

CRISIS BULLETIN

National Vitamin A Supplementation
Campaign Activities: August 2001

In Indonesia, maintaining public awareness about the routine vitamin A supplementation program is essential for its ongoing success. Helen Keller International (HKI) helped organize a variety of activities to promote the August 2001 distribution month nationwide.

National Vitamin A Supplementation Program goals

In Indonesia, the goal of the national vitamin A supplementation program for children is to deliver vitamin A supplements to preschool age children twice a year. The *posyandu* (village-based integrated health post) system is the primary channel used to distribute capsules and vitamin A supplementation has been one of the standard services offered at the *posyandu* since the late 1980s. Nationwide, an estimated 20 million children aged 6-59 months are eligible for the supplementation program.

Children aged 6-11 months were officially added as a new target group for routine supplementation in 1999 (see *Ind Cris Bul*, year 2, issue 5, May 2000). Since that time efforts have been made to inform health workers about the new recommendations and to promote the new target group to the public.

In August 1999, national coverage rates for vitamin A supplementation were less than 10% for 6-11 month old children and around 60% for 12-59 month old children, according to data from the Ministry of Health (MOH, 2000). More recent data from the MOH estimate that overall coverage rates for the August 2000 distribution round were around 60% for

children aged 6-11 months and around 70% for 12-59 month old children. The improvement in coverage rates among children aged 6-11 months over this one-year period is quite encouraging and further improvements are expected for this new target group.

Ingredients for success

High vitamin A capsule coverage rates can be achieved and maintained over time only when many different systems work



Figure 1. Vitamin A poster

smoothly together. In Indonesia, the essential ingredients for a successful supplementation program include: community awareness about the routine program, children's attendance at designated distribution points (*posyandu*) during February and August, health worker knowledge about current supplementation guidelines and procedures, a well-functioning distribution system for capsules, and timely procurement of adequate stocks of both 100,000 IU (blue-colored) capsules for younger children (aged 6-11 months) and 200,000 IU (red-colored) capsules for older children (aged 12-59 months).

Lessons learned from past activities

All of these factors listed above are necessary to achieve high vitamin A coverage rates. However, one that has contributed to the success of the routine program over time is that fact the distribution months (February and August) are standardized across Indonesia. This has allowed both national level government information channels and more recently popular mass media channels to be widely used to promote the routine supplementation months.

The benefit of having standardized program months and conducting widespread promotional activities became apparent as pilot programs began expanding in the 1970s. In one pilot program, community health workers were assigned to spend part of each week distributing vitamin A capsules to the children in their service areas who had not received a capsule in the previous six months. Using this system nearly all children could be reached in a 6-month cycle, but coverage tended to decline as time went on. Over time, supplementation program activities expanded into many different provinces and the delivery mechanism changed to a monthly distribution utilizing the *posyandu* system as the main service delivery point. In an effort to draw even more attention to the program, different provinces began



Figure 2. Mothers and children attend the Vitamin A Program health fair organized by HKI at Taman Mini Indonesia Indah before the August distribution month.



Figure 3. A child participating in a coloring contest – one of the many activities held during the health fair at Taman Mini Indonesia Indah.

designating only two months of every year as vitamin A distribution months. Then, in 1991, the vitamin A distribution months were standardized, with February and August being chosen as the national distribution months for Indonesia. National promotional campaigns started at that point and vitamin A coverage rates increased.

The routine vitamin A supplementation program continues to take place during February and August. Ongoing promotion of the supplementation months is essential to maintain public awareness about the program and to encourage *posyandu* attendance, particularly during those months. The general public as well as health care providers need to be reminded when the routine vitamin A distribution months take place.

August 2001 promotional events

In order to raise public awareness about the August 2001 national vitamin A distribution month, HKI worked with the MOH, *Koalisi Untuk Indonesia Sehat* (Coalition for a Healthy Indonesia), and local advertising and mass media production companies to design and implement a coordinated vitamin A promotional campaign. The campaign was designed to promote the same key messages using a variety of media channels.

Key messages: These four key messages were emphasized in all promotional materials and events. They were: 1) What? - Free vitamin A capsules for children; blue-colored capsules for children aged 6-11 months and red-colored capsules for children aged 1-5 years, 2) When? - February and August, 3) Where? *Posyandu* or *Puskesmas* (public health center), and 4) Why? – This was answered using the tag line '*Mataku Sehat, Tubuhku Kuat karena*

kapsul vitamin A – ‘My eyes are healthy and my body is strong because of vitamin A capsules’ in association with the vitamin A cartoon baby mascot (see Figure 1). The same color scheme was used for all materials. Because February was also included as a routine distribution month, the promotional materials will be used beyond August 2001.

TV spot: A new public service announcement TV spot was produced to promote the routine vitamin A supplementation program. The spot features an animated version of the vitamin A cartoon baby mascot, the new jingle developed for the radio spot, and the promotional poster. The 15-second and 30-second versions of the TV spot were aired on channels with nationwide coverage across Indonesia from late July until the end of August.

Radio spot: A new public service announcement radio spot was produced. The new jingle features a familiar song, entitled ‘*Dua Mata Saya*,’ taught to kindergarten children but reworded to include vitamin A campaign messages. The 60-second radio spot was aired throughout August in selected areas (including the urban slums of Jakarta) known to have low vitamin A coverage rates. In addition to the national version produced in *Bahasa Indonesia*, regional versions of the radio spot were produced in *Bahasa Sasak*, *Bahasa Minang*, and *Bahasa Madura*.

Vitamin A radio jingle lyrics

*“Dua mata saya, yang sehat selalu,
Karena vitamin A, sehat, kuat tubuhku . . .”*

English translation:
*I have two eyes that are always healthy,
Because of vitamin A, my body is healthy and strong . . .*

Print media: A coordinated set of print materials (banners, posters, brochures, flyers, and stickers) were produced that all feature the vitamin A cartoon baby mascot, the same color scheme, and the key messages about the supplementation program. These supporting materials will be used to promote vitamin A month at the local community level.

Over 5,800 packets of print materials were directly distributed to province health offices, district health offices, and all *Puskesmas* in selected provinces. In addition, materials were directly distributed to over

2,000 health promotion groups throughout the country associated with the *Koalisi Untuk Indonesia Sehat*.

‘Planet Gizi’ children’s TV show: Messages about the importance of vitamin A and the national vitamin A supplementation program were incorporated into episodes of the special children’s TV variety show ‘Planet Gizi’ produced by the *Koalisi Untuk Indonesia Sehat*. The three episodes of this special series were filmed at Taman Mini on July 22 were aired on Friday afternoons during the last week of July and first two weeks of August 2001.

Children’s health fair: A health fair was held at Taman Mini in conjunction with the taping of the ‘*Planet Gizi*’ TV shows. HKI sponsored an information booth about the national vitamin A supplementation program and organized a program of educational games and activities for children and parents that included a quiz show, a vitamin A mascot coloring contest, a vitamin A jingle singing contest, etc.

Press conference: The national vitamin A supplementation program was one of the topics featured at the July 27 press conference organized by the *Koalisi Untuk Indonesia Sehat* in conjunction with *Hari Anak Nasional* (National Children’s Day).

Conclusions and recommendations

- Ongoing promotional activities are essential for maintaining public awareness about the national vitamin A distribution months and increasing demand for vitamin A supplementation, especially for the newest target group of children aged 6-11 months.
- More attention should be given to the vitamin A capsule procurement and distribution systems to ensure that vitamin A capsule supplies do not become a limiting factor in the near future as governmental decentralization proceeds and new roles and responsibilities for implementing the vitamin A program are established at the central, provincial, and district health office levels.



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