commitment does not always translate into funding/action
• Impartial convener and open communication
THANK YOU