Micronutrient Data Group Meeting Notes
Feb 6, 2025
[Link to Recording](#)

The Micronutrient Data Group convenes quarterly to facilitate the sharing of project updates among group members and seek feedback from the community. Our aim is to foster a collaborative working environment and cultivate synergies whenever possible. These meetings are open to all individuals working with micronutrient data, and we strongly encourage participation from those working at the regional and national levels. In our most recent meeting, we had four speakers, and high-level minutes are included below:

1. **Measuring LSFF coverage in routine multi-topic household surveys: formative research in Ethiopia and Bangladesh**
   Speaker: Samuel Scott (IFPRI)
   - Research focused on improving coverage measurement of nutrition interventions
   - Questions: type and brand of food vehicle purchased, source, packaging and level of awareness of fortification. Brands observed: oil, salt, wheat flour and rice
   - Key findings Ethiopia: very few respondents had any knowledge of fortification, few recalled types and brands
   - Limitations: estimates will be a lower bound; questions do not cover regular practices with purchase decisions largely price driven
   - Use: results to assist develop DHS-9 recommendations; useful resource on measuring LSFF coverage in household surveys; provide inputs on FACT manual update (led by GAIN).

2. **Taking action: Improve the nutrition content in DHS Round 9 Surveys**
   a) **LSFF & HFIES**
      Speaker: Valerie Friesen (GAIN)
      - Rationale: limited information on population-level coverage of fortification programs; inconsistent definitions and measurement methods
      - Questions used in DHS surveys in Malawi (2024) and Tanzania (2022)
      - Data to assess and justify potential reach and impact of fortification approaches, provide guidance to which staples to include in new or expanded fortification programs, and improve established programs
   b) **Biomarkers & Anemia**
      Speaker: Rebecca Heidkamp (DataDENT, Johns Hopkins University)
      - Proposed indicators to be measured - anemia (hemoglobin in venous blood), malaria infection (RDT), iron deficiency (ferritin), and inflammation status (crp and agp)
      - Malawi DHS 2015-16, Rwanda DHS 2019-20, and Tanzania DHS 2022 surveys shown relatively high response rates for venous blood specimen collection
      - To contribute to the Micronutrient Database of the Vitamin and Mineral Nutrition Information Systems (VMNIS), improve effectiveness of country food fortification programs and aid development of national policies and multi-sectoral plans
   c) **Supplements: Iron-containing supplements during pregnancy (MMS/IFA)**
      Speaker: Ellina Wood (DataDENT, Johns Hopkins University)
      - DHS-8 questions measure coverage of iron-containing supplements and understanding supply sources and number of days of consumption

- Challenge: 2020 IMPROVE/DataDENT validation study in Nepal confirmed DHS questions about IFA across pregnancy do not produce accurate estimates, with cases of either poor recall, over-reporting or under-reporting
- Recommendation: need to improve DHS style questions considering it is the main data source used for policy and programmatic decision-making; modify wordings to differentiate between MN powder, MMS and IF and introduce a visual aid developed to local contexts to support products differentiation
- Next steps: the DHS-9 Revision Portal now open for comments until March 3, 2025.

3. **Integrating a micronutrient module in the Demographic Health Survey: Insights from Tanzania**
   Speaker: Tedson Lukindo (Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre)
   - 2010 DHS biomarkers: anemia, iodine, iron biomarker status (sTfR), inflammatory biomarker status (CRP), and Vit A status
   - Successes: improved setup of micronutrient intervention programs; facilitated responsive nutrition programming; and provided baseline information for future MN surveys
   - Challenges: budgetary constraints including unforeseen costs; inadequate human and infrastructural capacity; logistics and coordination; time constraints, COVID-19
   - Lessons learned: it is possible to incorporate MN biomarker assessment in national health surveys; need for early engagement of skilled and experienced human resources to guide entire process
   - Recommendations: need to develop in-country biomarker research capacity; stakeholder engagement from the onset is crucial and develop simplified pre-established data capture and management instruments for each biomarker to facilitate dissemination process.

4. **2025 Small Grants Program Launch**
   Speaker: Shruthi Cyriac (DInA, Micronutrient Forum)
   - The program will focus on country-led efforts to strengthen the LSFF data ecosystem
   - Aim: support national fortification stakeholders generate and use evidence to inform programming, decision-making and ensure wide reach of fortified foods to vulnerable populations
   - Deadline for submission of RFQs: 31 March, 2025