



OPPORTUNITIES *for the* MAJORITY

## Ancalmo: Sprinkles Against Anemia

### Producing Micronutrients Locally to Reduce Anemia

Almost one fifth of children under five in El Salvador are anemic because their diets contain too little iron. In rural areas, that number rises to 25 percent; the disorder extends across Central America. Iron is essential for bodies and minds to develop and resist infections and diseases. Giving children micronutrients such as iron, vitamins and zinc is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways of improving their health. Educating families about good nutrition is key.

A pharmaceutical company in El Salvador is retrofitting its plant with a \$1.1 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank's Opportunities for the Majority Initiative (OMJ) to become the first local producer of powdered micronutrients. Supervised by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Establecimientos Ancalmo S.A. de C.V. will insure a reliable, affordable supply of supplements and reach more children in the Central America.

### Broader Distribution through Easier Access

Inexpensive powdered supplements regularly added to food can reverse anemia and its debilitating, sometimes lifelong, consequences. Supplements are most effective when given to children between six months and two years. Iron drops and syrups work, but taste bad, can stain teeth and upset digestion, and are less popular.

Micronutrient powders (MNPs) are distributed in Central America through public and private nutrition programs but until now no local company manufactured them with required supervision and guarantees. MNPs are shipped from Asia, requiring health authority checks before dispensing. They must be bought in bulk, and are in transit so long that some deteriorate. GAIN pinpointed the lack of a local producer as a major obstacle in preventing wider use of these essential substances in Central America.

### First Central American Micronutrient Producer

ANCALMO is a family-owned pharmaceutical manufacturer in El Salvador with a well-known line of products aimed at reducing malnutrition. It has experience developing new pharmaceuticals and exports almost half of its production to Central American countries. The company will become the first Central American producer of MNPs, called Sprinkles, with a loan from OMJ and a local bank to adapt and expand their plant.

Starting in 2012, ANCALMO will be able to manufacture three million sachets a month, and meet international quality and production standards with technical assistance from GAIN, whose participation was insured thanks to OMJ. Sprinkles are packaged in single doses requiring no measuring, refrigeration or water, so they are easier for people to use and store, and for nutrition programs to distribute.

Getting Sprinkles to families is key; so is getting families to consume them. In addition to the loan to ANCALMO, OMJ is supporting a \$600,000 grant for a vast community education campaign. "Pounds of Love" is an established program that distributes Sprinkles and seeks to end child malnutrition. With extra support, "Pounds of Love" will distribute Sprinkles more widely and work to increase their effectiveness by teaching families about nutrition, healthy lifestyles and childrearing, and early childhood development. Baseline measurements will be taken of Sprinkles' impact on communities in order to measure the program's effectiveness over the next four years.

Beyond El Salvador, ANCALMO can expect to sell to Guyana, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. Governments there have resources to buy and distribute MNPs through nutrition or conditional cash transfer programs. Up to a million children could benefit from locally produced MNPs and ANCALMO could sell 1.4 billion units over the next five years to combat childhood anemia alone. Once ANCALMO has experience producing MNPs for children under five, it will be in a position to manufacture a different formula to reduce anemia in pregnant women and target that population.



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