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DInA 2024 Small Grant Program

A snapshot of five locally-led projects advancing micronutrient data to improve programs and policies.

About the Small Grants Program

Launched in 2023, DInA's Small Grants Program supports its alliance members in low-and middle-income countries to strengthen the micronutrient data value chain, from generation and analysis to communication and use. Grants of up to US\$15,000 fund one-year projects that build capacity, foster knowledge mobilization and exchange, and support advocacy efforts so decision-makers can act on better evidence for vulnerable populations. Each round focuses on a priority theme and is designed to equip grantees with seed funding for their micronutrient data-focused research, or communication and advocacy efforts. Funding can be used to cover activities, such as stakeholder workshops, survey or intervention design, laboratory and analytical capacity strengthening, secondary data analysis, or dissemination of research results.

About DInA

The Micronutrient Data Innovation Alliance (DInA), hosted by the Micronutrient Forum, is a member-based coalition that drives collective action to improve the availability, quality, accessibility, and use of micronutrient data, to ensure national leaders can make data-driven policy and program decisions.



Colombia — National University of Colombia / OBSSAN

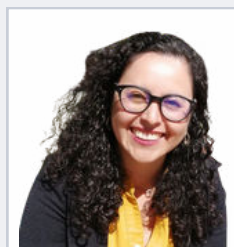
Intake of Fortified Wheat Flour on Anemia and Iron Status in Colombia

Using data from the National Survey of the Nutritional Situation in Colombia (ENSIN 2015), the research group assessed the impact of wheat flour consumption on anemia, iron deficiency, and iron-deficiency anemia. They found wheat flour consumption was associated with lower prevalence estimates among children under five, with little effects in older age groups. A qualitative review of the national wheat flour fortification program found high compliance to fortification standards for iron, but regulatory gaps remain for some imported products. Recommendations include assessing iron compound bioavailability and strengthening regulatory oversight.



Colombia Team at a Glance

OBSSAN is an academic and social observatory at Universidad Nacional de Colombia dedicated to research, teaching, and community outreach on food sovereignty, food security, and nutrition. Team included: Natalia Elvira Poveda Rey, PhD (PI); Ana Patricia Heredia, MSc; and Sarah Eloisa del Castillo Matamoros, PhD.



The team lead, Natalia Elvira Poveda Rey, is a Nutrition Researcher at OBSSAN and Assistant Professor at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, with a PhD in Nutrition and Health

Science (Emory University). Her work centers on nutrition across the life-course and nutrition epidemiology, linking early growth, diet, and cardiometabolic outcomes at individual and population levels.



Ethiopia — Ethiopian Public Health Institute

Determination of a Serum Folate Threshold that Indicates an Increased Risk of Neural Tube Defects

The research team identified serum folate cutoffs that correspond to the red blood cell (RBC) folate threshold for elevated neural tube defect (NTD) risk in the Ethiopian population and compared this to a southern India-derived cutoff. The southern India cutoff showed high sensitivity but poor specificity and lower discrimination in the Ethiopian data, suggesting possible population-specific differences in thresholds. Published in September 2025, this work sets the stage for validating folate thresholds in diverse settings to support reliable population NTD risk prediction.

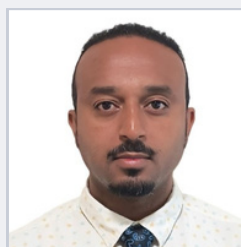


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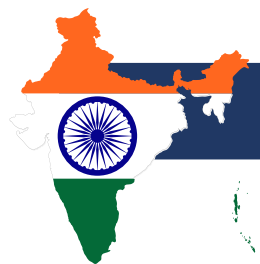


Ethiopia Team at a Glance

The Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) conducts research on priority health and nutrition issues for evidence-based information utilization and technology transfer; public health emergency management; establishing quality laboratory systems; and training public health researchers and practitioners. Team included: Biniyam Tesfaye Banjaw, PhD (PI); Kenneth H Brown, MD (Mentor); Masresha Tessema, PhD; and Charles Dale Arnold, MS.



The team lead, Biniyam Tesfaye, is a Research Associate at EPHI and a post-doctoral scholar at UC Berkeley, with a PhD in Nutritional Biology (UC Davis). His research focuses on conducting national dietary and micronutrient surveys; modeling social and economic costs of child undernutrition (Cost of Hunger study); routine food analysis; and complementary food development.



India — Lata Medical Research Foundation

Exploring the Interplay Between Micronutrients in Human Milk and Infant Growth in Indian Population

The study team examined temporal patterns in zinc, calcium, selenium, and magnesium concentrations in human milk, and their relationship with infant growth. Zinc and selenium declined from 1 week postpartum through 6 months, calcium varied over time, and magnesium remained relatively stable. These findings suggest that lactating women may not be meeting their nutritional needs and underscores the importance of maternal nutrition support before and during breastfeeding. Future work will link these data with infant anthropometric data to test associations with growth.

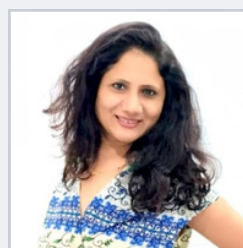


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India Team at a Glance

Lata Medical Research Foundation (LMRF) is a not-for-profit research organization in India, established by a group of motivated medical students, residents, physicians, and community health specialists united by one cause: to give back to society by conducting meaningful public health research in order to develop effective tools to alleviate human suffering. Team included: Shilpa Bhaise, PhD (PI); Archana Patel, MD, DNB; and Lindsey Locks, ScD MPH.



The team lead, Shilpa Bhaise, is a nutrition consultant at LMRF with a PhD in Food Science and Nutrition (Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University). Her research areas of interest

include maternal, infant, and adolescent nutrition; food-security through the use of indigenous plants; development of nutraceuticals and other value-added products; and women-led nutrition gardens.



Malawi — Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Applying the CONGA Method to Assess Micronutrient Gaps in Malawian Women

Using the Comprehensive Nutrient Gap Assessment (CONGA) method, researchers synthesized evidence to assess the public health burden of 17 nutrients in women of reproductive age. Gaps were identified for calcium, iron, zinc, and selenium, with potential gaps for phosphorus and vitamins B1, B12, and C. Using consumption data from Malawi's 5th Integrated Household Survey, the team identified the best foods to address the nutrient gaps: small fish, powdered milk, wild vegetables, eggs, goat, and pork. Findings point to the need for targeted actions (e.g., scaling nutrition education and expanding fortification/biofortification), and improved biomarker and intake data.



Malawi Team at a Glance

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) is Malawi's leading agricultural and natural resource academic institution, offering degrees in agribusiness, crop science, animal science, veterinary medicine, engineering, and more. It also has a growing digital learning school through the LUANAR eCAMPUS. Team included: Zione Kalumikiza-Chikumbu (PI); Alexander Kalimbira PhD; Gareth Osman; and Bridget Mkama.



The team lead, Zione Kalumikiza-Chikumbu, is a Lecturer in Public Health Nutrition at LUANAR and previously coordinated the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)

Operational Research during its roll-out phase. Her work is centered on evidence generation, capacity building, and advocacy to advance nutrition in Malawi. Zione is a recipient of numerous African fellowships and leadership awards.



Sierra Leone — Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute

Proposal Development and Resource Mobilization for a National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey

The core technical team collaborated with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), and other organizations to develop a joint proposal for a national nutrition survey that includes biomarker and food consumption data collection. In addition to the proposal, they developed a resource mobilization plan that advocates for necessary funding to carry out the survey. Their efforts resulted in effective coordination among micronutrient stakeholders in Sierra Leone and inclusion of the survey in the annual planning activities of MAFS.



Sierra Leone Team at a Glance

The Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) is the sole government agricultural research and agricultural technology institute that generates evidence for the farming, fishing, and forestry sectors in Sierra Leone. Team included: Martha S.E. Williams-Ngegba, PhD (SLARI); Busie Maziya-Dixon, PhD (IITA); and other members from SLARI, MAFS, and SUN Sierra Leone who were part of the stakeholder network.



The team lead, Martha Williams-Ngegba, is a Research Officer III at SLARI and heads the Post-harvest Engineering, Food and Nutrition thematic area. She holds a PhD in

Nutrition and Dietetics (Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta) and her work focuses on post-harvest processing, food fortification, and community training to reduce food losses and improve diets.



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Website: www.micronutrientforum.org/micronutrient-data-innovation-alliance/

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