

For GiveWell: Update since quarterly call

15 April 2019

West Bengal

M&E of PDS fortified atta

Brendan, Urmi and Muneer conducted a field visit to West Bengal (WB) to better understand opportunities to strengthen delivery of fortified atta that is already being supplied through PDS, and to look into potential for expansion of the supply of fortified atta in the open market.

We learned that West Bengal's Food and Supplies Division's (FSD) frequency of testing and lag between testing and sharing results to millers is better than originally anticipated. We believe there may be promising opportunities for cooperation to strengthen the existing monitoring and evaluation system pending a diagnostic phase, described below.

Monitoring of fortified PDS atta is primarily carried out in two parts:

- a) **Inspection:** This is done by a team of field inspectors (3-5 per district). They visit flour mills, check if instruments are working or not, working correctly or not. This includes checking microfeeder (dosing machine). On an average there are 5 flour mills per district supplying atta to FPS through distributors and the team in the district is responsible for quality control in all these mills. According to bureaucrats, the team visits each mill 3-4 days per week. Unrepresentative millers we visited suggested samples are tested about twice a month on average. This may have to do with non-continuous requests for production.
- b) **Quality control:** This involves lab tests which are done from samples collected by field inspectors, which include a qualitative test for the presence of iron but no relevant quantitative testing to assure adequate dosing.

We are developing a proposal to work in partnership with the state government to quantitatively test fortified flour that passes qualitative tests (measuring the dose of micronutrients in the flour), then assessing a) how adequately dosed existing supply of fortified flour is, b) whether quantitative testing should be recommended to the state as part of standard quality monitoring, and c) whether Fortify Health could provide supportive services to the millers to ensure adequate dosing. We plan to discuss this proposal with the state government in coming weeks.

Working with open market millers in West Bengal

In addition to this, the FH team visited three different mills and found that the primary reason for not fortifying mainstream atta was cost of fortification. Fortify Health can bridge this gap by funding premix, or by encouraging the already onboarded state government to try to expand open-market fortification. The three mills we visited all supply fortified through the PDS already and expressed interest in this kind of partnership.

Maharashtra

Nutrapoorna mill

Since our last call, we have installed the microdoser in the Nutrapoorna mill and signed an MOU with them. Nutrapoorna staff have been inducted on the use of the equipment and produced the first batch of fortified flour for testing. They are now conducting lab tests and acquiring consumer feedback of the atta they have fortified. Once we have received these, we can roll out the fortified atta more widely. We anticipate a gradual phase-in of fortification to their products.

Amravati mill

We have signed an MOU with the Amravati miller, whose equipment will be installed in the next few weeks. He has agreed to launch a new product, which will be the atta we fortify. Once confidence is built in the product, we aim to expand fortification efforts into the rest of this mill's products.

Nagpur updates

The FH team visited Nagpur and met with the Divisional Commissioner, who has previously served as Commissioner of Public Health for the state and now oversees 7 districts in Nagpur Division. He was enthusiastic about fortification and is enthusiastic to work with us and the Food and Drug Administration on expanding fortification efforts in the Nagpur division. He who suggested we run an onboarding and fortification workshop in Nagpur on 22 April for local millers and government officials, which will be coordinated and hosted by him and the additional secretary for the Food and Drug Administration (responsible for licensing the millers) of the Nagpur Division. He is a *champion* for fortification, and will enable the establishment of Nagpur as a *fortification hub*.

This meeting will allow Fortify Health to expand its open market partnerships with millers in the Nagpur region with top bureaucrats encouraging millers to engage our support in fortifying flour the already produce. They will also bring together those government programs distributing flour or wheat to consider whether they could fortify it (as in the case of ashram schools, previously discussed, and also hostels, jails, hospitals, etc.).

Moving forward

Fortify Health's main base

Based on the events of the past month, we are considering moving Fortify Health's main base out of Mumbai and into one of the other cities in Maharashtra. Most of our activities, outside of Nutrapoorna, are now in the region around Pune, or closer to Nagpur, and we are primarily working with local government divisions rather than Maharashtra state government. We anticipate establishing 3-4 hubs (Nagpur, Pune, Mumbai, Kolkata) where field staff would be present to further develop and monitor fortification efforts.