

May 10, 2021

The WHO Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines

Re: To express support of the application to the WHO Essential Medicines List for Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation for pregnant women

Dear Expert Committee,

This is to present the compliment of Haiti Health Network (HHN) and to express our support in favor of adding *Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) – Antenatal Supplement* on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (EML).

The Haiti Health Network was formed in 2017 with the goal of supporting Haitian Healthcare providers via education, community, and programmatic support so they can provide the absolute best healthcare to the people of Haiti. To date the network has nearly 600 members and hosts collaborative roundtable discussions twice monthly and hosts on average of 5 webinars every month. The Haiti health Network also aggregates healthcare facility demographic, service, and capacity data on all healthcare facilities in Haiti and provides this information to the public at reLinkGlobalHealth.org- [Solving Healthcare Delivery Challenges](https://reLinkGlobalHealth.org). This data is vital for Haiti Health Network project design and implementation. To date The Haiti Health Network has launched two Nationwide initiatives to provide key diagnostic medical equipment to both rural providers and regional hospitals. In addition, the Haiti Health Network team is a proud partner with Vitamin Angels and distributes vitamins to over 20 partners in Northern Haiti. The work to support women and children continues with their NICU modernization and Standardization program that launched in February of 2021.

Haiti's infant mortality rate is 59 per 1,000 live births and approximately 22% of children under the age of 5 experience stunting¹. UNICEF estimates that there are 55,000 cases of acute malnutrition, including 18,000 severe cases, in children under the age of five². Malnourishment among women of reproductive age remains prevalent: 49% of women ages 15-49 have anemia³. Micronutrient deficiency during pregnancy remains a major public health problem in Haiti. Evidence from clinical trials has concluded that antenatal MMS is superior to iron and folic acid (IFA) supplementation in improving birth outcomes, and has equivalent benefits for preventing maternal anaemia.

Haiti's National Guiding Health Plan has laid the foundation for combating micronutrient deficiencies in its Strategy 2.3.6. This action plan outlines micronutrient supplementation for

¹ Institut Haïtien de l'Enfance (IHE) et ICF. 2018. *Enquête Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services (EMMUS-VI 2016-2017)* Pétiön-Ville, Haïti, et Rockville, Maryland, USA : IHE et ICF

² UNICEF. Haiti Factsheets. <https://www.unicef.org/haiti/media/626/file/Fact-Sheet-f%C3%A9vrier-2019.pdf> Updated February 2019. Accessed January 18, 2020

³ USAID. Haiti: Nutrition Profile. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Haiti-Nutrition-Profile-Mar2018-508.pdf> Updated February 2018. Accessed January 18, 2020

pregnant women and nutritional surveillance for pregnant women. The plan laid out activities used to follow through on this strategy including the strengthening of routine micronutrient supplementation services. Technical nutrition committees and sectoral groups exist in ten departments of Haiti and are regularly working with local authorities and organizations to ensure better integration of the Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation into communities.

Adding the MMS on the Essential Medical List will be a key step towards supporting the efforts of the Haitian government and the civil society to scale MMS in Haiti. The inclusion of MMS on the EML will particularly encourage the integration of MMS in our nutrition programming and will facilitate the importing process of the product on the national territory.

We strongly urge that Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation be accepted as an item on the WHO EML.

Sincerely,

Barbara Campbell RPh

Executive Director
Haiti Health Network