

**GLOBAL FORTIFICATION  
DATA EXCHANGE**


# **STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**


**Understanding the needs of partners  
and national implementers to make  
informed decisions about their  
fortification policies and programs**

## **Case Study Summary Report**

**1 February 2021**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO GAIN COUNTRY OFFICES AND  
IGN REGIONAL COORDINATORS FOR ORGANIZING  
THE CONSULTATIONS SUMMARIZED IN THIS REPORT**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Food fortification is one of the most scalable, sustainable and cost-effective interventions to combat micronutrient malnutrition.**

The Global Fortification Data Exchange (GFDx) was designed to empower governments, donors, implementing agencies, and other members of the global health and development community to reach populations affected by vitamin and mineral deficiencies with data-driven policy and programs. Despite global usage of the GFDx among various stakeholders (such as technical staff, academics, non-governmental organizations, donors and others) website analytics for the period between 2017-2019 demonstrate that usage was low among most low- and middle-income countries.

To further increase usage of the platform and reinforce the value and uptake of the GFDx data for key stakeholders in-country for decision making, the GFDx secretariat held consultative dialogues with fortification stakeholders in seven countries to better understand how the GFDx could be improved to better meet their decision-making needs on fortification policies and programs.

The consultative dialogues were held virtually in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The consultations included a variety of representatives, ranging from development partners, donors, industry, research and academic institutions, food regulators, and premix suppliers. The following is a summary of key themes and recommendations from all consultations and potential next steps for improving the GFDx.

# INTRODUCTION

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies affect people globally – impacting their health and limiting their ability to contribute to the economic well-being of their communities and countries.

Fortification of staple foods and condiments, is a cost-effective way to improve the diets of populations at scale and reduce the prevalence and effects of micronutrient deficiencies. Food fortification requires little to no behavior change and can be sustained over time through partnerships between food producers and premix companies, government, and the public health community.

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the Iodine Global Network (IGN) organized virtual orientation meetings in seven countries, to introduce the Global Fortification Data Exchange (GFDx) as a “one-stop shop” for harmonized data on fortification globally. The consultations were attended by representatives from government, development partners, donors, research and academic institutions, food regulators, and premix suppliers.



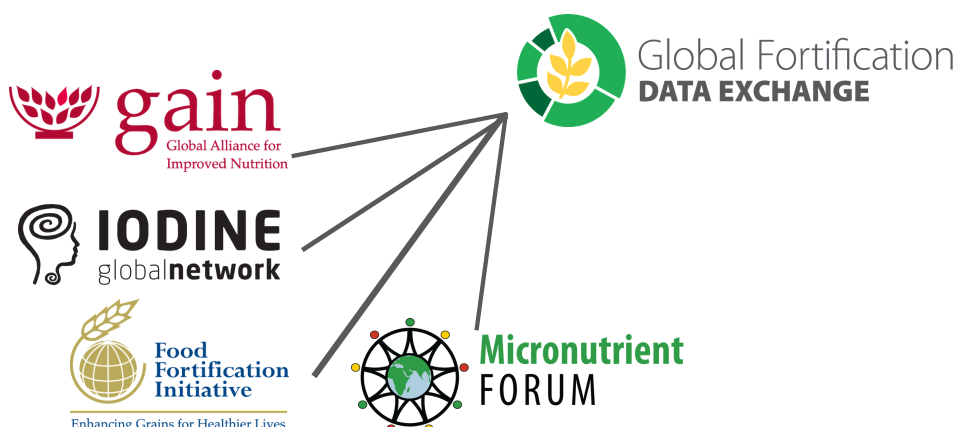
# GOAL OF STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The goal during these virtual meetings was to get feedback on the GFDx platform from stakeholders, to understand their data needs and processes for decision making, and to find out how the GFDx website might be enhanced or refined to better support their decision-making processes.

# RESPONDING TO A FORTIFICATION DATA CHALLENGE

During the first Global Summit on Food Fortification in Arusha, Tanzania, it was highlighted that there were many different stakeholders that collect and house data on fortification in different ways. There was no “one-stop shop” for harmonized data on fortification globally. As more countries began to adopt food fortification programs, stakeholders raised a call for better data accessibility to inform policy and identify populations in need, formalized in the 2015 Arusha Statement on Food Fortification.

As a response to this call for action, the Global Fortification Data Exchange (GFDx) was created, through a collaboration between various organizations: the Food Fortification Initiative (FFI), Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN); Iodine Global Network (IGN), and the Micronutrient Forum (MNF), and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Designed by the fortification community, the GFDx relies on the cooperation of both providers and users of data to help reach our aspiration for an improved data landscape in food fortification.



# WHAT IS THE GFDx?


The GFDx is an online analysis and visualization tool for data on food fortification; it provides all the data necessary to track global progress on food fortification and to enable decision makers to use data to improve the quality of national fortification programs. The GFDx aggregates and visualizes data on five commonly fortified foods: **maize flour, oil, rice, salt, and wheat flour.**

The GFDx includes indicators on food fortification legislation from 1940 to present, fortification standards, food availability and intake, legislation scope, proportion of foods industrially processed, availability of regulatory monitoring protocols, fortification quality, health impact, comparison with WHO recommendations, and population coverage for 196 countries, among others. Within the GFDx site, users can generate custom maps, charts, tables, and plots or download data for offline analysis. The GFDx is continuously updated as new data and information become available.

# WHERE DOES THE DATA COME FROM?

All data in the GFDx come from countries and national programs. Some had already been compiled globally, but independently managed, with separate databases for each food vehicle. Other important food fortification data only exist in national databases. Consolidating available data for the most commonly fortified foods allows national decision-makers to more holistically view their fortification programs, identify gaps, and make comparisons across foods and between countries. Importantly, compiling national and global data from various stakeholders and consolidating data sets across standardized indicators reflects collaboration and crosscutting partnership in the fortification sector to improve diets globally.

The GFDx represents a significant step forward in the effort to improve the availability, stewardship and presentation of fortification data. From non-profit organizations to governments to private industry, a broad range of actors must come together for fortification programs to be successful.



**In thinking about this and the data value chain, the goal of the GFDx is to provide actionable information on fortification policies and programs that meets the diverse needs of stakeholders along the decision-making pathway**



# CONSULTATIVE DIALOGUES WITH IN- COUNTRY FORTIFICATION STAKEHOLDERS TO IMPROVE UPTAKE OF GFDx DATA

To further increase usage and reinforce the value and use of the GFDx data for key stakeholders in-country for decision making, including governments, implementing agencies, and private sector partners to improve fortification programs, the GFDx held consultative dialogues with fortification stakeholders to better understand:

- 1 their processes for decision making regarding changes to fortification programs;
- 2 their data needs to facilitate discussions and decision making for fortification programs;
- 3 whether the GFDx meets those needs already, *or* whether a set of small tweaks/improvements to the site (in presentation of data, added visualizations or existing data as noted above) can be made to the GFDx to meet those decision-making needs; and
- 4 what emerges across country consultations and how do we integrate these elements into cross-country learnings.

# TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

- Country stakeholders/key decision makers in government
- Regional fortification association stakeholders
- Development agencies or other implementing partners with broad presence and specific mandates in fortification
- Researchers/academic institutions
- National Fortification Alliance representatives
- Industry Associations/grain, salt, oil producers
- Civic associations that advocate for fortification such as consumer groups, parent associations and human rights groups
- Other fortification stakeholders and decision makers along the decision-making pathway

# COUNTRIES

With the support of the GAIN Country Office staff and IGN Regional Coordinators, the GFDx leveraged fortification stakeholder groups to better understand the data needs and their feedback on the GFDx platform.

Consultations were held in:

- Bangladesh
- India
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka



# KEY THEMES ACROSS RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNTRIES

The following key themes/recommendations were considered important to several stakeholder groups across countries towards improving the usage of GFDx database for program discussions, reviews and decisions:

- **Inclusion of micronutrient burden data, production/consumption, shifts in health impact and cost/benefit data; trends for all across time.**
- **Resources for development community and government:** Stakeholders emphasized the need for studies and advocacy resources/materials to convince decision makers of the potential benefits of implementing fortification.
- **Inclusion of high quality premix procurement information:** Premix procurement information (in addition to the GAIN Premix Facility data which is already showcased on the GFDx) such as price, quality, and premix availability in proximity to the country requesting it.
- **Guidance on setting standards and choosing vehicles:** Stakeholders recommended that more guidance be available for decision makers on how to set and/or revise standards, as well as how to choose the best food vehicle for fortification within their country context.
- **Success stories and challenges for cross-country learning:** The GFDx (in collaboration with in-country partners) should develop and post materials on the platform that feature success stories and challenges for cross-country learning.

# KEY THEMES ACROSS RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNTRIES (CTD.)

- **Data on additional fortification vehicles:** e.g., Double Fortified Salt [DFS], sugar, milk, bouillon, biofortified foods, among others.
- **Promotion of GFDx for data use across sectors:** Fortification is a multi-sector program with shared responsibility among across the various ministries and development partners. GFDx data could benefit decision-making in various sectors. GFDx should take more opportunities to raise awareness of the platform.
- **Quality/compliance data in fortification:** There is a need to visualize the trends on quality and compliance over time to better advocate for improvements (include analysis or interpretation of quality/compliance data). Additionally, it would be helpful to see how changes in quality are impacting micronutrient burden. Stakeholders suggested GFDx could link with Management Information Systems (MIS) in the country to access this data.
- **Regional and Subnational level data:** Standards for economic regions (visualization of harmonization of fortification standards, where relevant). For some indicators, particularly for consumption, micronutrient burden, quality/compliance, and for countries with strong district- or state-level decision-making would benefit from subnational data.

# CATEGORIZING RECOMMENDATIONS

## MEDIUM PRIORITY

## HIGH PRIORITY

WITHIN SCOPE

- Inclusion of micronutrient burden data, production volumes, shifts in health impact and cost/benefit data, as well as trends for all over time.
- Guidance on setting standards and choosing vehicles, as well as how to choose the best food vehicle for fortification within the country context.
- Regional level data: inclusion of standards developed for economic regions (harmonization of fortification standards, where relevant).
- Subnational level data: For some indicators, particularly for consumption, micronutrient burden, quality/compliance, and for countries with strong district- or state-level decision-making would benefit from subnational data.

- Resources for development community and government: Stakeholders emphasized the need for links to studies and advocacy resources/materials organized by topic which would be useful for convincing decision makers of the potential benefits of implementing fortification programs.
- Increased promotion of GFDx for data use across sectors (governments and industry).
- Quality/compliance data in fortification: There is a need to visualize the changes and how to improve; and how changes in quality are impacting micronutrient burden. Could link with Management Information Systems (MIS).
- Post materials on GFDx that showcase success stories and challenges for cross-country learning.

OUT OF SCOPE

- Include data for other food vehicles such as double fortified salt (DFS), sugar, milk, and biofortified foods.
- Develop materials to showcase success stories and challenges for cross-country learning.
- High quality premix procurement information (in addition to the GAIN Premix Facility data which is already on the GFDx) such as price and availability in proximity to the country requesting premix.

1. High Priority and Within Scope: The GFDx has the ability and resources to incorporate this recommendation now or in the near future.
2. High Priority and Out of Scope: The GFDx may fulfill this recommendation at a later time but the recommendation may require additional partners.
3. Medium Priority and Within Scope: The GFDx has the ability to complete this recommendation but may fulfill the recommendation at a later time with more resources.
4. Medium Priority and Out of Scope: The GFDx does not have the ability or resources to do this, but will consider this for future expansion of the GFDx.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

The GFDx Secretariat was able to identify several immediate actions that would address the needs from stakeholders:

- Many stakeholders involved in the meetings were not necessarily decision-makers themselves, but their role was key in providing decision-makers with evidence-based data and guidance. Thus, most stakeholders felt that there was a need for the posting/development of key resources on fortification to support their decision-making needs:
  - The GFDx currently has a page for fortification resources found here: <https://fortificationdata.org/resources/>
  - **Action 1:** Expand the resources page to include additional evidence-based studies, policy papers, and promotional/advocacy materials that would further support stakeholders for the future guidance they provide to decision makers.
- It was increasingly evident that many stakeholders were not aware of the GFDx platform, but found it to be a helpful resource. Increased engagement and promotion of the GFDx platform for data use across sectors (including governments, implementing organizations, and industry) was a key recommendation from the majority of countries.
  - **Action 2:** The GFDx secretariat will continue to hold in-country meetings where possible to increase awareness of the GFDx platform. It is also possible to equip other development partners with the resources they need to hold their own meetings in-country to raise awareness of the GFDx platform and data available.

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Currently there is a dearth of data on quality and compliance in countries. In time and with more awareness of this need, there will likely be more data available to visualize changes in quality/compliance over time, and how improvements in fortification quality and compliance may translate to improved nutrient status in the population.
  - **Action 3:** The secretariat will begin to create the infrastructure to examine trends in quality data over time and additionally explore linking with Management Information Systems (MIS) in country that may have forthcoming initiatives in place for collecting more quality and compliance data.
- Many countries requested more information on how other (similar) countries had dealt with fortification challenges, made critical decisions on new vehicles, set standards, and had success with fortification programs.
  - **Action 4:** Although the GFDx does not have the ability or resources to *develop* materials on success stories and challenges in countries, the GFDx is able to *post/showcase* materials developed by countries for cross-country learning.



# NEXT STEPS

## The GFDx secretariat outlined several key next steps:

Together with the actions above, the GFDx secretariat will explore the potential expansion of the GFDx platform (depending on future scope, resources available, and further collaboration/partnerships with other key stakeholders and organizations), and consider the following recommendations:

- Provide future technical assistance and guidance for countries in the selection of new fortification vehicles and standards setting process (either development of standards for a new vehicle or changes needed to existing standards).
- Inclusion of additional indicators such as micronutrient burden.
- Inclusion of additional food vehicles, beyond the five that currently exist.
- Inclusion of regional and subnational data.
- Inclusion of information for countries on high quality premix procurement.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**The GFDx team would like to thank the fortification community in coming together for these important consultations to discuss and identify how the GFDx data can be more useful and accessible to stakeholders involved with food fortification globally.**