Transitioning from IFA to MMS in Pakistan using a Social Marketing Approach

Dr. Sanober Qureshi, Fawad Shamim, Dr. Syed Saeedul Huda
Programs Department, Greenstar Social Marketing Pakistan, Karachi, Pakistan
Corresponding Author E-mail: sanoberqureshi@greenstar.org.pk

Introduction & Background

Anemia affects 40% of pregnant women globally and contributes to 20% of maternal deaths. In Pakistan, where 4.5-6.4 million women give birth annually, deficiencies in essential nutrients like iron, Zinc, Calcium, vitamin D, A, and other micro nutrients are prevalent. Micronutrient deficiencies increase the risk of fetal death, low birth weight, and preterm birth. The WHO now recommends transitioning from Iron Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation to Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS), particularly UNIMMAP, for better maternal and neonatal outcomes.

Materials & Methods

GSM implemented a social marketing approach, incorporating the elements of training of providers, availability at the clinics through national distributor and creating awareness in the communities through social media channels. Endorsements from Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) which supported the initiative. The Society of Obs and Gynae (SOGP) also supported the campaign and posted maternal nutrition guidelines on its website which also recommends MMS for pregnant mothers. Over 10 months (Oct '23 - Jul '24) , the campaign showed promising results, with prescription rates and sales rising from 200 bottles a month to 2500 bottles per month, reflecting high product acceptance amongst providers and pregnant women.

Results

Over the span of 10 months, the number of women using MMS surged from 200 to 2,500 per month, showcasing remarkable acceptance among healthcare providers and pregnant women. This significant growth highlights the increasing awareness and trust in the program. During this period, the total uptake of MMS reached an impressive 420,000 tablets, reflecting the widespread adoption and impact of the initiative.

Conclusion

GSM will take a lead in scaling up MMS implementation nationally, ensuring its integration into both public and private healthcare systems. By leveraging its HCP network and building on the initial success of the pilot, GSM aims to make MMS the standard of care for pregnant women across Pakistan, ultimately improving maternal and child health outcomes.

Research Objectives

Greenstar Social Marketing (GSM) is leading the initiative to assess the feasibility of transitioning from IFA to MMS in Pakistan. The objective is to improve maternal health outcomes, reduce the risks associated with micronutrient deficiencies during pregnancy, and integrate MMS into the essential antenatal care (ANC) protocols through both public and private healthcare channels, leveraging GSM's vast network of healthcare providers across Pakistan.

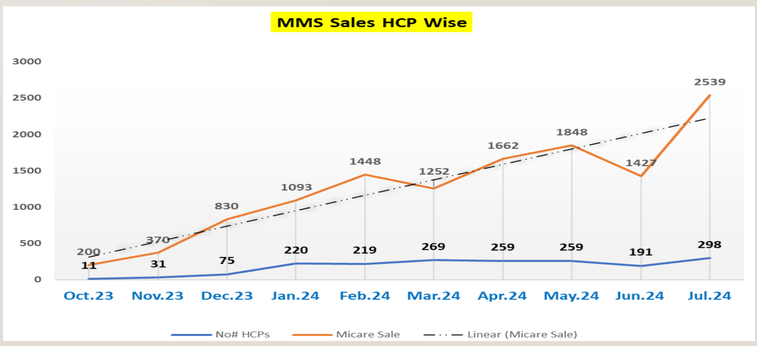
Recommendations

Paving the Path for Better Maternal Health Social Marketing Success

We proved that social marketing can effectively shift IFA to MMS in Pakistan.

- **Scalable and successful Model:** A replicable approach for regions facing similar nutritional needs, and can be roll out at a national level.
- **Policy Goal:** Secure MMS on the Essential Drug List.
- **HCP Network:** Engaging healthcare providers to adopt MMS.
- **Future Vision:** Establish MMS as the standard for maternal care in Pakistan.
- **Ultimate Impact:** Stronger mothers, healthier children, and a foundation for lasting community health

Results Total MMS uptake over 10 months ~ 4,20,000 Tablets

Districts
Karachi & Rawalpindi

Recruited HCPs 300 & Trained HCPs 250