

## MMS on Essential Medicine List

Multiple micronutrient supplements (MMS), which have been shown to reduce the risk of small-for-gestational age birth, low birth weight and still-birth (Haider & Bhutta, 2015), have now been included on the World Health Organization Essential Medicines List (EML) (WHO, 2021). The recommendation to include MMS was due to strong evidence that it is both cost-effective and confers significant benefits compared to iron and folic acid supplementation alone. The Micronutrient Forum (2021),

which was one of the first organisations to report on this, heralded the inclusion of MMS as “a huge milestone in making this cost-effective intervention accessible and affordable to pregnant women, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.”

We already know that MMS are effective but why does this development matter? The EML is a coveted collection of medicines that are considered safe and also vital to most effectively support the provision of health

services. The recognition of MMS as an essential medicine reinforces its value to governments around the world who will now be encouraged to incorporate this product into national health policies or state-sponsored programmes. This will hopefully support progress to greater coverage of the use of these supplements globally which is especially pertinent for hard-to-reach groups such as pregnant adolescents who have a particularly high risk of nutritional vulnerability (Nguyen et al, 2017). Therefore, designating MMS in this way will hopefully help to improve adolescent nutrition status, helping to safeguard the health of vulnerable populations around the world.

### References

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Pregnant woman taking a micronutrient supplement in Bangladesh

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## Expanding youth engagement in health research: The Lancet Youth Advisory Panel

Alongside the growing focus on adolescents in nutrition and health research during recent years, the benefits of engaging youth during the research process have been highlighted. In early 2021, a report by the Wellcome Trust showed that youth participation improves the quality of research since adolescents are able to identify the needs that are pertinent to them, tailor research methods to their interests and experiences and access their peers and communities for more effective data collection and research dissemination (Das et al, 2020). By active engagement in the research process, young people are also heard and empowered through the development of valuable knowledge and skills to improve their nutrition and health behaviours. However, few examples exist of effective youth engagement in practice which is likely due to a range of barriers including a lack of training and guidelines on how to engage and work effectively with youth and inadequate funding

to support such engagement, limiting collaboration between researchers and young people (Das et al, 2020; Sellars et al, 2021).

Such findings have informed efforts by The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health to better engage with young people by including them as research partners. As a first step in April 2021, a call for applications was released for a new Youth Advisory Panel (The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 2021). Following nearly 100 applications from 24 countries, the inaugural Youth Advisory Panel was announced in September 2021, including a total of eight members between 16 and 24 years of age (Morgan, 2021). This globally diverse panel of young males and females encompasses a range of personal and professional experiences including living with chronic illnesses, encountering various barriers to accessing nutrition and health services and volunteering and working within the health sector. The panel will sit within the journal's

newly launched International Advisory Board (Lau et al, 2021) to advise on, and contribute to, the development of the journal's content, ensuring that this is meaningful to young people from diverse backgrounds.

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