

ZINC SAVES KIDS PROVES LIFE TRANSFORMING FOR LITTLE BETSY

Five-year old Betsy is the only daughter of Francisco and Vicenta Huaman, who live in the small community of Chullcupampa in the Ayacucho region of Peru. Both from a simple background, Betsy's parents try to give her everything they never had – which reflects on the happy bright-eyed little girl, who is always asking questions and ready to play.

But this was not always the case. When Betsy was almost three, she was diagnosed with micronutrient deficiency. This diagnosis worried her parents greatly, leading them to do everything possible to improve their daughter's health. The staff from the local Huamanguilla Health Centre incorporated Betsy into the multiple micronutrient powder program, implemented in her area, due to the support of UNICEF and IZA. Through this program, Vicenta received multi-micronutrient packets for her daughter over the course of six months, with follow-up by health personnel. Later, Betsy took a six-month break, and then began taking the supplements for another six months.



With this intervention, there was a noticeable difference in Betsy and her health tests show that her micronutrient levels had improved. Visibly happy, Vicenta says “Those little packets gave her a better appetite. Now she eats all of her food! She always says, ‘Mommy, put the vitamins in my food.’”

The joy on Vicenta's face is evident when she describes how much it means to her for her daughter to be healthy and well nourished. “She is now curious and alert. She goes to the community preschool and she's just like the five-year-olds – playful, alert and happy. I think she might even grow up to be a singer...”

Vicenta now participates more actively in her community's health education meetings. “Now I do it to learn more and help the other moms in my community,” she says. Things have also changed in Vicenta's family. Together with her husband, they have learned to take great care in raising Betsy. Now, “We don't argue or fight because that affects our daughter. On the contrary, we give Betsy all of our love so that she will grow up healthy.”