



BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation



Since 1943, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been implementing the commitment of the Catholic bishops and the U.S. Catholic community to help the poor and vulnerable overseas. CRS strives to defend the sacredness and dignity of all human life by helping people based on their needs, not their beliefs, race, or nationality.

CRS intervenes in Burkina Faso since 1960. Since that time, CRS Burkina has continued its efforts to fulfill the agency's overall mission of helping people in need anywhere and anytime.

CRS and its fight against malnutrition

In West Africa, one out of two women of reproductive age is anemic with high deficiencies in key micronutrients (iron, vitamin A, zinc, folate, and iodine). There is a high burden of undernutrition with one out of three children under five stunted, 15% of infants born with low birth weight and high dependence on monotonous diet with close to 15% undernourished populations and 78% of children under two not meeting minimum dietary diversity mimicked by low minimum dietary diversity score among women and caregivers.

Quick Facts	
Project title :	Large Scale Food Fortification in West Africa
Country :	Burkina Faso
Funding :	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
Total cost (USD) :	2.000.000
Period :	June 2022 - December 2023
Implementing Partners :	Catholic Relief Services (CRS), West African Health Organization (WAHO)/ECOWAS and several Government institutions in Burkina Faso.

Most countries do not have food based dietary guidelines and nutrient intake among populations fall below expectations when compared to targets for fruits, vegetables, legumes, and other micronutrient dense foods.

CRS recognizes that solving this problem is complex and can only be achieved through a multi-sectoral and integrated approach among actors, with full engagement of the public and private sectors alongside nongovernmental organizations, donors, and other key players.

Promoting micronutrient fortified food for improving nutrition outcomes throughout West Africa

In June 2022, CRS in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) began the implementation of an 18-month "Large-Scale Food Fortification" (LSFF) project to expand and improve large-scale food fortification with essential micronutrients in West Africa.

Founded in 2000 in the United States, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to improve lives and health, lift people out of extreme poverty, and empower them to transform their lives. The LSFF initiative is the focus of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's nutrition strategy and include priority on building public sector capacity for effective food fortification at scale. The initiative will support the integration of LSFF into existing food and nutrition policies and programs in West Africa.

With financial support from the foundation, CRS seeks to build public sector capacity to ensure that large-scale food fortification programs are targeted, effective, and integrated into existing food and nutrition security policies and strategies and the regulatory frameworks that govern them. LSFF is a proven cost-effective nutrition intervention, that improves health, cognitive development, and educational outcomes and remain essential to human capital development. The regional objectives of the LSFF project are specifically to advance the sustainable addition of micronutrients to staple foods (wheat flour, vegetable oil) and condiments (salt, bouillon cubes) consumed on a large scale in West Africa in order to close the nutrient gap for women, girls, and vulnerable people.

Strengthening the partnership on LSFF in West Africa

CRS works with diverse, committed, and multi-level partners-individuals, households, communities, the private sector, civil society, and government-to foster long-term development by integrating approaches that recognize and respond to the needs and realities of vulnerable populations, organizations, and local systems.

In the LSFF project, we believe that this partnership approach will have enormous potential to leverage the resources and capacities of different stakeholders to improve nutrition for vulnerable populations.

Partners' assessment and evidence-based results

During this 18-month initiative, we will primarily conduct capacity assessments on the enabling environment, systems, and processes implemented by the West African Health Organization (WAHO) under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Ministry of Health of Burkina Faso, which seek to fulfill their mandates in advancing effective LSFF.

The assessments will involve multiple stakeholders who would be jointly involved in strengthening the partnership for sustainable food fortification in the ECOWAS region.

The key outcomes of the 18-month, first phase of this regional LSFF initiative in West Africa include:



Evidence based premised upon targeted capacity gap assessments of public sector institutions in West Africa to fulfill their governance roles in the implementation of regional food fortification in West Africa effectively and sustainably.



WAHO/ECOWAS technical gaps to implement harmonized regional policies and regulatory standards for LSFF in West Africa identified, with a specific focus on Francophone countries' capacity to achieve increased compliance with those policies and standards.



Burkina Faso Ministry of Health and other public sector institutional capacity gaps identified and addressed, focusing on regulatory governance, digital QA/QC, and enforcement of standards.