Iron Intensification Program in Nepal: An Overview

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Anemia Among Nepali Women in 1998

![Bar Chart]

Source: NMSS-1998
Iron Folic Acid (IFA) Supplementation During Pregnancy in 2001

- None: 77%
- 1-59 days: 14%
- 60-89 days: 3%
- ≥ 90 days: 6%

(NDHS 2001)
Policy for IFA supplementation to pregnant women is there...
Why is implementation so poor?
Main Problems

• Lack of awareness about need for IFA supplementation during pregnancy and lactation

• IFA tablets not accessible to most women
Establishment of Community Based Delivery

• In 2002, national strategy for anemia control formulated
  – Distribution of IFA through Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) in addition to health facilities included

• 2003, government launched first phase of Iron Intensification Program in five districts
  – Involved FCHVs also in distribution of IFA

• Program gradually expanded to 74 out of 75 districts by 2012
  – With support from MI (65 districts), UNICEF (7 districts), WHO (1 district) and Plan (1 district)
Key Activities by FCHVs

• Provide Iron/Folic Acid tablets to pregnant and lactating women
  – In small plastic bottles
  – In blister packs since 2011

• Encourage pregnant women to visit health facilities for taking deworming tablet and antenatal check ups

• Encourage pregnant women to take adequately iodized salt, one additional meal and rest during the day time
Each VDC has nine ward, Health Facility
Each district consists of VDCs
Each ward has 100-200 households and there is a Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) who provides maternal and child care services in the community. In each ward there is also a mother group coordinated by FCHV for community mobilisation.
Effectiveness of the Program
IFA Supplementation during Pregnancy in Nepal

First Phase of IIP
Launched in 2003

% of pregnant women who took any IFA tablet
% of pregnant women who took 90+ IFA tablets

MICS 1997 NDHS 2001 NDHS 2006 NDHS 2011
Compliance of IFA Supplementation and Deworming Among Pregnant Women

% of women who took full dose (180) IFA tablets
% women who took deworming tablet

NDHS 2006 NDHS 2011
20 55
7 38
Anemia among pregnant women in 2011

Anemia among pregnant women

- 1998: 75%
- 2011: 48%
Key Challenges

- There are some hard-to-reach groups among which coverage and utilization of IFA tablets are still low.
- Compliance has increased over the years but it needs further improvement.
- Anemia among pregnant women reduced from 75% in 1998 to 48% in 2011 but it is very high.

Next Steps: Strengthening the Program

- Refresher workshops for health workers and FCHVs focusing hard-to-reach groups in low performing districts
  - Already complemented in 9 districts with support from MI
  - Government organizing in additional 10 districts
Conclusions

• IFA supplementation among pregnant women has been significantly increased at national level in Nepal by
  – Bringing the supplements closer to the community
  – Enhancing interpersonal counseling skill of front line service providers
  – Improving product packaging
  – Ensuring regular supply of the supplements

• The Nepal program however needs further strengthening to increase coverage and utilization of IFA
Special thanks to 50,000 Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) of Nepal

Thank You