Eliminating Iodine Deficiency in China

In countries where iodized salt consumption is low, such as China, children are at risk of iodine deficiency disorders (IDDs) like goiter. Medical research also shows that IDD can result reduce a child’s IQ level by up to 13 per cent. Studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between children’s performance in school and the incorporation of iodine in their diets.

Working with UNICEF and other partners, the World Bank supported the Chinese government’s National Iodine Deficiency Elimination Program by providing aid for upgrading physical plants for iodized salt production, packaging, and distribution, and by establishing effective quality control in the salt industry. The project also included the training of laboratory staff and the improvement of laboratory facilities.

Since the start of the national program in 1993, goiter rates for children nationwide in China have declined significantly—to below 9 percent from 20 percent in 1995. The decline was initially a result of both distribution of iodine oil capsules and increased consumption of iodized salt. The national average distribution of iodized salt reached 93.9 percent in 1999, compared with 80 percent in 1995.

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Updated: September 2002