How large-scale food fortification will define Bangladesh’s future

Micronutrient deficiencies are a public health challenge in Bangladesh. Many children, women, and vulnerable populations are not getting the nutrients they need for proper brain development, immunity, and physical and mental health.

A Vitamin A deficiencies are severe and deadly

In 2019, the National Micronutrient Deficiency Survey in Bangladesh found that 50% of children under 5 – suffered from vitamin A deficiency.¹ This is a rise from 20.5% of children under 5 with vitamin A deficiency in 2011-2012.²

Vitamin A deficiency, which suppresses the immune system and increases the risk of respiratory and diarrhoeal infections, contributes to stunted growth, and can reduce the likelihood of survival from serious illness. Vitamin A deficiency is also a contributor to maternal mortality and other poor outcomes of pregnancy.

About 2% of all deaths among under-five children in Bangladesh are attributable to vitamin A deficiency.³

I Iodine deficiency can cause major impacts on cognition and intelligence

Iodine deficiency was found in approximately one in five children under 5 years of age and in nearly 30% of women of reproductive age.

Iodine deficiency can cause thyroid issues, such as goiter and can cause severe intellectual disability in newborns and children.

Children born to iodine deficient mothers suffer an average 12-point reduction in IQ.⁴
Vitamin A deficiency is alarmingly high and trending upwards for Bangladeshi children

Progress in iodine deficiency is a fortification success story for Bangladesh, but nearly ¼ of Bangladeshi children are still impacted – improved fortification quality will help to get the job done

Micronutrient deficiencies are costing the Bangladesh economy millions of dollars every day

The World Bank estimates Bangladesh loses over **US$700 million** in GDP to vitamin and mineral deficiencies. These losses come from multiple sources, including lost productivity, early death, illness, reduced capacity, and resources diverted to healthcare.

Together with diversified diets, **large scale food fortification** has the potential to make a significant impact on micronutrient deficiency in Bangladesh. By ensuring that vitamins and minerals are added to staple foods, in line with the mandated national standards, fortified food producers have the power to transform the health of the nation.