

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 26, 1993

TO: All Human Resources Divisions

FROM: Alan Berg AB

EXTENSION: 33433

SUBJECT: New & Noteworthy in Nutrition (No. 20)

Highlights: Important new findings on nutrition effects of cash vs. kind (page 1)... Strong PHN position on inclusion of vitamin A in World Bank projects (Task Managers now have in their hands the capacity to reduce child mortality by 23 percent) (page 2)... New nutrition co-financier (page 7)... Misfiring of a food policy (page 1). Following the opening main items, this issue is organized as follows:

	Page		Page
Fresh Targeting Ideas	3	Operations	7
Also New in Project Design	4	Nutrition and Agriculture	8
New Research Findings with		New in Micronutrients	9
Implications for Bank Operations	5	Worth Noting	10
Infant Feeding	6	Quotable Comments	12

1. The Little Sector That Could. This 20th issue of New & Noteworthy in Nutrition is an excuse for stocktaking, giving cause to review how nutrition has fared in the Bank since the first issue in May 1988. One of the best kept secrets is that the nutrition sector has evolved into a significant growth industry in the Bank. For fiscal years 1993 and '94, there are 18 nutrition operations in the lending program that are either free-standing projects (e.g., Nigeria and Pakistan) or in which nutrition is a main theme (such as Honduras Nutrition and Health, Madagascar Food Security and Nutrition, and Panama Nutrition and Environmental Sanitation). In fiscal years 1988 and '89, there was only one such project. Moreover, the projects under implementation are largely doing well. (The recent Project Completion Report for Indonesia Nutrition and Community Health II shows another nutrition operation that exceeded its targets; see paragraph 24.) This has occurred despite a minuscule staff in nutrition -- BUT a remarkable responsiveness by regional task managers from other disciplines who, intrigued by the importance of nutrition to development, are the ones responsible for this marked turnaround.

2. Bank Theology: Breaking the Faith. When discussing food needs, many Bank economists have for a long time been prescribing "just give cash -- providing food is too much trouble and too costly." And this prescription has carried over as a preference for monetization of food aid. But is it the best answer to greater food consumption? Clearly not, according to an important new study in Bangladesh by the International Food Policy Research Institute. IFPRI's findings from work there on "Food Consumption and Nutrition Effects of Targeted Interventions" are being fed into preparation of a Bank-assisted Bangladesh Nutrition Project; they show that when cash is distributed instead of wheat, the effect on household calorie intake is much lower. From each taka provided as cash transfer, 58 paisa goes to consume more food, while for

wheat the equivalent is 92 paisa. The study, by IFPRI's Akhter Ahmed, also shows that whereas it takes 24 taka (US\$0.63) to assure 1,000 calories through cash payment in the Rural Maintenance Program, it takes only 18 taka in the government's Vulnerable Group Development program with payment in wheat -- even taking into account all distribution costs. (One explanation is that if the recipients were to sell the wheat, they would get a very low price for it. Rice probably would be a different story.) Joachim von Braun, who heads up food consumption and nutrition studies at IFPRI, says the Bangladesh findings are in line with data collected in other countries -- once a second look, prompted by the Bangladesh finding, was taken at inside-household consumption data from IFPRI's work in Egypt and its cash cropping studies in Guatemala and Rwanda. Studies in the U.S. also show food stamps delivering more food to a poor family than an equivalent amount of cash. The bottom line, Dr. von Braun says: "The theology of 'cash equals kind' is outdated."

3. New Bank Position on Vitamin A: Task Managers, Please Take Note. Numerous studies on the connection of vitamin A deficiency to mortality, reported in earlier issues of New & Noteworthy in Nutrition, pointed to an astonishing (the use of the word probably not an overstatement in this case) relationship. But researchers' enthusiasm for vitamin A intervention invited skepticism and so questions, largely methodological, remained. Now these questions have been erased by a definitive mega study recently completed by a sterling team headed by Professors George Beaton of the University of Toronto, one of the earlier skeptics himself, and Reynaldo Martorell of Cornell and presented at the recent annual meeting of the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition (SCN). The bottom line: we can conservatively expect in seriously vitamin A-deficient areas -- and there are many -- the addition of vitamin A will reduce childhood mortality by an average of 23 percent. (Vitamin A intervention has a 98 percent chance of having at least some effect on mortality, a 90 percent chance of getting at least a 10 percent effect, three chances out of five of getting a 20 percent effect, and a one-in-four chance of a 30 percent effect or greater.) We cannot expect to see an impact of vitamin A on general morbidity; vitamin A affects the severity of illness. Other findings: Impact on mortality is not dependent on pharmaceutical doses of vitamin A. Any approach that improves vitamin A status (vitamin A-rich foods, fortified foods, as well as vitamin A capsules) might be equally effective. Among children, the link of vitamin A to mortality is neither age-dependent nor gender-dependent. The PHN Department's new position on all this is that task managers of every appropriate World Bank project (i.e., where vitamin A deficiency exists and the project provides a framework for addressing it) should, when the problem is not being addressed through other actions, try to include a vitamin A intervention. Costs are not inordinate; they can be as low as US\$0.43 a child a year, including delivery costs. An HRO Note on this will be issued shortly and further detail will be provided in Judy McGuire's upcoming best practices paper on micronutrients.

4. Consciousness Raising. Last week the Bank released word it will host a major symposium later this year here on the subject of world hunger. The goal will be to raise consciousness on the urgency of the hunger issue, and Managing Director Sven Sandstrom said he hopes the symposium "will serve as a catalyst to encourage those in other countries to organize similar

events." The intent is to involve policy-makers, NGOs, and others working on the issue. The announcement was contained in a letter to Congressman Tony Hall (head of the recently-killed Select Committee on Hunger of the U.S. House of Representatives -- its demise a disappointment to those concerned about the issue; it had been a highly effective committee) on his 19th day of a water-only fast to draw more attention to world hunger. Main line of questioning from reporters at his press conference last Friday: Why do we need yet another conference? Doesn't the Bank know already what needs to be done about hunger? What are the implications for the Bank's financial commitment to address hunger?

5. "It's the Anthropometry, Stupid!" Followers of President Clinton's economic program (and his April 8th budget submission) will note that two of the very few programs proposed for substantial increases, WIC (Women, Infants, Children) and Head Start, are in large part nutrition programs. And -- the point here -- that the President has emphasized in all his statements that these are investment programs.

Fresh Targeting Ideas

6. Focusing on Newlyweds. In Bangladesh there are so many mal-nourished children, such fragile implementation capacity, and such limited resources that good sense calls for biting off a smaller number than taking on the whole problem. So the community-based program of the new Nutrition Project being developed there will be targeted three ways -- by geography, by age (zero-to-two, instead of the more common zero-to-three) and, in a sub-set of beneficiaries, something totally new, by concentrating resources on families with newly married women. The rationale is that behavior of these women will be easier to influence than of that of women with several children. And addressing a mother with her first child will likely affect behavior for the rest of her parenting life. So pay-off is greater. The sense is that discrimination in favor of the newlywed, at a stage when the community recognizes her as someone special and entitled to special help, may be acceptable. These assumptions will be tested in the project, with effects on younger women compared in a dozen ways with effects on more experienced mothers.

7. Stemming the Flow. Cheap food in the cities, resulting from consumer food subsidies, may undesirably draw still more of the rural population to already burgeoning urban areas, a consideration that isn't always taken into account by those planning urban subsidy programs. In the design of the Mozambique food subsidy program, eligibility for program benefits in Maputo requires a minimum one-year residence in the capital -- explicitly intended to discourage the rural-to-urban flow.

8. Packaging as a Targeting Device. Sven Sandstrom, at the recent International Development Conference, called for "subsidizing foods which only the very poor are likely to eat," as a good example of needed "self-targeting schemes in which the poor choose to participate, but the better off do not." But what to do when there are no perceived "inferior foods" in the diet of a given country? This does not mean that self-targeting is out of the question,

but creativity is required. In Tunisia, this was achieved by differentiating goods by packaging or by formulating generic products. For example, while the better-off consume considerably more milk than the poor, they dislike buying it in plastic film pouches which require transferring the milk to another container once opened and which do not have the long-life properties of tetrapack cartons. This from Laura Tuck (MNIAG) in CED's "Outreach" newsletter; her full study, "From Universal Food Subsidies to a Self-Targeted Program," will be issued shortly. In New & Noteworthy No. 13, her similar efforts with cooking oil were reported. The better-off prefer it in fancy TV-advertised bottles that identify the type of oil, while the poor are willing to buy a generic product identified only as "cooking oil," and packaged in sometimes greasy containers. The oil is basically the same.

9. Effectiveness and the Leakage Question. The proper standard for judging targeted services and subsidies in nutrition, according to Harold Alderman, PDRPH, may well be not whether they reach only the poor but whether they reach the poor more effectively than other programs. Whatever leakage to the non-needy there may be in nutrition, he writes, it is not likely to be as regressive on a nationwide scale as cross-country studies show about the regressiveness of government spending on health.

10. Fears Unjustified. Individual nutrition status serves as a good criterion for targeting, concludes Margaret Grosh, PRDPH, in her excellent study on targeting, now out as LACTD Regional Study Report No. 21, and recently approved by the Editorial Committee for publication as a Bank book. "Using nutrition status or risk, as determined in pre-existing growth monitoring arrangements," she writes, "is usually a viable and efficient system; indeed it may be the most broadly desirable and replicable system." The logistics of measuring children and distributing benefits do place demands on operational staff of health clinics, she says, but such activity provides a draw to improve health coverage among the poorest and allow cross-over benefits among health services, efforts at behavioral change, and food or income supplements. The report's arithmetic importantly concludes that "the blanket fear that individual assessment mechanisms are too costly or unmanageable is unjustified."

Also New in Project Design

11. Takes Two to Tango. Argentina has never been known for its great social consciousness; its record of public and private social services being among the poorest in Latin America. Discussions about this with Argentine sociologists, psychologists and social workers by an early preparation mission of the MCH and Nutrition Project (scheduled for the Board early in FY94) confirmed that the concept of charity is largely absent in the wealthier Argentine's tradition. And "when extrapolating individual indifference to a national level," said a BTO last year, "it should not be surprising that this is a country without a social policy... Unless the mentality is changed, we cannot be optimistic about the success of any efforts for developing serious social programs there." Social responsibility is not something that can be inculcated by project conditionality, but the project does include a Social Communications component, designed through social marketing techniques, "to

create an awareness... and generate commitment" among both public and private leadership, among others. It also will try to develop "a network of alliances among institutions, service providers, and the community."

12. Mapping for Food Security. The new third Indonesia nutrition operation is planning to develop a series of district (kabupaten)-level maps of rainfall, altitude, land formation and soil conditions superimposed with the known local nutrition deficiencies. Then, assuming a high correlation between geography and what is grown there, typologies will be drawn up that will help predict under what conditions certain forms of malnutrition are likely to appear -- in turn, leading to suggested nutrition interventions for different ecological conditions. A particular value of this approach, according to Australian consultant Peter Heywood who devised it, is that government agriculturalists who generally do not devote much attention to nutrition do understand issues such as rainfall and soil conditions. "In talking their language," he says, "their involvement can be enlisted."

13. AIDS and Breastfeeding. In a first for the Bank, the recently approved Honduras Nutrition and Health Project includes a research study that will try to shed additional light on the possibility of transmission of the HIV virus through breastmilk.

14. Buying Nutrition Care. Pro Salud, one of the private nonprofit groups working in Bolivia under contract with the health system that could be involved in the upcoming Integrated Child Development and Nutrition Project, is committed to better nutrition and other forms of preventive care in a novel way. When a woman pays for an obstetric delivery, she also gets a package of prenatal and postnatal care, including an excellent growth monitoring program, good nutrition counseling, and iron supplementation. In this self-financed program, the quality of care is said to be excellent -- a reflection of considerable attention to both training and supervision.

New Research Findings with Implications for Bank Operations

15. Getting Prices Wrong. There is less leakage of wheat than rice to the non-needy in India's public distribution system, according to a Purdue doctoral thesis by G. Chellaraj, who recently joined LA2HR. He claims that targeting inferior quality rice to the poor in South India has not been successful because such rice makes better dosas and idli, the local grain-based fare -- so all income groups prefer poorer quality rice for these purposes. (Better quality rice is only preferred when consumed as whole grain rice.) In contrast, since some varieties of wheat makes for a better chapatti, it is possible to subsidize other wheat and target the subsidy for it more efficiently to the poor.

16. How Not to Target. Rice is also not a good bet to subsidize in Bangladesh. As rice prices there are lowered, caloric intake might actually decrease among the poor and, conversely, as rice prices rise, caloric consumption increases, according to IFPRI's new study (para 2). The reason for this anomaly: wheat, which more commonly is consumed by the poor, gets

displaced by the much preferred rice as rice prices drop, even though the subsidized rice price is still higher than wheat.

17. Double Jeopardy. Most nutrition and productivity studies focus on the food consumption and/or nutrition status of men and its links to male wage rates. Yet in Sub-Saharan Africa, much of the heavy labor is done by women who have the dual burden of long days in energy-intensive work and long periods of pregnancy and breastfeeding. The combined productive and reproductive workload has special negative effects on women's nutrition status, further exasperated by a high prevalence of anemia. Now data about a World Bank-supported sugarcane production project in Kenya explore the links between women's nutrition status and energy expenditure. Presented by Eileen Kennedy of IFPRI and Peggy Bentley of Johns Hopkins (in a soon-to-be-published book, Health and Nutrition in a Changing Economic Environment), the Kenya data indicate that better nourished women are able and do spend more time and energy on productive activities. This finding importantly suggests that interventions supporting women's nutrition status merit attention from an efficiency as well as equity point of view.

Infant Feeding

18. Keeping Abreast of Legislation. Last month Florida made it legal to breastfeed a baby in public. The naked breast had been forbidden in Florida but not now, so long as there is a baby attached to it. This may not sound like an earth-shaking advance, but apparently this is the first legal measure by a state in the U.S. guaranteeing women the right to breastfeed their children in public. The bill also endorses breastfeeding as the preferred method of nurturing an infant and condemns "the vicious cycle of embarrassment and ignorance and archaic and outdated moral taboos" surrounding the practice.

19. Sweat and Sour. Breastmilk from nursing mothers who have just exercised (and presumably engaged in heavy work, although the study doesn't say so) tends to have a sour taste, and thus infants may drink less of it. The cause, according to researchers Wallace, Inbar and Ernsthausen, writing in a recent issue of Pediatrics: lactic acid remains elevated in the milk for at least 90 minutes after the expenditure of energy. (In response to our query on this, breastfeeding expert Chloe O'Gara of Wellstart reports that in Central America common belief is that exercise heats the milk and hot milk is not good for the baby. So mothers cool themselves off and express and then discard the first drops of milk before feeding.)

20. Chicken or Egg? Do poor feeding practices lead to poor growth among infants? Or is it the other way around? Ellen Piwoz, in her recent doctoral thesis at Johns Hopkins, shows that often it is the lack of an infant's growth that leads to changes of a mother's feeding behavior. Usually for the worse. Exclusive breastfeeding is abandoned before four months, for instance, in favor of adding artificial milks and solid foods, which may be mistakenly perceived as better infant foods.

21. Who's Minding the Stork? Tom Merrick, the Bank's Senior Population Adviser, reported at the 40th anniversary meeting of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in New Delhi that "the neglect of breastfeeding is costly for family planning programs... The hormonal suppression of ovulation associated with exclusive or nearly exclusive breastfeeding, he said, is especially effective in the first six months postpartum, when the efficacy of this approach has been documented at 98-99.6 percent. Since "breastfeeding accounts for about 12-50 percent of fertility suppression in the countries studied..." and "the promotion and support programs developed to enhance breastfeeding practices have been shown to be very effective..." he concludes that "it is appropriate and logical that family planning counselling and support include breastfeeding, LAM, (the Lactational Amenorrhea Method of exclusive or near-exclusive breastfeeding), and the vital complementarity of breastfeeding and family planning."

Operations

22. Projects Approved by the Board Last Quarter: Madagascar Food Security and Nutrition (Task Manager: Qaiser Khan, AF3PH), India ICDS II (Jim Greene, ASTPH), and Honduras Nutrition and Health (Anna Maria Sant'Anna, LA2HR). Scheduled for the Board in the next three months are Guinea Health and Nutrition (Task Manager: Ethna Johnson, AF1PH), Mozambique Food Security (Neeta Sirur, AF6PH), and Philippines Urban Health and Nutrition (Stan Scheyer, ASTPH).

23. New Co-Financing Opportunity. Task Managers for South Asia and East Asia nutrition projects should be alert to co-financing possibilities with the Asian Development Bank, which for the first time is expressing interest in nutrition. Its initial investment in this field could be as co-financier of the Bangladesh Nutrition Project, based on recent participation in the pre-appraisal mission.

24. Lessons from Indonesia Project. The cost to a project of frequent changes in Bank task managers is noted in the recent Project Completion Report of the Indonesia Nutrition and Community Health Project; the impact of Bank supervision was made less effective, the report says. But "overall implementation was satisfactory" and exceeded appraised targets, especially physical targets, in several respects. And the project was completed right on schedule, a noteworthy achievement in light of other projects in Indonesia. Centerpiece of the project was major expansion of *posyandu* community integrated delivery posts. (Part of *posyandu* roots having been planted in the first Bank-supported Indonesia Nutrition Development Project.) The underlying hypothesis was that by making five key interventions simultaneously available at predictable times, say once a month, and at an easily accessible place, their utilization would increase. A sense of the effect of this easier access is reflected in the portion of the youngest children in Indonesian families weighed in this program, which went up from 41 to 77 percent. Communities shoulder a sizable part of the responsibility. (This program is supported by other agencies as well, particularly UNICEF.) "The most important lesson from the project is that *posyandu* works to a considerable extent," the report states. But it "could be made to work even better," inadequate local

supervision cited as a key shortcoming. (A large part of the success of India's Tamil Nadu nutrition project is attributed to good supervision, helped by very low supervisory ratios, and related good training.) Task managers developing nutrition surveillance and early warning systems for other countries can also learn from this PCR how "apparent conceptual simplicity can be misleading." A number of good tips on this are offered. Finally, flexibility built into the project was deemed especially important. (Report available from Vic Paqueo, SA3PH.)

25. Iron-deficiency Curtain. In Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union, there apparently are widespread misconceptions about nutrition among scientists, who for 70 years have been isolated from modern nutrition science -- this according to Elisabet Helsing, WHO Regional Nutrition Adviser for Europe, at her presentation in the Bank in late January. The IEPS of the first Russia Health Project begins to come to grips with needs by including supplements to deal with iron-deficiency anemia, iodine deficiency diseases, vitamin and mineral enrichment of basic foods, behavioral change, and upgrading food-testing laboratories. (Task Managers: Ellen Schaengold and Dov Chernichovsky, for EC3HR.)

26. From the Brink of Famine. The drought crisis in Southern Africa, the worst of the century there, is nearing an end and the response to it by this institution, not exactly famous for its speed on project approval, was unusually swift. And not insignificant -- US\$345 million was committed in quick-disbursing funds to help give a new lease on life to Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Malawi, to avoid skyrocketing prices common during food shortages, IDA financed one third of all maize imports. In Zambia, thanks to the effectiveness of actions taken to ensure sufficient availability of seeds and fertilizer, the 1993 maize harvest is expected to be its third highest. Similarly, inputs provided under an IDA operation, coupled with plentiful and timely rains, appear to have positioned Zimbabwe for a bumper 1993 harvest.

Nutrition and Agriculture

27. AGgravating Household Food Shortages. The about-to-be-published Nutrition Review for Zimbabwe shows that the widespread adoption of hybrid maize (90 percent of maize production nationwide) has benefitted households in some ways -- requiring less food preparation time than sorghum and millet, for instance. But it has left these households more vulnerable to food shortages. The millet and sorghum that have been displaced by maize are more drought-resistant, can be grown on poor soils and can be stored longer than maize... The study also notes that in Zimbabwe hurdles to establishing effective health-agriculture intersectoral cooperation on nutrition issues have been overcome -- so much so that it could be looked to as a model for the continent -- without a national nutrition policy. The job might have been easier had such a policy been in place, but then cooperation dictated by policy drawn up in the abstract might not have become as effective as what gradually evolved as an outgrowth of practical project requirements.

28. Fitting Nutrition into Agriculture Projects. A few recent examples of an increasing trend of nutrition work in Bank-supported agriculture operations: Sao Tome and Principe's Agriculture Privatizing and Smallholder Development Project, approved at the end of last year, finances food distribution -- to allow settlers to feed their families while they develop new plots of land and build houses. Under Ecuador's Rural Development Project resources in a community development fund are earmarked for raising nutrition levels and increasing incomes of women through production of fruits and vegetables. In Chile's Small Farmers' Services Project the primary objective is to transfer technology via farm and home-centered extension, including information on improved diets, cooking methods and kitchen gardens. And in Ghana, improved nutrition is one of the main objectives of the latest National Agricultural Extension Project. Project monitoring and evaluation will assess changes in nutrition status. Outreach services for women include transferring technologies in food processing, use and preservation. And training at agricultural colleges for front-line extensionists will be required to include courses in nutrition and food processing.

29. Further Breakthroughs Elude Food Staples. While most scientists perceive a compelling need for new technological breakthroughs on staple food crops, "few, if any, exist or are on the verge of creation that will dramatically increase the productivity." So reported Bank Vice-President V. Rajagopalan, also Chairman of CGIAR, at the annual Lal Bahadur Shastri Memorial Lecture in New Delhi in February. "This is particularly troubling," he said, "because 10 to 20 years are required for a new technology to make the various transformations from hypothesis to actual production."

New in Micronutrients

30. Iron. A study with global implications is nearing completion in Tanzania (as part of the Bank-supported Health and Nutrition Project there) of a slow-release, one-a-day iron supplement that is expected to have greater absorption and fewer side effects -- the number, frequency and side effects of iron pills being excuses for women's low compliance in popping iron. A unique feature of the test, being carried out by WHO, is that built into the lid of the container of capsules is a small computer that records the day and exact time the container is opened.

31. Salt fortified doubly with iron and iodine is on the market for the first time anywhere, in Tamil Nadu. Also iron-alone fortified salt is on sale and is being used in the large Mid-Day Meals program in that state. A recent study in Tamil Nadu showed that, over a 100-day period, iron-fortified salt had the same effect and improvement in nutrition status as iron tablets -- all this reported by salt technologist Venkatesh Mannar to the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition.

32. Also announced at the SCN meeting was a recent Brazilian study on the use of "Drinking Water as an Iron Carrier to Control Anemia," which found that when ferrous-sulphate is added to a pot of drinking water, the mean hemoglobin of preschool children (anthropometrically healthy but with a high incidence of anemia) increased from 10.6 to 13.0 and the serum ferritin nearly

doubled. Dr. J.E. Dutra de Oliveira and colleagues at Ribeirao Preto Medical School calculated the annual cost per child to be roughly US\$0.15.

33. Iodine. A good example from China on how to translate technical data into a language of effective advocacy: In a March 23 presentation at the Bank, Glen Maberly (Director of Emory University's Center for International Health and head of the Program Against Micronutrient Malnutrition) explained how his Australian/Chinese project established the amount of iodine deficiency in China and how the team's psychologists determined that, on average, iodine deficiency comes at a cost of 10 IQ points. When key people in China heard their country was losing 60 million IQ points a year because of iodine deficiency, they were moved to action. (What education intervention, by the way, is going to affect IQ by 10 points so easily at such an affordable cost?)

34. Vitamin A. There has long been difficulty in fortifying rice because the way rice is cooked -- the intended added nutrients discarded with the water. But now a vitamin A and iron premix powder has been developed that is combined with ground-up broken rice and reformulated to approximate whole rice kernels. These kernels, now packing the extra punch, are then intermingled with real rice. Tests in Brazil show 100 percent retention of the micronutrients after washing the rice and 85 percent retention after cooking. This test of the product known as Ultra Rice, developed by a firm in Oregon, is now being replicated in the Philippines.

35. Infants who are never breastfed or are weaned early can become blind as early as two-to-three months of age because breastmilk, a rich source of vitamin A, is replaced with foods containing no or little vitamin A, according to Barbara Underwood of WHO, at the February Interagency Meeting on Breastfeeding, in Geneva.

36. Simonizing the Micronutrient Initiative. After an unusually long but finally fruitful search, Stephen Simon has been appointed Executive Director of the Micronutrient Initiative, the new collaborative program (IDRC, CIDA, UNDP, UNICEF and the Bank) to help countries analyze their micronutrient problems, develop feasible solutions, and locate resources to support major operational programs. Dr. Simon was Director of CIDA's Health and Population Directorate and Senior Medical Advisor. He has worked extensively in the Subcontinent and in both North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Worth Noting

37. No Longer Walking Up the Down Escalator. Two surprises popped out at last week's PHN seminar on the World Nutrition Situation, by SCN Technical Secretary John Mason. Not only are things looking up in most of the world, Sub-Saharan Africa excluded, but disaggregation of regional data trends shows that nutrition status in some countries is improving nearly fast enough to meet what had seemed to be unrealistic goals of the 1990 Children's Summit and last December's International Conference on Nutrition. What's more, these improvements can't be explained by GNP alone -- some, as in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe seem to be explained by direct nutrition interventions.

The data also confirm that economic growth does not automatically lead to improved nutrition.

38. Refugee Redux, Redux. At the end of 1970, 2.5 million refugees required food and nutrition assistance. Now over 18 million refugees do, and so do an additional 20 million who are displaced in their own countries, according to the representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees at the recent International Conference on Nutrition. The nutrition community generally agrees that the minimum calorie intake per capita in an emergency situation should be about 2,000 calories. In fact, most refugees are programmed to get less than 1,500 calories. Nor is much of the food for refugees adequate in micronutrients. ("Dogs eat better than refugees," claims a recent article in the U.K. by Jeremy Laurence; he says that pet food contains more vitamins than standard refugee rations.) No doubt, this is among the reasons that micronutrient deficiency diseases such as scurvy and pellagra are reappearing on a scale unprecedented since World War II.

39. Insights into LAC Nutrition. Brazil and Mexico together have two thirds of the malnourished children in Latin America. And in Mexico malnutrition is nearly four times greater in the southern than in the northern parts of the country. Other interesting data from the new Poverty and Income Distribution in Latin America: The Story of the 1980s (by Senior HRO Adviser George Psacharopoulos and others; LACTD Regional Study Report No. 27) show that child malnutrition in rural areas is at least 40 percent higher than in urban areas. In Paraguay, the rural rate is double and in Peru, triple... Analysis of the problems of indigenous populations shows that in Bolivia, malnutrition among Indian language-speaking children is twice as high as among Spanish-speaking children; in Guatemala malnutrition is over 40 percent higher for the indigenous population... Overall an estimated 10 million preschool-aged children in the region are moderately or severely malnourished.

40. Let Them Eat Bullets. The final version of 'The World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition' (with its outré cover) from the recent International Conference on Nutrition is now available. The objectives of the recent conference remind that the World Food Conference, also in Rome, pledged "that within a decade no child would go to bed hungry." That was in 1974 -- when the global military budget was less than US\$300 billion, writes Colman McCarthy in The Washington Post. Today, it is US\$900 billion.

41. Shadow Boxing. Responses to the questionnaire in the last New & Noteworthy in Nutrition (No. 19) show that: More emphasis is desired on fresh project design ideas and new research findings relevant to Bank operations and less on routine operations and conferences. (This issue is an effort to try to be responsive.) Readers otherwise generally seem to still prefer a substantively unvarnished quarterly memo of this approximate length, in the current format. One reader, in keeping with Bank fashions, asked for boxes to be included, á la the World Development Report and most everything else that passes our desks these days. That box-addicted reader should know that New & Noteworthy in Nutrition is the ultimate consummation of the tendency towards more boxes in Bank publications. Each paragraph is a box without borders. This memo is nothing but wall-to-wall boxes.

Quotable Comments

42. "The widespread black marketing of donated food in Sarajevo crosses every line of ethnic hate," according to Leslie Gelb in The New York Times. "It shows," he reports, "that Serbs, Croats, and Muslims really can cooperate when they want to."

43. Simon Maxwell (Head of the Food Security Unit at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex) dramatically illustrates to British audiences their capacity to put bread on the table, compared to that of Ethiopians: "The value of a year's worth of work in Ethiopia is achieved in the U.K. by teatime on January 4."

44. From an editorial in The Lancet: "*Homo sapiens*, among the slowest breeding of all animals, has experienced an unprecedented population explosion partly because natural intervals of breastfeeding have been abandoned."

45. Per Pinstrup Andersen, IFPRI's Director-General, reminds us in his most recent presentation at the Bank that "a billion people in the world earn less than a dollar a day."

46. "Only by focusing as much attention on its application as on the technology can we be sure that vitamin A deficiency interventions will be translated into effective and sustainable large-scale action." -- Jim Greene's (ASTHR) keynote address at the mid-March International Vitamin A Consultative Group meeting in Arusha.

47. "Today we are poised to accomplish in the field of education what the green revolution augured for agricultural production. New technologies can significantly reduce helminth infection and micronutrient deficiency among millions of school-age children, thereby eliminating a major obstacle to learning" -- from Beryl Levinger's February 25 seminar at the Bank on Enhancing Investments in Education through Improving the Nutrition & Health of School Children.

48. Festo Kavishe, Managing Director of the Tanzanian Food and Nutrition Center, reports that "when a family planning car was used in support of a micronutrient program, the public was convinced that the micronutrients had population control qualities, and rejected them accordingly."

49. When Julia Tagwireyi, Director of Nutrition for Zimbabwe, asked WHO for help in addressing the hunger related to last year's drought and was told all WHO could offer was a technical expert, she specified that "he be very plump."

Thanks to all staff who contributed items to this issue.