Symposium on:
Improving Complementary Feeding Practices in Ghana:
Reaching the Vulnerable Through Innovative Social Business

GIMPA Conference Center – Accra, Ghana
Monday July 21, 2014
3:15 to 5:00pm

Abstract:
Over one third of all deaths of children under the age of five are directly or indirectly caused by undernutrition. Appropriate infant and child feeding practices are crucial starting from birth and can impact immediate and long-term nutritional status. The most recent Lancet series on nutrition (2013) estimates that the lives of over 220,000 children under five years of age can be saved through the implementation of appropriate infant and young child nutrition interventions that include the promotion of complementary feeding. A unique project is being undertaken in Ghana that incorporates two innovative elements into infant and young child complementary feeding interventions: public-private partnership, and social business approaches.

Social engagement and social responsibility in the private sector has evolved over the past decade. While researchers and academics have long proposed that multinational businesses can sustainably reach the poorest of consumers – i.e. those at the “base of the pyramid” (BoP) – many businesses have been reluctant to engage this market. Today, however, effective business solutions are becoming a critical approach for reaching vulnerable populations in low-resource settings. An innovative public-private partnership has been developed to test the principles of BoP marketing of social business in Ghana within the context of achieving nutrition outcomes.

This project aims to prevent malnutrition in infants and young children aged 6-24 months through the formulation and market-based distribution of a complementary food supplement. Currently in its fourth year, the ongoing activities of this project include an efficacy study that is evaluating the impact of the supplement on growth and development of infants, and two effectiveness studies that compare different marketing and distribution strategies. The objective of the session is to highlight the concept of innovative business approaches in reaching vulnerable populations using the case of a low-cost complementary food supplement in Ghana.

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