



**Getting things done:
Using an innovative
management approach
to facilitate food
fortification in Kenya**



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Introduction

Industrialised countries have fortified foods with vitamins and minerals for several decades. Fortification is credited with the successful control of deficiencies of vitamins A and D, several B vitamins, iodine and iron in these populations. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, fortification is increasingly recognised as a cost-effective strategy that, when combined with other interventions, can control micronutrient deficiencies. Recognising its potential, several countries have started large scale fortification programmes². However, there are still relatively few mass fortification initiatives³. A major reason for this is the difficulties government and private companies encounter when forming the type of partnership needed to bring fortified products to market.

The potential for fortification to improve the diet of Africa's people is substantial. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the population of sub-Saharan Africa has access to processed foods. This percentage is expected to grow as increased urbanisation enlarges the number of people relying on commercially processed foods. The urban population grew by 50%, from 171 million to 257 million between 1995 and 2005, and is expected to reach 365 million by 2015. Bread consumption is on the increase, with wheat milling at large modern mills increasing by 40% between 1998 and 2002. Furthermore, packaging innovations and business strategies focusing on the poor are extending distribution and marketing networks deep into rural areas⁴.

In light of these developments, this case study details how the Kenya National Food Fortification Alliance (KNFFA), overcame the obstacles that prevented the implementation of Kenya's fortification programme. Specifically, it tells the story of how government and private food companies co-operated to bring certified fortified cooking oil to market within four months. This was done with the support of the Micronutrient Initiative (MI)⁵, and the Rapid Results Institute⁶, which supported the KNFFA using an innovative approach to project implementation. The case not only offers lesson on how those interested in fortification can achieve similar results, it also offers insights as to how these results can be used to lay the ground work for even more ambitious achievements.

² In Latin America, for example, sugar fortification with Vitamin A is well-established, and folic-acid fortification of wheat has been adopted in several countries. In Africa, some 33 countries regularly fortify salt with iodine, and fortification programs have started in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia. Wheat and maize flour fortification with iron, Vitamin A and a range of B vitamins is mandatory in South Africa and Nigeria, sugar and oil fortification is also mandatory in Nigeria whereas sugar is fortified in Zambia on a voluntary basis.

³ Micronutrient Initiative. Fortifying Africa's Future. Ottawa: Micronutrient Initiative.

⁴ Micronutrient Initiative. Fortifying Africa's Future. Ottawa: Micronutrient Initiative.

⁵ For more information on the Micronutrient Initiative, see www.micronutrient.org

⁶ For more information on the Rapid Results Institute, see www.rapidresults.org



Moving from Intent to Action

While fortification shows great promise as a key nutrition strategy, there is often a long lag time between the decision to introduce fortification and the appearance of adequately fortified products in the market. The technical process of fortification is relatively straightforward, but implementing a national fortification programme can be a complex undertaking. It requires specific capacities and actions on the part of both the public and the private sectors. Neither sector can do it alone. The public sector, which is ultimately responsible for the safety of food and overall health of the population, must create, monitor and enforce standards for fortified foods. Most stakeholders also expect the government to help create demand for fortification by informing the public about its health benefits. The private sector is responsible for the production and marketing of fortified foods. Generally, the decision to fortify necessitates adjustments to processing plants and quality control systems. Companies are often only willing to make such investments when they become confident that government will do what is necessary to make fortification economically feasible.

Whether countries adopt voluntary or mandatory fortification measures, the public and private sectors have to work together to make it happen. Such collaboration rarely happens spontaneously – it requires attention and rigorous implementation. Without commitment to shared goals and adequate leadership, little progress is possible. The first hurdle to overcome relates to leadership and the political visibility of nutrition issues in general, and micronutrient fortification in particular. Micronutrient deficiencies are often difficult to recognise. The health impacts, while devastating in the long run, are not immediately apparent. More visible and urgent health challenges such as HIV/AIDS prevention and malaria control are often more likely to get priority attention from over-burdened senior managers.

Even among nutrition officers working on micronutrient deficiencies, fortification efforts are often not a priority. Instead, targeted supplementation programmes (particularly the twice-yearly distribution of Vitamin A capsules to young children) receive more attention. This approach is effective in lowering child mortality in places where high coverage can be maintained. However, it is often criticised as an unsustainable approach. Fortification is intended to be a complementary strategy to targeted supplementation of young children and mothers where micronutrient deficiencies are high. However, staff may be more comfortable working on public-sector driven interventions like supplementation and shy away from interventions that include the private sector. This situation is reinforced by donor agency requirements which tend to favour targeted approaches.

It is therefore not unusual to find that pressure from senior political leaders, donor funding priorities and the media's bias towards visible health conditions crowd out fortification issues. Consequently, public sector leaders often do not have the time and energy required to shepherd a complex public-private partnership focused on fortification through its planning stages and into action.

The process of working in partnership is further complicated by the difficulty of building trust between the sectors. Companies may be wary of working with government, concerned about slow and cumbersome procedures and political interference. Operating on razor-thin profit margins, these companies may be hesitant to make investments that become profitable only if government is able and willing to enforce health and commercial regulations and raise public awareness of the benefits of fortification. Government agents may doubt the private sector's commitment and be suspicious of the profit motive.

Experience in Kenya

In Kenya, the government decided early in the new millennium to prioritise food fortification as part of the country's nutrition strategy. Salt iodisation, which started on a voluntary basis in 1970, and became mandatory in 1992, has become a well-established programme, but the effort to extend the fortification agenda to other nutrients and food vehicles did not fare so well. By 2006, after several years of planning by the Ministry of Health, efforts to move into action had stalled. Multiple rounds of meetings concentrating on guidelines and regulatory issues were held over the years but by 2006 there was still no consensus. The Kenya National Food Fortification Alliance (KNFFA), a public-private partnership (PPP) was launched in 2006 to spearhead the fortification effort.

The KNFFA had a particularly challenging task, given the size of the alliance and the diversity of the group. It had to forge agreement and coordinate action among close to 20 different food companies and government organisations. On the private side, many of the food companies were fierce competitors and hesitant to share information or co-ordinate action. Additionally, the private actors, from the grain milling, edible oil, salt and other food industries, faced very different cost structures and marketing strategies. Corraling such a large and diverse group of actors presented a host of logistic and strategic obstacles that made communication and negotiation cumbersome.

Private Sector Concerns

With more than a decade of sporadic talk among the key players, but no visible results, goodwill and trust was starting to erode. Private sector partners doubted the public sector's readiness to promulgate the required standards in a reasonable time. They were also not convinced that the government would put in place the monitoring systems needed to ensure that unscrupulous companies could not falsely claim their products were fortified. Neither did they trust that government would mount an adequate social marketing campaign to raise public awareness about fortification. Many companies concluded that it was too risky to make needed investments without first seeing government come through with the necessary standards and support.



Public Sector Concerns

The public sector saw the private sector's hesitancy as evidence that they would not voluntarily fortify their brands. Many felt it was part of a strategy to get tax breaks and subsidies. Additionally, public sector leaders bristled under demands to accelerate the pace of work in this area. Large scale changes to the country's food supply could produce tremendously positive or negative impacts. Since they held overall responsibility for public health and food safety, they could not make any changes in the system without first ensuring adequate safeguards. Added to these hesitations was the fact that the public sector did not want to dedicate resources to the project without being assured that the private sector would co-operate. As with any managers, they did not want to invest their people's energies into a project that did not have a reasonable probability of success.

Not surprisingly, the Alliance was reluctant to embark on activities that would require members to commit significant amounts of resources. Instead, they opted for a detailed planning approach — creating plans, policy documents and designing, on paper, systems, procedures and protocols.

While these activities kept the partnership alive, they did little to help the group generate any impact on the nutritional status of Kenyans. Soon, it became evident to the KNFFA's senior leaders that business as usual would not get the job done. A new way of working together and a relatively safe space within which to operate were clearly required.

Management Innovation

At this point, the KNFFA approached the Micronutrient Initiative (MI) for assistance. MI, which had supported the Kenya salt iodisation programme and Vitamin A supplementation activities, and assisted with drafting a fortification work plan in 2005, proposed a management innovation - the Rapid Results Approach.



Box 1: Prerequisites for Using the Rapid Results Approach

To maximize the effectiveness of a Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) the following conditions should be in place:

Senior leader buy-in: At least one senior leader should be willing to step up and exert demands for achieving results rapidly, and be ready to support the rapid results team as it pursues its goal.

Basic consensus among stakeholders on key priorities: The stakeholder group should have a basic idea of what they, as a group, want to achieve and some degree of alignment on how to achieve it. Detailed strategy documents and work plans are not necessary.

Some initial views on probable obstacles and challenges: RRIs are designed to help stakeholders overcome challenges that stand in the way of long-term impact. As such, basic information on expected challenges will help optimize the design of the RRI. Detailed workplans and SWOT analyses are not necessary.

Sense of urgency to achieve results: An RRI may not be appropriate with groups that prefer to focus solely on training, strategizing or planning. The approach works best when there is a felt need for urgent action and frustration with the status quo.

Availability of technical assistance: For projects involving specialized knowledge, real-time technical assistance will maximize capacity building. This support can be provided via informal meetings telephone calls and emails between the team and technical experts.

Budgetary Allocations: Rapid Results teams are generally asked to develop a goal that can be achieved using existing resources or ones that can be obtained during the 100 day cycle. If stakeholders expect that a capital investment or otherwise significant budgetary allocation will be needed, these resources should be secured before starting the RRI.

Results through action

This new approach to public sector management promised to energise the effort and highlight the role of the private sector in achieving the country's fortification targets. MI introduced the KNFFA leadership to consultants from the Rapid Results Institute. The Institute specialises in helping organisations shift from activity based planning to results based action. The Institute's consultants explained that the approach would allow the group to shift its focus - from detailed planning of the entire programme, to the pursuit of a near-term (around 100 day) goal. As long as this goal was properly designed, it would generate the energy needed to overcome the obstacles that had prevented the achievement of impact. Whilst hesitant about trying a rather foreign approach, the KNFFA leadership courageously decided to give this new approach a try.

The first step in the process was to bring together senior leaders from the key organisations including industry leaders in the flour, sugar and oil industries, standards and regulatory bodies, and relevant government ministries. Prior to this, staff from MI and the Rapid Results Institute engaged in a brief but intense period of "shuttle diplomacy" between the different organisations, including government ministries, regulatory bodies, food processing companies and premix distributors. This was needed as the lack of progress had frayed trust and relationships to such a point that many stakeholders were hesitant to attend yet another meeting on fortification — especially one that seemed to involve the type of outside "expert" consultants that were so good at getting people talking, but disappeared as soon as it was time for the group to move into action. Additionally, senior leaders in the KNFFA thought such diplomacy would be necessary to reassure public sector stakeholders that their concerns about long-term sustainability would be respected by the approach, which on first glance seemed to focus only on the short-term.

A new role for leaders

The following week, some 33 leaders representing five food processing companies, premix distributors, regulatory bodies and government ministries came to a day-long workshop. The first part of the workshop provided an explanation of the Rapid Results Approach. The consultants explained that the approach would ask the group to focus on a "mini" version of their overall long-term goal. This mini goal would require them to undertake most of the activities that they had planned to do, but on a smaller scale and within a short period of time. Additionally, the approach would require senior leaders to step back and allow the technical and operational staff in their organisations to decide exactly what the 100 day goal would be.



Senior leaders would only issue general guidelines for the goal, mentor their staff and facilitate the institutional support needed to achieve the goal.

Many workshop participants were sceptical. How could the KNFFA achieve an ambitious result in 100 days when years of preparation had not led to any major breakthroughs? To many, the Rapid Results Approach seemed out of touch with how African governments, and specifically the Kenyan government, worked. Many claimed that nothing significant could be achieved in that short a time. However, several senior leaders recognised the potential benefit of the approach. These leaders liked the proposed change in their roles. By adjusting the focus to a near-term results goal, most of the group's work moved from senior level policy discussions to operationally-orientated action. This meant that senior leaders could step away, at least temporarily, from the time-consuming process of negotiating long-term agreements and designing implementation plans. Instead, the group would focus on the type of technical work that could be delegated to technical officers. This would allow the leaders to take on a support and oversight role that used their time more effectively. Using Rapid Results, they would no longer be involved in the day-to-day work of making the partnership function. Instead, they could check in on a weekly basis with the staff working on the initiative, treating it much like any other project. This seemed a more appropriate role for senior leaders, given the amount of time they could realistically dedicate to fortification efforts.

Committing to action

A second aspect of the approach, that appealed to the senior leaders was that it made it easier to commit to action. The focus on a short-term goal lowered the risks of committing to the entire public-private partnership initiative on fortification. Up to this point, private sector leaders hesitated to move into action for fear of being asked to sign up for a long-term project with untested partners. All of the KNFFA's work plans, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), and strategy papers required leaders to commit to efforts that would only yield results in the years to come. This seemed like getting married without knowing anything about your partner. With Rapid Results however, the only requirement was to be open to a long-term relationship, contingent on the outcomes of a short-term project that resembled the larger project in miniature. This provided a trial run in which leaders could check the readiness of each organisation, including their own, to do what was needed to make fortification commercially viable.

Finally, senior leaders also liked the motivational aspects of the Approach. They could actually feel the increased excite-



ment in the room. Even those that were sceptical about the approach were excited about the possibility of actually seeing a concrete impact in as little as 100 days. Operational staff were also likely to be excited by the prospect of working on a project with a goal they had chosen themselves.

Eventually, the group agreed to try a 100-day Rapid Results Initiative (RRI). They decided to start with the edible oil industry, given the high level of readiness in the industry. They wondered whether a team could achieve a significant result in such a short time. Nevertheless, they felt that even if the team failed, the exercise itself would inform the group's efforts to determine a workable long-term strategy.

During the second half of the workshop, the senior leaders shaped the challenge they would give to the rapid results team and identified individuals for the team. After some discussion, the group decided to challenge the team with increasing the availability of fortified cooking oils and edible fats available for purchase by Kenyan consumers. At the end of the workshop, the participants set the date for a follow-up meeting, one week later. At this meeting they would review the goal and work plan that the rapid results team members would create in the interim period.

The Team's Experience and Outcomes

Nine technical officers from the public sector and oil industry met a few days later for a workshop facilitated by the Institute and MI. The team members created an ambitious results-based goal that could be achieved in 100 days. They also created a work plan that would help them achieve the goal.

Setting a results-focused goal

At first, the team wanted the goal to focus on the creation of a certification system. To do this the team would have to do the following:

- Develop official vitamin A fortification guidelines
- Revise government standards for cooking / edible oils and fats
- Design a certification process
- Develop a fortification logo that could be placed on qualifying brands.

After several exercises that helped the team determine whether such a goal was results-focused, they decided to change the goal statement. They realised that just focusing on the creation of a certification system fell short of a direct focus on impact and results. As the goal was written, they could achieve it and still not actually increase the availability of fortified products. After all, there were many certification systems and other government programmes that existed on paper but attracted few participants because they were too cumbersome or impractical under local conditions.

Realising that they would have to push their goal a bit further, the team reworked their goal and eventually agreed to the following: To place at least three fully certified Vitamin A-fortified cooking oil or edible fat brands on supermarket shelves in 100 days. To achieve this goal, the team would not only design a certification system, they would have to implement it as well. This would entail working collaboratively to ensure that the entire system was logistically and economically feasible for all parties. Additionally, they would have to build local capacity to test for Vitamin A in food products, something that could be overlooked if the goal was just to design the system but not actually use it. Furthermore, the new goal would also

require that the fortification logo was designed so that the companies felt comfortable placing it on their packaging. Finally, the team would have to facilitate changes in factory production processes for at least three brands- again something that would not have had to happen in order to achieve the goal originally proposed.

Soon after the team's workshop, they presented their goal and work plan to the larger stakeholder group. Many KNFFA members were incredulous. A less complex effort in the 1990's involving the fortification of salt with iodine had taken over two years. The team's promise to deliver three fully certified brands in a matter of months seemed unrealistic. Many in the private sector felt that government could not move that fast. Many public sector stakeholders, still sceptical of the private sector's interest in fortification, doubted any company would incur the costs of fortification without receiving some type of subsidy.

Results in 130 days!

However, at the end of 130 days, to the amazement of many, the team reached its goal. On March 1st, 2007, the Ministry of Health officially announced that three cooking oil brands now had the right to use the new "fortification logo" regulated by the Ministry of Health, and enforced by the Kenya Bureau of Standards. With this achievement, 15% of the cooking oil market became compliant with official fortification standards. This meant that an estimated 3.6 million Kenyans would now benefit from increased intake of vitamin A⁷. As one KNFFA official stated, more was achieved on fortification in Kenya during the RRI than in the many years since the fortification of salt. This achievement was done not with extra budget or through reliance on outside experts, but through the dedicated and creative efforts of a team of technical staff meeting once every two to three weeks. Senior leaders' involvement was limited to 30 minute meetings with the team members from their organisation every three to four weeks and a joint stakeholder review at Day 50 of the project timeline. Details of the resource requirements for the Rapid Results Initiative can be found in the box on the following page.

⁷ Calculated using population estimates from World Development Indicators database, (World Bank, April 2007), and an assumption that the certified product, which made up 15% of the market, reached 10% of the total population.



Box 2: Resource Requirements for a Rapid Results Initiative

Shape Phase (1-3 weeks), depending on complexity of the project	
1-2 Rapid Results Management Consultants	3-4 days per week
Local NGO/agency staff	3-4 days per week
Senior Leaders	1 day per week
Launch Phase (1-3 days)	
Rapid Results Consultant	1-3 days
Local NGO/agency staff	1-3 days
Senior Leaders	1/2 day
Team Members	1-3 days
Implementation Phase (Approx 100 days/15 weeks)	
Rapid Results Consultant	4-6 hours per week (10 days total)
Local NGO/agency staff	4- 8 hour per week (15 days total)
Senior Leaders	30 minutes, every 3-4 weeks
Team Members	8-12 hours per week (20 days total)
Outside Technical Assistance, e.g. fortification expert	As needed
Other Costs	
Local Costs (Venue rental and food for stakeholder meetings, incidentals)	
Travel and Accommodation for Rapid Result Consultant	
Communication – email, fax, telephone	
Sponsoring Agency HQ admin/time costs	

The team did encounter many difficulties, causing it to take 30 days longer than planned. One of the key difficulties was developing the capacity to test oil-based products for vitamin A. At first, the team tried to adjust an existing testing methodology. However, at the last moment they discovered that they would have to research and design an entirely new protocol. Working under the pressure of a deadline, and with technical support from MI, the team condensed the research and design process to less than 30 days.

Leadership challenges

Another major obstacle was that some senior leaders struggled with their new role. Some, excited about the project or anxious about delegating responsibility, found it difficult to step back and give the team room to experiment and develop its own solutions. Others, pulling back too far, struggled to provide the type of mentoring the team needed. Several team members also found the changes in their role challenging. Accustomed to working in a rigidly hierarchical public sector management structure, they struggled with the expectation that they be proactive and entrepreneurial. In these cases, the MI and Institute staff helped senior leaders delegate effectively and team members accept their new authority and freedom.

Motivation to move forward

The experience of working together showed all stakeholders that it was possible to get certified fortified products on the shelf in a matter of months. This proof generated considerable interest and enthusiasm for the fortification agenda. Afterwards, the KNFFA launched a second RRI focused on the much greater challenge of fortifying flour with iron, zinc, folic acid and other B vitamins. Building on the skills developed during the first project, the team was able to resolve a number of logistical and technical problems. Although it took slightly longer⁸, the first certified flour brands were made available to consumers in early 2008. Action is now underway to extend the fortification process to other edible oil, fat and flour brands, and to finalise standards for a larger range of staple foods. A large scale marketing campaign is being planned concurrently, to ensure that consumers are aware of the availability of fortified foods in the market.

⁸ This due in part to the civil unrest following Kenya's 2007 presidential elections



Key lessons

Showing that collaboration works builds confidence in the process

First, the focus on a challenging, but limited, short-term goal created a safe space in which to practice new ways of working together. The tangible goal and short time frame shifted attention from the differences between the perspectives, interests, and institutional cultures of the various players and focused it on how to work together to achieve the team's goals. Having achieved the goal, the team was then in a position to reflect on the experience, to notice their differences AND how they were able to work around them to reach the shared goal. The team noted, for example, that they shifted from sending each other official letters to more informal e-mails and telephone calls. Because it was in everyone's interest to achieve the shared goal, results became more important than holding on to traditional protocols. People from the various sectors were able to learn from each other and try out different ways of solving problems in the context of the limited, time-bound exercise. This gives greater confidence to begin adopting new practices in the regular course of doing business.

Trust grows through joint action

Secondly, the effort shows the best way to build trust is not through the negotiation of formal agreements, but through a joint effort to achieve a short-term goal. Once such a goal (or several of them) has been achieved, partners can start discussing long term agreements.

Technical agency roles change

Thirdly, a focus on short-term results has implications for the roles of technical agencies. They may have to trust the process sufficiently to commit resources before the exact nature of the 100-day goal is known. Agencies must also be willing to engage in mentoring and shuttle diplomacy to facilitate communication among the different parties and build self-confidence among the team players. In Kenya this was an important element of the project's success: Staff from MI and the Rapid Results Institute stayed in contact with senior leaders, responding to concerns and keeping them updated on progress. Additionally, agencies must respond in a flexible and timely manner to technical bottlenecks. A perfect example of this flexibility was MI's ability to organise conference calls, impromptu meetings and technical support in response to the need to rapidly develop local skills to analyse Vitamin A.

Untapped human capacity of organisations is mobilised

Fourthly, an approach that empowers technical and operational staff to take responsibility for the achievement of concrete outcomes, such as getting fortified foods on shelves, releases reservoirs of energy and capacity that are often left

untapped in conventional approaches to project implementation. It is a steep learning curve for persons used to pushing authority upwards. As is often the case, the Kenya RRI team demonstrated their ability to rise to the challenge and deliver the expected results. Such experiences can give senior leaders greater confidence in the capacity of their staff to take on more responsibility, and could, over time, shift the decision making culture in the participating organisations.

Concrete results get leaders' attention

The success of the first Food Fortification RRI in Kenya had an unanticipated positive impact on leadership attention to nutrition issues, and has significant lessons for nutrition advocates. Traditional advocacy efforts often focus on convincing leaders that nutrition deserves more attention, because of its public health impacts, cost-effectiveness, and human rights implications. These arguments, while valid, have limited impact on how leaders allocate their time and resources. Leaders pay attention to concrete results that can be talked about, photographed and disseminated. This is not just a matter of senior leaders chasing publicity. Instead it is part of a productive managerial decision-making process that asks managers to avoid putting resources into a project until they are reasonably certain that it will be successful.

Proving that success is possible, even on a small scale, provides the evidence senior managers need to justify larger investments in longer-term efforts. Rather than spending time trying to get full buy-in for the entire fortification agenda from the leaders, the fortification team needed only to get approval to commit resources to a limited 100-day project at the beginning. While not problem-free, this was a manageable task. In the case of the KNFFA, results spoke for themselves, and this made it much easier to get the ear of senior management for subsequent rounds. After the initial results, there was far greater readiness among the key public sector leaders to discuss the nutrition agenda and to prioritise fortification in the ministry's work plan and budget.



Conclusion

Moving from intention to action on food fortification is often challenging, due to the number of partners involved and the range of activities to be undertaken. The KNFFA's success in bringing certified fortified edible oil to market within four months offers lessons on how those interested in fortification can achieve similar results. Given the heightened interest in nutrition on the part of public and private sector leaders, and the increased capacity and energy of the fortification team, the ground work is laid for more ambitious achievements. Development partners are challenged to adapt their procedures in order to facilitate similar innovative approaches to achieving nutritional goals elsewhere.



About the Micronutrient Initiative

Passionate about developing and implementing solutions for hidden hunger, the Micronutrient Initiative works in partnership with governments, the private sector and civil society organizations to address this serious problem that affects one third of the world's population. Governed by an international Board of Directors, MI works in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East and reaches people in over 70 countries. With headquarters in Ottawa, Canada, MI maintains regional offices in New Delhi, India and Dakar, Senegal that manage our country offices in Asia and Africa.

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