



Accelerating Food Fortification In Kenya:

A results-based approach to forming public-private partnerships

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Introduction

Like many in the food industry, Dr John Hare knew the nutritional benefits and low costs of commercial food fortification. As a senior manager of one of Kenya's leading cooking oil manufacturers, he had been on the receiving end of fortification advocacy efforts from the Ministry of Health and NGOs. The information he received showed how fortification of cooking oil with Vitamin A could produce significant improvements in infant mortality and the overall health of Kenyans. Over the years, Dr Hare became convinced that fortification would not only be a big public health win, it would also increase profits.

However, despite his enthusiasm, Dr Hare hesitated when in 2006 he was asked to participate in a project sponsored by the Kenya National Food Fortification Alliance (KNFFA). The KNFFA was a new public-private partnership (PPP) focused on making widespread fortification a reality. While optimistic about the KNFFA, Dr Hare knew that for years there had been much talk about fortification but few results.

This case details how the KNFFA, with support from the Micronutrient Initiative² and the Rapid Results Institute³, gained the trust of the many stakeholders like Dr Hare who were essential to achieving results in fortification. The KNFFA's success illustrates how to make the formation of a PPP easier. Specifically, the story illustrates how structuring partnership efforts around results-based short-term goals can strengthen a PPP, and quickly build the capacity needed to achieve long-term impact.

² For more information on the Micronutrient Initiative, see www.micronutrient.org

³ For more information on the Rapid Results Institute, see www.rapidresults.org



The Challenges of Implementing a Simple Solution

Food fortification is widely regarded as a cost-effective strategy to address malnutrition and improve the health of the poor worldwide. The Copenhagen Consensus ranked micronutrient interventions (including fortification) among the highest of 17 potentially cost-effective interventions. Universal salt iodisation, for example, would protect millions of infants from preventable brain damage for pennies per child per year⁴. A woman can meet 50% of her iron needs and 84% of her daily folic acid requirement by eating 2 slices of fortified bread. The World Bank estimates that the benefits of fortification programmes outweigh the costs by a factor of up to 200⁵. From a technical perspective, the addition of micronutrients to staple foods is a simple process that results in large positive health impacts.

Despite favourable factors, creating large-scale fortification programmes is difficult. Few governments have the financial resources or political will to provide subsidies for fortification. Despite the low costs of fortification, implementing a subsidy programme is cumbersome and expensive. Additionally, public sector leaders are often unwilling or unable to push through a legislative mandate making fortification obligatory. As a consequence, many countries turn to market-based approaches that rely on voluntary cooperation from the private sector and consumer demand.

For voluntary fortification to be successful, public and private sectors must work in partnership to build a regulatory infrastructure that promotes public health, and makes fortification attractive to industry. This entails the creation of a product certification system based on rigorously enforced fortification guidelines. Also needed are advertising regulations that minimise the ability of unscrupulous producers to falsely claim their products are fortified. Government is also expected to help create demand for fortified foods by educating the public on their health benefits. Most important, private companies must trust the efficacy of this regulatory infrastructure. Operating on razor-thin profit margins, food companies are hesitant to make the necessary investments until they are sure government is willing and able to enforce regulations and raise consumer awareness.

In the case of the KNFFA, the group faced two other issues not uncommon to public-private efforts. The first was the number of stake-holding organisations. To be successful, the KNFFA had to coordinate the actions of dozens of food companies and government organisations. On the private-sector side, many of the food companies were fierce competitors and hesitant to share information. Corraling such a large and diverse group of stakeholders presented logistic and strategic obstacles that made communication and negotiation cumbersome.

A second obstacle related to the political visibility of micronutrient fortification. While the health impacts of micronutrient deficiencies are devastating over time, they are often hidden in the short-term. Not surprisingly, more visible health challenges such as HIV/AIDS and malaria are more likely to get the attention of over-burdened senior managers. As a consequence, many public sector leaders simply cannot dedicate the time and energy required to manage a complex fortification initiative.

⁴ World Bank. *Enriching Lives: Overcoming Vitamin and Mineral Malnutrition in Developing Countries*. 1994. Washington DC: World Bank Development in Practice Series; Allen L, de Benoist B, Dary O, Hurrell, R. *Guidelines on Food Fortification with Micronutrients*. 2006. Geneva: WHO Press; Behrman JR, Alderman H, Hodidinott J. *Malnutrition and Hunger*. Chapter 7 in Lomborg, B. ed. *Global Crises, Global Solutions*. 2004. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Information on the positive effects of micronutrient fortification provided by the Micronutrient Initiative, www.micronutrient.org

⁵ World Bank. 1994. *Enriching Lives: Overcoming Vitamin and Mineral malnutrition in Developing Countries*. Washington DC: World Bank Development in Practice Series.



Transforming Scepticism into Excitement

In the years prior to the KNFFA, these obstacles made progress on fortification difficult. So difficult that, at the time of its formation, many KNFFA stakeholders had already turned their attention towards other issues. Their frustration stemmed from the fact that, despite countless meetings and workshops, stakeholders seemed unable to produce anything beyond vague action plans and calls for more meetings.

Concerned with the decreasing involvement of stakeholders, the KNFFA consulted with the Micronutrient Initiative (MI). This international NGO, which had provided technical support to the group, introduced the KNFFA to the Rapid Results Institute. The Institute specialised in helping organisations shift from activity-based planning to results-based action. Consultants from the Institute explained that, by focusing on a near-term (around 100 days) results-based goal, the KNFFA might generate the momentum it needed. While hesitant about trying an approach that was rather foreign, KNFFA's leadership courageously decided to give what the consultants called the "Rapid Results Approach" a try.

As a first step, KNFFA leaders called together key organisations involved in fortification. Prior to this, staff from MI and the Institute engaged in a brief but intense period of "shuttle diplomacy" between the organisations. This was needed as 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 good at getting people talking, but disappeared as soon as it was time for the group to move into action.

When Dr Hare was first approached, he was intrigued by the concept of Rapid Results. He found the idea of achieving a result in 100 days much more exciting than focusing on a larger goal that might or might not be achieved after many years. Convinced that there was cause for hope, but wary about getting too excited, Dr Hare agreed to attend the meeting.

At the meeting, consultants from the Institute explained to Dr Hare and other stakeholders that the Rapid Results Approach would focus the KNFFA on a "mini" version of its long-term goal. This goal would require them to undertake most of their



planned activities, but on a smaller scale and within a short period of time. Additionally, the approach would ask senior leaders to step back and allow a team of technical staff from key organisations to decide what the 100-day goal would be. Senior leaders would only issue general guidelines for the goal, mentor the technical staff and facilitate the institutional support needed by the team.

Many workshop participants were sceptical. How could the KNFFA achieve an ambitious result in 100 days when years of discussions had not led to any major breakthroughs? For some, the Rapid Results Approach seemed out of touch with how the Kenyan government worked. Many claimed that nothing significant could be achieved in such a short timeframe.

Dr Hare however was not among the sceptics. In fact, he saw several aspects of the approach that gave him hope. He was most excited by the change in senior leadership's role. By focusing on a near-term results goal, the KNFFA's work moved from senior level policy discussions to the type of operationally-orientated action that could be more easily delegated to technical employees. This shift would allow leaders to take on a support and oversight role that used their time more effectively. Dr Hare felt this was a much more appropriate role for senior leaders, given the amount of time they could realistically dedicate to fortification efforts.

The approach also appealed to Dr Hare because the short-term goal made it easier to commit to action. Up to this point, most fortification work-plans and strategy papers required him to commit to a multi-year project involving untested partners. To Dr Hare, the idea of signing up for such a long-term commitment was much like agreeing to get married without knowing anything about his future spouse. With Rapid Results, he only had to commit to being open to a long-term relationship, contingent on the outcomes of a short-term project. Rapid Results provided a trial run in which he could check the readiness of each organisation, including his own, to do what was needed to make fortification commercially viable.

Finally, Dr Hare liked the motivational aspects of the approach, the evidence of which he felt in the meeting room. Even the sceptics were excited about the possibility of actually seeing a concrete impact in 100 days. Additionally, Dr Hare knew his staff would get excited about working towards a goal they had chosen themselves. Previously, when he had given his staff leeway to design a project, their buy-in and performance had been phenomenal. Much to Dr Hare's surprise, he found himself excited about jumping into a 100-day project. Eventually, most participants came to share Dr Hare's enthusiasm and the group agreed to start a Rapid Results Initiative.

During the second half of the meeting, participants shaped senior leadership's guidelines for the rapid results team and identified who would serve as team members. Much to the delight of Dr Hare, the group decided to challenge the team with increasing the availability of fortified cooking oils. 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 team would create in the interim.

Transforming Excitement into Results

Nine technical staff members from the public and private sectors 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. Additionally, they created a workplan that would help them achieve this goal.



At first, team members wanted to focus on creating a certification system in 100 days. To do this the team would have to:

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

After some discussion, the team 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 they needed to push their goal further, they continued their discussions and eventually settled on the following: To place at least three fully-certified Vitamin A-fortified cooking oil or edible fats brands on store shelves in 100 days. To achieve this, the team would not only design the certification system, they would implement it as well. This would force them to work 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, something that could be overlooked if the goal was just to design the system but not actually use it. Furthermore, the team would have to facilitate changes in factory production processes for at least three brands, again something that would not have to happen in order to achieve the initial proposed goal.

Soon after the workshop, the team presented their goal to stakeholders. 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 within a matter of months seemed unrealistic to some.

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 gave three brands the right to use a new "fortification logo" regulated by the Ministry of Health and enforced by the Kenya Bureau of Standards. With this achievement, 15% of the market became compliant with official fortification standards. This meant that an estimated 3.6 million Kenyans would now benefit from increased intake of



vitamin A⁶. 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 1-2 weeks. Senior leaders' involvement was limited to 30 minute meetings with the team members from their organisation every 3-4 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 .

⁶ 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 1: 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	

Results That Build Capacity

The team did encounter many difficulties, resulting in the process taking 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.

Another major obstacle was that some senior leaders struggled with their new role. Some senior leaders, excited about the project or anxious about delegating responsibility, found it difficult to step back and give the team room to experiment and develop solutions. Others, pulling back too far, were not able to provide the mentoring the team needed. Several of the team members also found their new role challenging. Accustomed to a rigidly hierarchical public sector management structure, they struggled with expectations from supervisors to be proactive and entrepreneurial. In these cases, MI and RRI staff provided support, helping senior leaders delegate more effectively, and helping team members accept their new authority and freedom.

The team also struggled with the written and unwritten norms that made inter-organisational cooperation difficult. At first, the team relied on established protocol dictating how government offices communicated with each other and with the public. Communications between team members took the form of official memos that traveled up the hierarchy of one organisation and then down that of the recipient. Messages to private sector companies had to be approved by superiors. All meetings had to be formally called through invitations and recorded through elaborate notes.

After several weeks the team realised they would not meet their deadline without making their communication more efficient. Inspired by their 100-day timeline, the team broke from tradition and started to interact on a more informal basis.





Official meetings become more informal and supplemented with phone calls and impromptu office visits. Official memos were replaced by e-mails and even SMS messages. One team member was actually inspired to start using e-mail regularly for the first time. Soon, united by a common effort to achieve their ambitious goal, the team started seeing each other not as official representatives of separate organisations, but as teammates.

When the team announced their results, Dr Hare was excited. His company's products had been certified and had gained an important advantage in the market. Additionally, the experience gave the staff member assigned to the team a chance to develop professionally as a project manager, and as a liaison between his company and several key regulatory bodies.

For the KNFFA and MI, the project was a resounding success, not only did the team increase the availability of fortified products, the team's achievement increased the profile of fortification. This in turn increased the ability of senior managers to help the KNFFA tackle even more ambitious projects. Soon after the conclusion of the first Rapid Results project, the KNFFA launched a second 100-day initiative focusing on the more complex task of fortifying flour products with iron, zinc and folic acid. This initiative resulted in the certification of two flour brands. There are now plans to launch a scale-up effort that would increase coverage within the flour and cooking oil industries and expand the logo to a wider range of staple foods.



How to Quickly “Fortify” Your Public Private Partnership

In the years before the KNFFA, advocates tried to build capacity through strategy studies, policy agreements and training programmes. Unfortunately, such activities failed to create the cooperation needed to move from discussion into action. Using Rapid Results, the KNFFA changed this. By focusing on a 100-day result, the group quickly made visible progress and built the trust needed for further work.

The 100-day effort made the move into action easier because it changed the dynamics of fortification work. First, it adjusted the role of senior leadership. Previously, fortification initiatives focused on the type of policy and strategy decisions that could only be made by senior leaders. This required a level of involvement by senior leaders that was not realistic given the issue’s low profile. By shifting the focus to an operational result, senior leaders could delegate and assume a support role.

Second, the 100-day effort served as a space in which team members were motivated and empowered to engage in the type of experimentation and innovation that builds capacity. The urgency of the challenge inspired the team to quickly develop the hard and soft skills needed to reach the goal. The need to get the project done quickly also inspired the team to rework overly-cumbersome procedures. In one of the organisations, the team produced several procedural innovations that were quickly integrated into the organisation’s other projects.

Third, the approach made it easier to build trust. By focusing on near-term results, organisations could quickly judge one other’s readiness and commitment. Since the project was relatively small, stakeholders risked few resources while getting a revealing glimpse at each others capabilities. Once potential partners had proven themselves, it became easier to discuss longer-term cooperation.

Finally, because the project created a visible impact, its success generated the political and psychological momentum needed to expand the project. At the first concrete sign of impact, everyone became more excited and confident in the KNFFA. This created the personal and institutional buy-in needed to achieve larger goals.

This is of course not to say that the Rapid Results experience made the KNFFA’s development simple. During the project, outside facilitation was needed at all stages. MI and Institute staff spent significant time helping team members quickly develop the needed technical and communication skills. This investment in capacity building paid off. During subsequent efforts, outside support was significantly scaled back.

While it was not as smooth a process as he had hoped, Dr Hare was quite proud of his involvement in the KNFFA. By participating in the Rapid Results Approach, he witnessed the power a short-term results-based goal has for bringing partners together, for building their capacity to work individually and as a group, and for achieving the results that make long-term impact possible. For those forming PPPs the lessons are clear. The process will be easier if stakeholders focus on results and empower those most responsible for operational aspects to lead the project. Group efforts to achieve short-term results will develop strong relationships among the partners, and create the trust, momentum and capacity needed to tackle larger-scale projects that achieve the long-term objectives of the partnership.

Box 2: 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.