



# BEST PRACTICE: CMAM SURGE – MENTORING

## Introduction

Concern Worldwide, through the ERNE programme (and in consortium with ACF and COOPI), supports the implementation of the CMAM Surge approach in 216 integrated health centres (IHCs) distributed among 09 Health Districts (HDs) in the Tahoua, Maradi and Tillabéry regions in Niger. ERNE (Enhanced Responses to Nutrition Emergencies) is funded by the European Union (Directorate General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, ECHO). The programme has been operational in Niger since June 2020. The goal of ERNE is, among others, to strengthen the health system and reduce morbidity and mortality related to malnutrition among children under the age of five.

**PHOTO:** Mohamed Roufai, CMAM Surge Technical Specialist (Concern), with Rahila Paraizo, Chief IHC Kuwait, Aissa Issaka and Rahamatou Issa, health workers at IHC Kuwait, on May 6 May 2021 at the Kuwait IHC in the commune of Tahoua, Niger.

In order to scale up this approach in all the health facilities (HF) of the supported HDs, 256 health workers (Directors of Integrated Health Centres and assistants) were trained between 2019 and 2020 on the CMAM Surge approach with funding from ECHO. However, in view of the expansion of health coverage with the creation of HFs and the frequent turnover of health care workers (HCW), it was important to train new HCWs on the CMAM Surge



approach and to ensure the continuous reinforcement of their capacities, taking into account the limited funds available. To do so, an innovative approach called “Mentoring” - which consists in an in-situ training of health workers over a short period of time - was initiated under the lead of the District Health Management Team (DHMT) of Keita with the support of ACF’s CMAM Surge Technical Specialist. This involved trainers spending two days in the health centre to conduct all the theoretical and practical modules for the benefit of the director and his assistant. For the practical modules, the trainers relied on the data and elements available within the IHC itself.

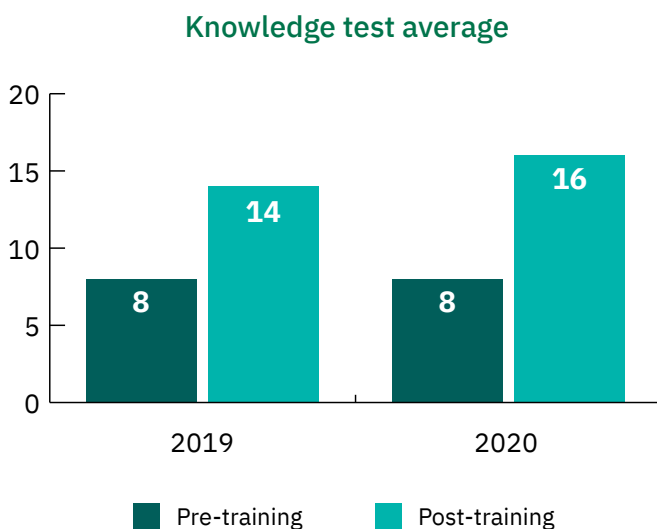
As a prelude to scaling up this mentoring approach in the other HDs supported by the ERNE programme (and indeed for all HDs implementing CMAM Surge, beyond HDs supported by ERNE), this document is an attempt to capitalize on the pilot phase of mentoring in the HD of Keita.

To produce this document, Concern conducted three interviews with the different actors involved in tutoring. These are ACF’s CMAM Surge Technical Specialist, the HD nutrition focal point and the Director of the Akla IHC, who benefited from the mentoring. A literature review on mentoring was also conducted.

## Results

Thanks to this mentoring approach, the Keita Health Department trained 6 health workers in July 2020. The directors of the IHCs were assessed at the beginning of the training on their initial knowledge of the approach. Following the training, this same assessment was used to determine their

level of understanding. The results of the pre-training and post-training tests can be used to assess the effectiveness of this approach. The average score on the pre-training knowledge test was 8/20 and this increased to 16/20 following the training. By comparison, for this same HD which took part in the training workshop held in 2019, the results were 8/20 and 14/20 respectively for the pre and post-training knowledge test. This shows a greater improvement in knowledge as a result of the mentoring approach. Therefore, the mentoring approach offers a higher level of understanding and assimilation than that of a traditional training as evidenced by the results of the pre and post-test results. In addition, it was found at the Akla IHC - whose health care workers have experienced mentoring - that this approach has enabled a complete and rapid implementation of the CMAM Surge approach (the first 6 steps were already achieved in less than a year).



## Success

The main reasons for the success of this mentoring approach, according to the actors who implemented it, are:

- The format of the training. The fact that the training is held in-situ with a limited number of participants allows time to fully deliver all the theoretical and practical training sessions. The practical training session focuses on the actual experience of the IHC itself and this allows for a better assimilation of the theories and concepts of the Surge approach.
- This approach does not require huge financial resources.
- In addition, the amount of time health care workers spend away from the workplace is reduced, which means less impact on the continuity of care services in the IHC.



**PHOTO:** Rahila Paraizo explains the CMAM Surge wall charts. May 6, 2021 at Koweit IHC in the commune of Tahoua, Niger.

## Impact

The mentoring initiative in Keita has brought to light an aspect that was previously neglected in the implementation of CMAM Surge in Niger. This is the importance of the participation of the community. During the training sessions, the Keita IHC team took care to invite a few community leaders to sensitize them on the approach and also on their role in its implementation. This had the effect of encouraging better engagement of the community in the activities, particularly the Surge actions of the health facility. For example, at the Akla IHC that Concern visited as part of this study, we noted that the community has already made certain commitments to support the IHC, including the construction of a shed within the IHC compound.

## Constraints

Despite its successes, the implementation of mentoring has faced some challenges. The first constraint was accessibility. As the training took place during the rainy season, some IHCs were very difficult to access due to the nature of the terrain. In the case of Akla, the locality is surrounded by rivers which isolate it after a rain.

The second constraint was the availability of healthcare workers. As the training is held in situ, the healthcare workers have to juggle between the training sessions and their current workload or even emergencies. In order to fully complete the training agenda, the sessions were sometimes extended until late in the evening.

The last constraint identified was the lack of data. Since the practical part of the training is experiential, the lack of usable data for these IHCs was a limitation for this part of the training.

## Lessons learned

- The strong involvement of the communities in the mentoring initiative boosts the implementation process and improves the completion of the steps of the CMAM Surge approach (formalization of commitments for example).
- A higher level of understanding on the part of healthcare workers with mentoring compared to traditional training sessions.
- Mentoring is a more efficient and flexible approach than more traditional training formats, and it requires less financial resources.

## How to further strengthen the mentoring approach

Due to certain constraints encountered, mentoring has some limitations. However, there are avenues for improvement to make it even more effective and more efficient and to overcome the observed constraints:

- Remove the barrier of physical accessibility to the IHCs by conducting the training outside the rainy season.
- Extend the duration of the training to 3 or even 4 days to address the availability of healthcare workers and to improve community participation.
- Combine mentoring with traditional training to bridge the gap between theory and practical learning in the healthcare workers work environment.
- Conduct mentoring as a complement to traditional training to ensure continuous capacity building of healthcare workers.

## Conclusion

Given the results obtained in Keita, mentoring is a solid approach to training health workers as part of the scaling up and sustainability of the CMAM Surge approach. It can also be used as an alternative to traditional training workshops, especially for instances when a small number of workers require training, for refresher training, for areas where the CMAM Surge approach is already being implemented and for areas that face a high turnover of health workers.

Adaptation measures can be taken to overcome the constraints encountered. It is possible to combine the strengths of traditional workshops with mentoring to achieve better performance.

**Tutoring is a solid approach to training health workers in the context of scale-up and sustainability of the CMAM Surge approach.**

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