

TECHNICAL BRIEF  
May 2025

# Large-scale Food Fortification in West Africa

Renewing large-scale engagement in the fight against micronutrient deficiencies



Vials and syringes used in training about food fortification in West Africa.  
Kalle Kamal Eko/CRS

PROJECT BACKGROUND

West Africa faces high rates of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, with stunting, wasting, and anemia—especially among women—exceeding global averages (Global Nutrition Report, WHO 2023). These issues stem from poor dietary diversity, limited access to nutritious foods, and weak enforcement of food fortification standards.

Large-scale food fortification (LSFF) is a proven, cost-effective solution that adds essential micronutrients to staple foods like vegetable oil, flour, and salt. Since 2022, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and partners have led an LSFF initiative across West Africa, building on regional efforts including ECOWAS resolutions from 2006 and 2012.

A situational analysis (June 2022–Oct 2023), funded by the Gates Foundation, identified barriers such as poor coordination, weak governance, and limited access to quality premixes. These findings shaped the second phase (Nov 2023–June 2025), focused on scaling efforts through stronger public-private partnerships, regulatory improvements, policy advocacy and community engagement. Funded by BMZ and the Gates Foundation, this phase aims to make fortified foods more accessible and impactful across the region.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

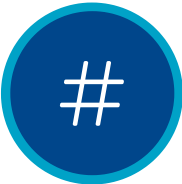
The LSFF initiative aims to sustainably reduce and prevent vitamin and mineral deficiencies among vulnerable populations in West Africa, particularly women and girls. To do so, the project strengthens the public sector capacity to enforce fortification standards of key foods like vegetable oil, wheat flour and salt, with the following objectives:



Strengthening  
public-private  
partnerships to  
support fortification  
efforts



Enhancing food  
fortification efforts to  
ensure compliance with  
regulations and  
standards



Promoting food  
fortification through  
effective social  
marketing and  
communication



Implementing a  
Monitoring, Evaluation,  
Accountability and  
Learning system to track  
progress and inform  
decision making



Dr. Ndeye Fatou Ndiaye, Coordinator of COSFAM, and Dr. Alphonse Vohou Sakouvogui, Coordinator of the Guinean Alliance for Food Fortification, during a session in Senegal to train stakeholders involved in applying food fortification standards in West Africa. Kalle Kamal Eko/CRS

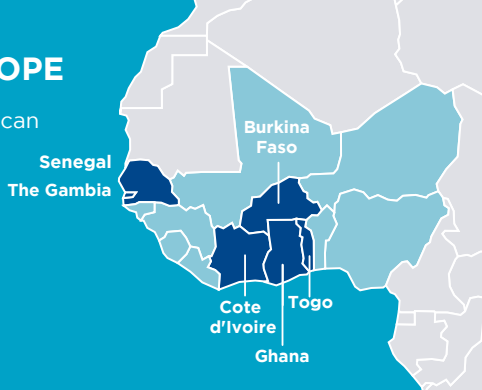




GEOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC SCOPE

CRS is implementing its LSFF initiative across 15 West African countries, with priority countries being Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, The Gambia and Togo.

Program participants, making up 70% of the region, are women of reproductive age, girls and other vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by micronutrient deficiencies.



FIVE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Regional institutions**  
The West African Health Organization (WAHO) and the ECOWAS Commission

**Governments**  
National Fortification Alliances, Ministries of health, industry, trade, communication and finance, and regulatory agencies and public health laboratories

**Private sector partners**  
Industry associations, food producers and premix suppliers

**NGOs and civil society organizations**  
Groups advocating for consumer rights and nutrition awareness, Journalist and Communicators Network for Nutrition, Scaling Up Nutrition Regional Secretariat

**Int'l development partners**  
UNICEF, GIZ, GAIN, Helen Keller International, TechnoServe, Nutrition International and the World Food Programme



During the session, participants learned analytical methods as well as practical skills such as titrations. Kalle Kamal Eko/CRS

APPROACH AND OUTCOMES

Strengthening public-private partnerships and alliances

SITUATION

LSFF requires collaboration from public and private sector stakeholders to establish a clear strategy, accountability framework and action plan covering activities for fortification with mutual communication and support. All stakeholders must be involved from the start, with clearly defined roles to ensure transparency and accountability in fortification governance.

National Fortification Alliances (NFAs) were established over a decade ago in West Africa as inclusive platforms for stakeholder engagement to promote food fortification. Supported by ECOWAS, WAHO and development partners, these alliances facilitated public-private sector dialogues and coordinated national strategies and accountability frameworks for food fortification.

While many NFAs were instrumental in coordinating food fortification, most were short-lived, and only a few remain active. Several obstacles have impacted their success and sustainability, including:



Limited technical capacity for implementing food fortification



Weak political motivation to prioritize food fortification



Lack of comms and resource mobilization to maintain funding

To ensure food fortification standards, electronic devices are used to determine the amount of iodine, iron, Vitamin A and other essential micronutrients in fortified crops.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Convened four regional consultations in West Africa, involving public and private sector stakeholders, civil society and technical and financial partners to improve LSFF implementation and coordination.
- Revitalized National Fortification Alliances in 12 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo and The Gambia) by mobilizing 645 members and conducting 19 activities, resulting in more engaged and functional NFAs with clear, budgeted action plans.
- Enhanced coordination and governance by building the capacity of 50 NFA coordinators from all 15 ECOWAS countries in leadership, partnership and advocacy.
- Integrated LSFF into the nutrition strategies of the West African Health Organization and the ECOWAS Commission for Industries.
- Convened four regional consultations in West Africa, supporting the establishment of the Regional Fortification Alliance to improve LSFF coordination.
- Strengthened advocacy efforts, leading to increased government commitment and private sector engagement.
- Led the LSFF sub-working group with WFP under the regional nutrition working group.
- Formed an ad hoc committee with representatives from CRS, GIZ, GAIN, HKI and WFP to guide the development of a regional food fortification strategy in West Africa.
- Completed country profiles on food fortification to inform national and regional action plans on food fortification.

SUCCESS STORIES

- Facilitated the inclusion of retinyl palmitate, a premix used in the fortification of refined vegetable oil, on Burkina Faso’s national list of essential medicines and health products.
- Integrated two food fortification indicators into Burkina Faso’s country nutrition survey.
- Supported the re-establishment of NFAs in Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In The Gambia, a National Assembly representative leads NFA coordination, chaired by the private sector.
- Established the West Africa Regional Food Fortification Alliance, led by the West African Health Organization, to improve LSFF program coordination.
- Enhanced stakeholder collaboration under the Regional Fortification Alliance’s leadership.
- Completed national profiles on food fortification for all 15 countries.



Dr. Ndeye Fatou Ndiaye speaks with the press parallel to the training on food fortification standards in Senegal. Kalle Kamal Eko/CRS



Beatrice Adjattan, CRS Technical Advisor, demonstrates a titration to a participant during the session. Kalle Kamal Eko/CRS

Enabling environment and compliance

SITUATION

One key challenge highlighted at the regional consultative meeting is the weakness of the regulatory enforcement system. Effective enforcement and monitoring are hindered by insufficient analytical capacity and controls. Stronger regulatory enforcement and a supportive market environment are essential for the mandatory program to achieve its objectives with greater impact and coverage.

Efforts to standardize enforcement are underway, and support for the ECOWAS Commission is crucial for adopting updated standards.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Improved micronutrient analysis by training of lab technicians, regulatory officers and custom officers on rapid test devices (iCheck) in Ghana.
- Enhanced regulatory monitoring by increasing the efficiency of 270 officials in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo, focusing on rapid analysis methods for iodine, vitamin A and iron in fortified foods using iCheck devices (Iodine, Chroma 3 and Iron).
- Trained 80 producers in Senegal on clean and sustainable iodized salt production techniques
- Strengthened external control capacities of public sector structures in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Togo by donating 63 iCheck analysers (25 iCheck Chroma 3, 18 iCheck Iron and 20 iCheck Iodine).
- Assessed fortified food compliance and coverage in The Gambia.
- Revised mandatory food fortification standards in Ghana.
- Provided technical support to ECOWAS for revising harmonized regional fortification standards.

COUNTRY	COUNTRY	ICHECK IRON	ICHECK IODINE	TOTAL
The Gambia	3	3	2	8
Senegal	2	2	4	8
Burkina Faso	5	5	5	15
Ghana	7	2	4	13
Togo	4	4	3	11
Côte d'Ivoire	4	2	2	8
TOTAL	25	18	20	63



Communication and social marketing

SITUATION

Following country visits and discussions with key public and private sector stakeholders, gaps were identified in managing the regional ENRICHI logo. Poor understanding of logo ownership, application, usage and country-level attribution hindered fortified food branding recognition. This issue is compounded by low public recognition (10% in Burkina Faso in 2023) and varying branding standards across countries and industries.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Empowered 400+ journalists, communicators and civil society members to advocate for food fortification, leading to commitments for nutrition-focused media programs and community campaigns.
- Increased awareness in Ghana and The Gambia through social marketing (flip charts, posters, flyers and brochures) developed and disseminated by national health and nutrition agencies.
- Strengthened communication and social marketing skills for 195 stakeholders and Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams in The Gambia.
- Developed advocacy videos in Burkina Faso for local leaders, parliament members and youth influencers to promote food fortification.
- Revised ENRICHI logo management and usage policies to ensure sustainability, consistency and acceptance.
- Improved branding requirements and adherence to ENRICHI logo usage rules.
- Strengthened collaboration among fortified food industry associations within ECOWAS.

SUCCESS STORIES

- Established the African Journalists and Communicators Initiative for Nutrition (IJCAN) to unite Sub-Saharan African journalists in advocating for nutrition programs and food fortification.
- Launched dedicated TV programs highlighting government initiatives against micronutrient deficiencies in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia.
- Integrated the Gambian journalist network into the National Fortification Alliance of The Gambia.

- Led consultations to enhance understanding of branding rules for ENRICHI, aiming for a unified logo for fortified foods across 15 West African countries.
- Strengthened coordination among industry associations for vegetable oil and wheat flour, with notable progress in reviving industry associations for wheat flour and salt iodization.

MEAL/ICT4D

SITUATION

Assessments in 15 West African countries identified gaps in data and evidence on food fortification. Food fortification alliances highlighted the lack of reliable data on analysis, compliance, coverage and nutritional impact in public-private partnerships. The evaluation recommended a digitized tracking and monitoring system, including surveys and technical data collection on laboratory analysis, to address these gaps.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Enhanced capacities for digitalizing LSFF monitoring and evaluation systems in Burkina Faso (pilot), Niger and The Gambia.

SUCCESS STORIES

- Assessed 200 food samples (flour, oil and salt) in The Gambia via the National Nutrition Agency and the Food Safety and Quality Assurance Agency to evaluate the effectiveness of the monitoring plan and compliance with the 2020 food fortification regulation. Findings revealed widespread non-compliance in edible oil, salt and wheat flour, indicating gaps in industrial quality control and regulation enforcement. Salt samples showed the highest non-compliance rate for iodine levels (over 97%).
- Mobilized stakeholders from the public-private sector and civil society in Burkina Faso through the National Fortification Alliance (NFA) to design and test a digital system for tracking food fortification compliance and coverage data, fostering collaboration among institutions for data collection, compilation, analysis and reporting.

TESTIMONIALS

“The Government will come up with strategies in institutionalizing and sustaining the NFA, and will mobilize more resources in nutrition, especially on industrial scale food fortification. The Office of the Vice President will discuss with the development partners and the Ministry of Finance about improving the salt production sites and purchasing machines for the iodization of the salt produced.” **Office of the Vice President of The Gambia**

“In our countries, legislation has made it mandatory to add iron and folate to wheat flour, iodine to salt, and vitamin A to edible oil, but there is still much to do. Better regional coordination is needed to accelerate efforts in a coordinated manner.” **Dr. Namoudou Kéita, West African Health Organization.**

“Thanks to this training, beautiful reports, features and broadcasts will be produced to raise public awareness about the importance of fortifying foods to address nutritional deficiencies. We are determined to contribute to a greater understanding of fortification.” **Basile Mignake, President of the Media Network for Nutrition and Food Fortification, Togo**

“The whole essence is to address micronutrient deficiencies in our countries to benefit children, infants, young infants and expectant mothers. We aim to address these issues holistically and collaboratively by sharing experiences from different countries.” **Fred Chiazor, Chairman of the National Fortification Alliance, Nigeria**

“I sincerely thank the LSFF project for this valuable support which addressed our immediate regulatory monitoring needs; the equipment provided has enabled us to resume surveillance operations and expand monitoring from salt to include oil and flour, though continued follow-up remains essential to ensure sustained compliance.” **Barbara Hoffman, Head of Satellite Laboratory Department, Food and Drugs Authority, Ghana**

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