



HEALTHY MOTHERS HEALTHY BABIES CONSORTIUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the support and encouragement of our donors in 2021: Kirk Humanitarian, who enabled the establishment of the Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB) Consortium, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and the Vitamin Angels Alliance (VA).



We would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by the members of the HMHB Steering Committee. The [Steering Committee](#) provides direction, guidance, and advice to the Secretariat of the HMHB Consortium and is composed of the following renowned experts:

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More information on HMHB's [governance framework](#) and [membership](#) can be found on the HMHB website.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 2021 Year of Action on Nutrition, the Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB) Consortium advanced a compelling and evidence-driven new agenda on the transformative potential of multiple micronutrient supplementation (MMS) with clear and measurable achievements. The inclusion of MMS in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Essential Medicine's List (EML) constituted a key milestone and a significant step forward in achieving the Consortium's mission to accelerate the availability of MMS to millions of mothers in vulnerable communities worldwide.

Moreover, by building upon the global focus on gender equity and women's nutrition in the UN Food Systems (UN-FS) and Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summits, the Consortium broadened its reach and advocated for MMS and maternal nutrition prioritization with relevant international health audiences.

With a growing membership, broader reach, and its ABC approach: Advocacy; Brokering Knowledge and Convening, the Consortium unifies and amplifies the voices of individual organizations, aligns them around a common evidence-driven agenda, convenes experts around technical topics to build consensus, and develops and disseminates resources and knowledge.

A key focus of the Consortium's efforts in 2021 was to advocate with global decision makers to commit to and invest in the scale up of MMS through the development and dissemination of evidence-based knowledge, expert guidance, and briefings.

Building on considerable groundwork established in 2021, the Consortium looks forward to another capstone year in 2022 and increasing its focus and support to national-level stakeholders and decision-makers.



HMHB is grateful to all its members, donors and partners for their support in 2021 and looks forward to advancing our collective vision to support more women and their babies in 2022.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Launching the Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies (HMHB) Consortium

HMHB originated from The Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Goalkeepers Accelerator, hosted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) in 2019. The Accelerator brought together eleven partners from the private sector, academia, civil society, and the United Nations (UN), who committed nearly USD 50 million to accelerate the adoption and implementation of MMS\* in lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Specific achievements of the Accelerator Partners in 2021 are mentioned in the text box: Accelerator Achievements.

Building on this momentum, HMHB was launched on 10 March 2021 to bring together global and national stakeholders to improve maternal nutrition, specifically through the effective use of affordable MMS during pregnancy for women in vulnerable communities worldwide..



\*MMS refers to the formula used in the United Nations International Multiple Micronutrient Antenatal Preparation (UNIMMAP).

## 1.2 The 'ABC' Approach

To achieve its vision, HMHB members are working towards creating demand for MMS in high-burden countries; supporting the sustainable supply of high-quality, affordable MMS; and ensuring effective and efficient delivery of MMS to those who need it the most. HMHB's spectrum of activities to fulfill this mission falls under three key 'ABC' actions: **Advocacy, Brokering Knowledge** and **Convening**.

HMHB is **advocating** for MMS in global, regional, and national contexts to create an enabling environment for adoption of MMS policies and programs by aligning perspectives through advocacy tools and guidance.

HMHB is **brokering knowledge** to relevant stakeholders by capturing, sharing, and widely disseminating existing and new information on MMS evidence, tools, guidance, and lessons learned as well as other resources.

By **convening** experts on diverse technical topics related to demand, supply and delivery of MMS or related maternal nutrition fields, HMHB is creating consensus and guiding collective action on emerging issues.

### 1.3 A Summary of HMHB in Action

In the ‘Year of Action on Nutrition’, HMHB advocated for MMS, bringing maternal nutrition into sharp focus by leveraging key international moments in tandem with major communications outreach.

A timely article published in advance of N4G in Devex, with an unprecedented readership crossing 10,000, positioned MMS as one of the best investments towards human and economic capital gains.

Following the successful inclusion of MMS in WHO’s EML, HMHB provided a range of advocacy tools and knowledge resources in response to gaps in the maternal nutrition community. These include commitment-making guides on maternal nutrition and MMS, an Advocacy Brief on MMS in EML for countries, a knowledge hub, and a series

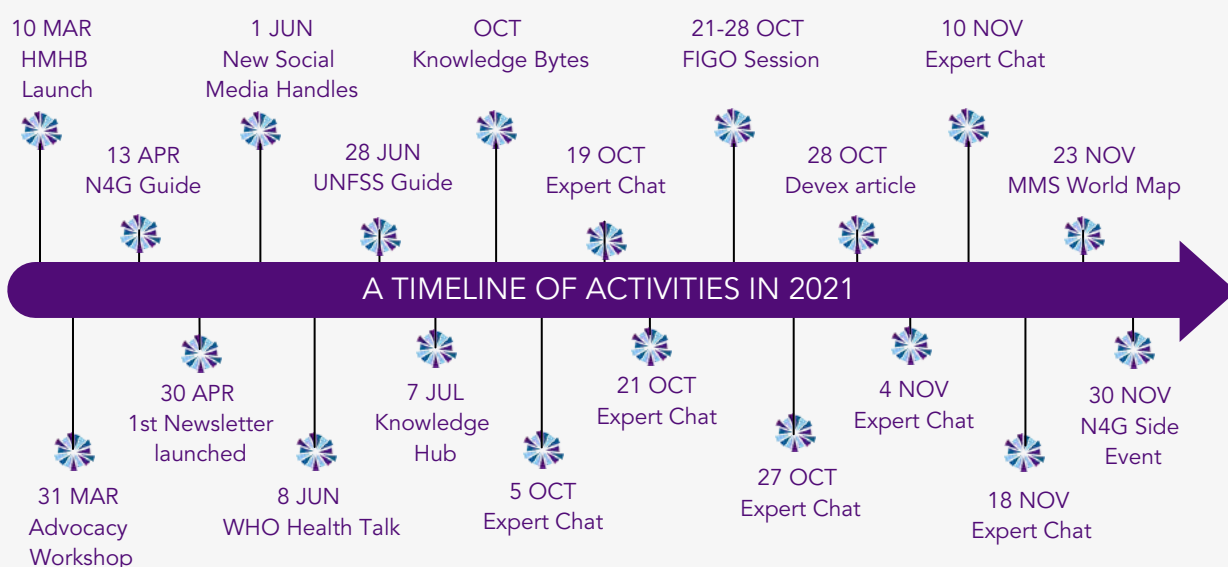
of in-depth ‘expert chats’ on MMS.

The Micronutrient Forum (MNF) is proud to take on the role of Secretariat for HMHB, supported by Kirk Humanitarian, Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and Vitamin Angels Alliance.

At the beginning of 2021, the Consortium established its governance structure and strategic framework, which was endorsed by the HMHB Steering Committee, composed of renowned nutrition and maternal health experts reflecting the diversity of expertise required to drive the HMHB agenda.

Through its members, which currently include over 80 individuals and organizations across the world, HMHB brings together a range of expertise to fulfill its mission. Organizations and individuals that support the HMHB strategic objectives are invited to join our growing membership [here](#).

This report highlights key actions taken by the HMHB Secretariat, in collaboration with HMHB members, during the first year since its inception and the doors they have opened for critical steps in the coming year towards fulfilling HMHB’s mission.



# ACCELERATOR ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2021, the 11 partners of the HMHB Goalkeepers Accelerator continued to deliver on their collective commitment made in 2019 through demand creation, supply, and effective delivery of MMS.

## Demand

Accelerator partners advocated for policies and investments in UNIMMAP-MMS (MMS) at the global and country levels. UNICEF supported Mexico, 24 Eastern and Southern African and 8 South Asian countries whereas Vitamin Angels (VA) supported Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Nigeria, Mexico, and South Africa. Kirk Humanitarian (KH) funded sponsored symposia at the 2020 Connected Conference, the establishment of the HMHB Consortium, the development of a report on maternal nutrition in India, as well as global advocacy undertaken by Bread for the World Institute and the Stronger Foundations for Nutrition. The Eleanor Crook Foundation (ECF) supported the 'Nourish the Future' proposal to the US Government, which included MMS. DSM advocated for the launch of MMS in retail. UNICEF incorporated MMS into country GAP wasting plans, finalized an MMS monitoring and learning plan. Nutrition International (NI) updated and disseminated its MMS Cost Benefit Tool.

## Supply

In Bangladesh, a locally produced MMS was launched, supported by ClIFF, Social Marketing Company (SMC), and SAL. In Indonesia, KH identified a manufacturer to build capacity for local MMS supply. DSM accelerated efforts to supply high-quality, cost-effective MMS out of Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil, and South

Africa. In Ethiopia, UNICEF assessed supply readiness, a market model and technical feasibility of local MMS manufacturing, with ECF and SAL. UNICEF introduced a new, MMS 30-count blister pack and 100-count bottle design and developed several MMS supply tools with SAL. SAL completed supply readiness assessments in 21 countries, shortlisted 13 products from 7 countries for stability testing and developed quality control protocols. KH worked with suppliers to produce a high-quality, affordable, halal-certified MMS and donated 6.4 million bottles to qualified grantees, including 638,000 bottles to VA, for distribution to pregnant women.

## Delivery

Partners invested in tools and implementation research (IR) for effective delivery of MMS through public or market systems. KH funded IR done by John Hopkins and Harvard Universities, VA, and SAL. VA collaborated with partners in Haiti and Indonesia. UNICEF and SAL worked in Tanzania, Madagascar, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and more recently in Ethiopia and the Philippines. 'FullCare' MMS has been distributed to the 12,000 Blue, Green, Pink and Gold Star pharmacies network of SMC in Bangladesh. NYAS published a systematic review on interventions to increase adherence to MMS and UNICEF finalized global maternal nutrition program guidance which includes MMS and its use in emergencies. In Bangladesh, ClIFF and SAL supported SMC and GAIN to conduct formative research and provided training to SMC's staff. In 2022, Accelerator partners are aiming to scale up and consolidate their activities.

# ADVOCACY

Historically, collective efforts within the global development sector have been directed largely to child nutrition. The year 2021 offered an opportunity to drive new nutrition commitments, and investments, specifically targeting women at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in September and the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in December.

HMHB has spotlighted maternal nutrition and MMS during the Year of Action on Nutrition within the larger context of women’s nutrition and equity agenda, particularly in the face of rising challenges due to COVID-19, calling for increased investments and urgent action. More concretely, HMHB has provided critical resources to support and equip maternal nutrition advocates at key global moments.

## 2.1 Elevating Women and Maternal Nutrition in the Year of Action on Nutrition

To encourage global leaders and governments to make commitments focused on women and maternal nutrition, two key events were organized in advance of UNFSS and N4G by MNF and HMHB.

The WHO Health Talk held on 8 June 2021 titled Women Nutrition: Resilience and Recovery on the Road to 2030, focused on building women’s health and resilience across food and health systems. Through the voices of inspiring speakers, the session urged new and SMART commitments and highlighted evidence-based approaches to women’s nutrition, including MMS, prioritizing it within the broader food systems agenda of UNFSS, captured in the Event Brief.



**Micronutrient FORUM** **HEALTHY MOTHERS HEALTHY BABIES**

**REGISTER NOW**  
<https://hmhbconsortium.org/registration>

Food Systems Summit Dialogues  
 Health Talk

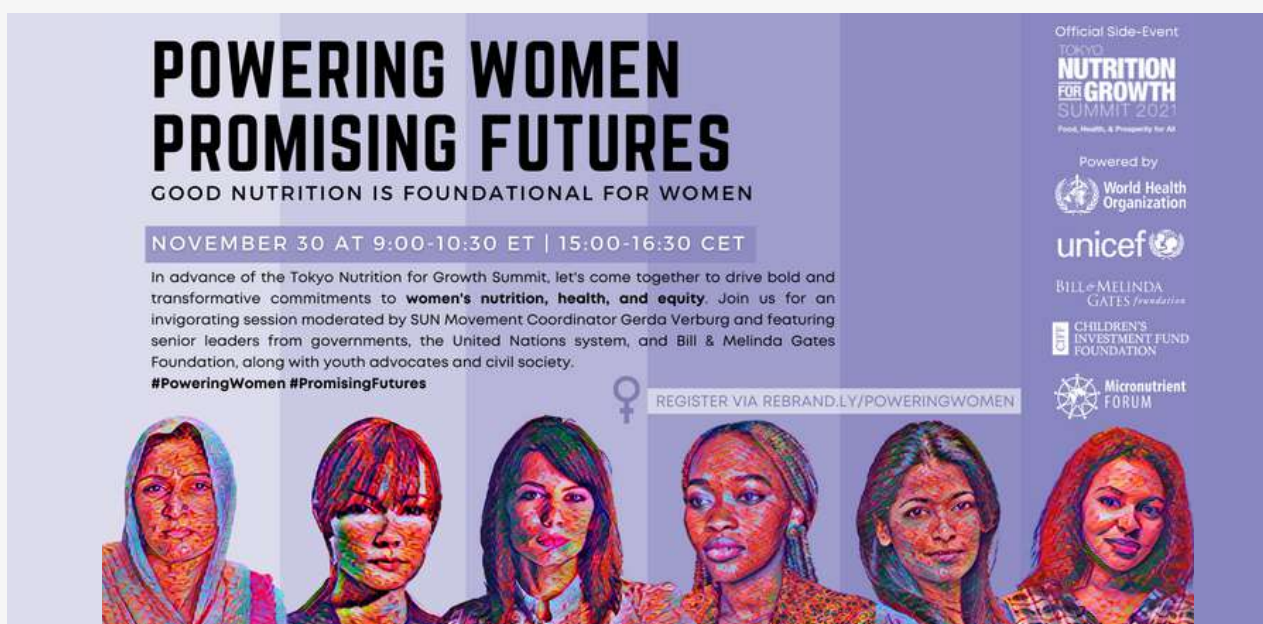
**WOMEN NUTRITION**  
**Resilience and Recovery**  
**on the Road to 2030**

**PANEL**

- MRS. AISHA MUHAMMADU BUHARI, First Lady, Nigeria
- CHERRIE ATILANO AGREA-ADI, Philippines
- JESSICA FANZO, Johns Hopkins University
- SAXXIA OSENDARP, Micronutrient Forum
- NIDI NIWUMELI, AJCE Foods
- MICHAEL OJO GAIN, Nigeria
- JEMIMAH IYUKI, IFPRI
- ANNA LARTEY, University of Ghana
- MARTI VAN LERE, Micronutrient Forum

TUESDAY | 8 JUNE 2021 | 14:00-15:00 CET





A side-event organized on 30 November 2021, called, Powering Women-Promising Futures, spotlighted women’s nutrition, health, and equity at N4G, captured in this [video](#). High-level leaders from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Peru, Burkina Faso, the UN, civil society, gender, and nutrition experts, as well as youth advocates came together to advance the women and maternal nutrition agenda in 2022.

This event showcased commitments for women’s nutrition with several mentions of the importance of scaling investment in MMS during pregnancy. Over 50 commitments highlighted women and maternal nutrition specifically and three specified MMS. HMHB also publicly presented its commitment during the event.

## 2.2 A Milestone: MMS included in WHO Essential Medicine List

A [major policy win](#) for scaling up MMS in LMIC contexts was its inclusion in the 22nd World Health Organization’s Model Essential Medicines List (EML) in October.

This followed a [joint application](#) submitted by MNF and the Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation – Technical Advisory Group (MMS-TAG) at the New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) in 2020.

In addition, multiple country authorities and global expert organizations in the field of maternal and child nutrition wrote letters in support of this application.

The inclusion of MMS in WHO’s EML has created an enabling environment to raise MMS high on government and donor agendas, providing the necessary impetus to countries to include it in their national EMLs and subsequently integrate it into existing antenatal care programs.

Hence, the HMHB secretariat and the NYAS developed an [Advocacy Brief and Frequently Asked Questions](#) document (FAQ). This document aims to support nutrition and public health professionals to advocate for the inclusion of MMS on national EMLs and has been disseminated via the HMHB website, the NYAS website, and UNICEF channels.

## 2.3 Highlighting Potential Human Capital Gains of MMS in Devex Article

If MMS were to reach 90% of pregnant women in 132 LMICs, it would result in an additional 5 million educational years and 18.1 billion USD in cumulative lifetime earnings for their babies.

This compelling argument in an article titled 'Hidden Hunger and its Hidden Cost', underscored MMS as one of the best buys in global development leading to enormous human capital gains.

Authored by Dr. Hema Divakar, Dr. Anna Lartey, and Dr. Saskia Osendarp and published by HMHB in Devex in October 2021, this article received more than 10,000 views, over three times the average number for a sponsored article, within three months of publication.

This wide outreach brought attention to MMS as a viable, cost-effective, high-impact intervention to improve maternal nutrition in many countries, beyond emergency settings.

## 2.4 Driving Global Commitments for Women and Maternal Nutrition in the Year of Action on Nutrition

To equip advocates to generate concrete financial, policy, and programmatic commitments for maternal nutrition and MMS, HMHB produced two illustrative commitment-making guides.

The UN-FSS commitment-making guide brought attention to women's multiple roles as food producers and caregivers within food systems. This message was reinforced in the N4G commitment-making guide with recommendations on scaling MMS in the context of implementation research.

These guides were circulated through the network of International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN) channels and listed as a resource in the common advocacy plan for N4G constituency Task Force members.

MNF submitted a policy commitment on behalf of HMHB for the N4G Summit. This commitment aims to grow the HMHB membership base and the number of countries where organizations and individuals are working toward the implementation of MMS.

Over 50 N4G commitments specifically highlighted women and maternal nutrition





## HMHB COMMITMENT AT N4G

### THE FULL EXPRESSION OF THE COMMITMENT

The Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Consortium, hosted by the Micronutrient Forum, commits to grow its membership to no less than 300 members and to establish focal points and liaison entities for Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation in at least 50 countries by 2025.

Focal points and liaison entities (representative or organization) cover anyone working in the field of MMS; for example, policy advocacy, implementation research, demonstration pilots, and building supply chain capacity.

The Consortium's Goal to grow in reach supports the deliberate transition of the distribution of iron-folic acid (IFA) to multiple micronutrient supplements (MMS) in contexts with poor diets, high prevalence of maternal undernutrition, and high levels of adverse pregnancy outcomes, notably stillbirths, babies born with low birth weight or who are small for gestational age by 2025.

The Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Consortium will achieve this goal by developing and implementing a global advocacy agenda, brokering knowledge around technical issues, and convening global and country-level stakeholders to develop consensus on issues impeding progress. The Consortium aims to build on implementation research to better understand and enhance the feasibility, acceptability, and compliance of introducing MMS.

# BROKERING KNOWLEDGE

Building understanding of the value, cost-effectiveness, and high impact of MMS among decision-makers and implementors is essential for its widespread adoption.

HMHB aimed to address critical knowledge and information gaps among key stakeholders, ranging from the evidence behind the UNIMMAP-MMS formulation to supply chain issues.

Consequently, over the past year, by collecting and curating relevant evidence-based knowledge and information, HMHB has developed and disseminated a range of useful and easily accessible resources, tailored to a broad range of stakeholders.

## 3.1 Building a Knowledge Hub of MMS Resources

In July 2021, HMHB launched a new [Knowledge Hub](#) hosted on the [HMHB website](#), as a single go-to online repository for all information related to MMS, carefully curated for advocates and public health professionals.

This user-friendly Knowledge Hub has over 100 resources that include scientific articles, reports, tools, case studies, policy briefs, and guidance documents. It will continue to be expanded in alignment with HMHB's overall mission and make credible information on maternal nutrition in general, and MMS in particular, easily accessible.

## 3.2 Disseminating Knowledge Bytes on Key Topics related to MMS



HMHB released a special series of 11 short videos called 'Knowledge Bytes' in October 2021. These short, relevant topics on MMS were extracted from a massive reservoir of information to make them more easily accessible to a larger audience. Each video featured a global expert who addressed and explained a specific and important question related to MMS, listed [here](#). The Knowledge Bytes are available on the [HMHB Playlist](#) of MNF's YouTube channel and the [Knowledge Hub](#) and will continue to be expanded and disseminated in 2022.

## 3.3 Mapping MMS-related Activities



In response to the need for an up-to-date inventory of MMS-related work worldwide, HMHB developed an interactive [world map on MMS](#).

Hosted on the HMHB website, it depicts country-wise information on which organizations are conducting or supporting implementation research, impact studies, demonstration pilots, cost-benefit analyses and scaling up activities.

The map also provides hyperlinks to relevant resources. This dynamic map will continuously be updated as relevant information becomes available from partners. It is expected to be a useful tool and guide for policy makers, program partners, implementors and donors interested in introducing, implementing, and scaling MMS across the world.

### 3.4 Amplifying Women's Voices

To complement and strengthen evidence-based advocacy with authentic human-interest stories, HMHB has captured voices of women and mothers from India and Ethiopia to share their lived experience with a broad audience. Three short films, produced in partnership with Sight and Life, shine a light on the complex cultural and social issues affecting women's nutrition during pregnancy and the challenges faced in equitable access to food and antenatal care services. The films remind us that while these challenges are difficult to overcome entirely, making MMS affordable and accessible to pregnant women can help improve their health and allow their babies to thrive. These videos, made with full consent of the women, will be used in conjunction with evidence-based advocacy tools in 2022 for greater impact.



# CONVENING

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented HMHB from organizing in-person convenings including planned meetings with national stakeholders and experts in 2021. Despite these delays, HMHB actively engaged with strategic partners to set up expert convenings for 2022. For instance, the need to create stronger engagement between nutrition and maternal health experts was identified to spark discussions on strengthening maternal nutrition, an area that needs urgent attention within the broader maternal health and antenatal care agenda.

## 4.1 Bringing Women’s Nutrition into Focus at FIGO World Congress



To engage the maternal health field, HMHB presented a scientific session called ‘The unfinished agenda of maternal malnutrition and its impact on birth outcomes’ at the Federation of International Gynecologists and Obstetricians (FIGO) World Conference from 24-28 October 2021.

This session presented evidence on the impact of maternal nutrition interventions including MMS on birth outcomes, and shared country experiences related to the integration of MMS in antenatal care services. .

## 4.2 Convening In-depth Chats with Global Experts on MMS



Since the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited in-person meetings with experts, HMHB used its convening power to organize a series of seven virtual ‘Coffee and Chai Chats’ throughout October and November 2021. These expert chats provided stakeholders across the world the opportunity to engage directly with global experts and ask in-depth questions about MMS. These 30-minute, interactive sessions with 20-25 participants, focused on specific ‘hot’ topics related to MMS, emerging issues as well as country experiences. The full list of speakers, topics and the recordings are available [here](#), which will continue to be promoted to a wider audience in 2022.

# LOOKING AHEAD



The Nutrition Year of Action has been a year of creating opportunities for the future. In 2022, HMHB plans to build upon this momentum with even stronger focus on supporting national advocacy and building national leadership for MMS. The Consortium will work with its members to identify and empower key influencers and champions at the regional and national levels to engage national policy and decision makers. In support of national advocacy efforts, HMHB will work with partners to develop and widely disseminate existing and new advocacy products and knowledge resources tailored to country requirements.

We will continue to find creative ways to interact online with members and stakeholders and respond to their needs. We will involve HMHB members in shaping and fulfilling strategic priorities in 2022 by convening regional workshops and expert meetings if the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic permits. Through global advocacy, 2021 has paved the way with global leaders of governments and donors recognizing the importance of improving maternal nutrition and scaling MMS for overall health and development. Now, 2022 brings many opportunities to support stakeholders in their national advocacy to precipitate concrete action.

This year would not have been possible without all members, donors, and partners.

The HMHB Consortium looks forward to advancing its collective vision to support more women and their babies in 2022.



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