

SRI LANKA

Huge strides in salt iodization help a new generation

Backed by strong political will, the unwavering commitment of the private sector, and a mobilized community, Sri Lanka has made huge strides towards ensuring the availability of iodized salt and eliminating iodine deficiency among its population. Today, close to 90 per cent of Sri Lankan households consume adequately iodized salt, ensuring that a new generation of children receives a smart start in life.

Sri Lanka embarked on its programme to eliminate iodine deficiencies just over a decade ago. A series of steps led to a doubling in the availability of iodized salt at community level – a 1995 law regulated the production and distribution of iodized salt for human consumption, the government strongly supported efforts to enhance public awareness about the problem of iodine deficiency and its solution, creating a demand for iodized salt, and an inter-sectoral committee was created to coordinate and strengthen linkages between the various partners.

The turning point came in 1996 when the Government-managed National Salt Corporation was privatized and split into two salt producing companies – Lanka Salt Limited and Puttalam Salt Limited. In order to gain the commitment of the private salt producers and to ensure long-term sustainability, a cost-sharing

arrangement for machinery and equipment was instituted between UNICEF and the producers. Financial support from the Governments of Canada and Australia, and Kiwanis International, as well as technical support from UNICEF, supported the upgrade of these facilities and ensured their capability to meet all of Sri Lanka's edible salt requirements. Since then, both producers have taken additional measures to further improve quality of iodized salt and to provide inter company technical support. In 1999, Lanka Salt Limited, the largest producer, was awarded the Sri Lanka Standard Institution certificate for the quality of its iodized salt.

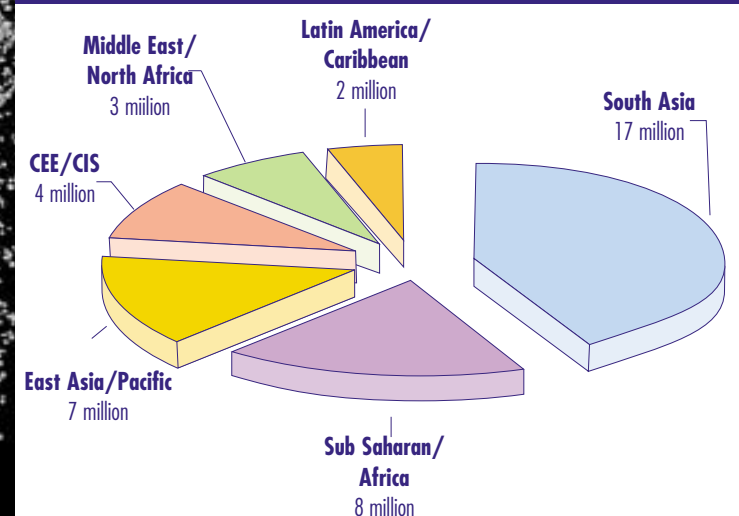
Sri Lanka stands apart in South Asia as a country that has made tremendous progress in a short span of time towards providing a 'smart start' in life for the thousands of infants born each year. This initiative is very much in line with the Government's recognition and focus on the importance of early child development and basic social services. It stands unquestioned that these children will go on to perform better in school and will be more able to perform as productive citizens in Sri Lankan society. The challenge now remains for Sri Lanka to rapidly ensure the same benefits to the small percentage of people who do not have access to iodized salt.

Global Progress on Eliminating Iodine Deficiency

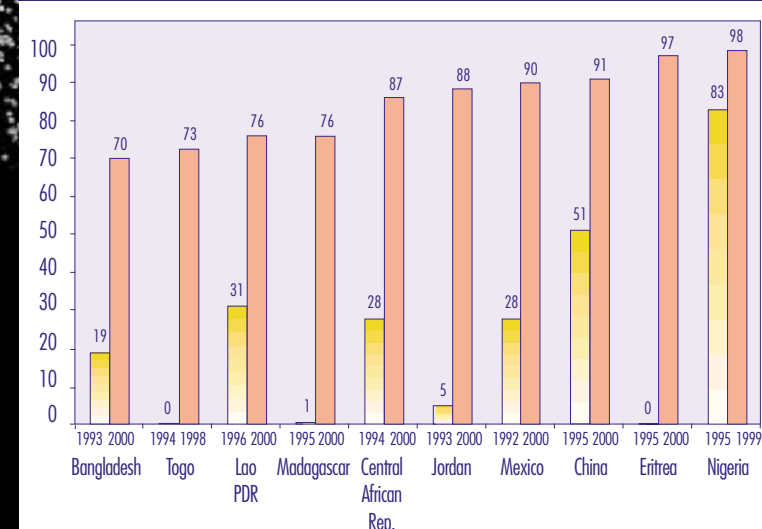
The simple process of iodizing salt can eliminate iodine deficiency.

Salt has been routinely iodized in parts of the industrialized world since the 1920s, but in the developing world, as recently as 1990, fewer than 20 per cent of people had access to iodized salt. Assessments at that time indicated that an estimated 750 million people were affected by goiter, 43 million had brain damage, and 100,000 children were being born each year with cretinism, conditions due to iodine deficiency.

41 MILLION NEWBORNS STILL UNPROTECTED FROM LEARNING DISABILITIES



MAJOR INCREASES IN SOME OF THE POOREST AND MOST POPULOUS COUNTRIES



Much progress has been made

since the historic 1990 World Summit for Children where over 70 Heads of State and Government set a number of ambitious goals for children – including the goal of eliminating iodine deficiency disorders by the year 2000. Today, as a result of pursuing the strategy of Universal Salt Iodization (USI) to ensure the improved iodine intake of populations, over 90 million newborns are protected every year from a significant loss in learning ability. Approximately 70 per cent of all households in the developing world are using iodized salt.

“...as recently as 1990, fewer than 20 per cent of people at risk of iodine deficiency had access to iodized salt...”

Over 90 per cent of the populations in 21 developing countries use adequately iodized salt. It will be important to continuously monitor the iodization of salt as well as the iodine status of the population in order to ensure the sustainability of these national IDD programmes. Among this group are large countries such as China and a number of poorer countries such as Eritrea and Kenya. By iodizing salt, these nations are protecting their populations against the devastating and visible effects of iodine deficiency such as goiter and cretinism. But they are also guarding people against the less visible but equally serious consequences, which include a significantly reduced ability to learn.

In an additional 35 countries, including Indonesia, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Madagascar, and South Africa, more than half of the population is protected from IDD by using iodized salt. Supported by a favourable policy environment and the commitment of salt producers and importers towards USI, it is likely that iodized salt consumption will rapidly increase in these countries.

However, the Summit goal has yet to be reached. While progress has been impressive, and some of the poorest nations have achieved iodized salt coverage, 41 million infants born each year are still unprotected from learning disabilities. Over 30 million of these unprotected infants are born in South and East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Increasing iodized salt coverage in countries where the largest numbers of unprotected infants are born — such as India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines and Bangladesh — is a priority.

There are 35 countries where less than half of the population uses iodized salt. This list includes many countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, where once-adequate salt iodization rates have dropped dramatically, as well as Ethiopia, the Philippines and Haiti: Exploring and addressing the reasons for the low iodization rates is critical.

And lastly, there are 83 countries (including many industrialized countries) for which there is no information on iodized salt consumption. Establishing national level monitoring mechanisms is essential to ensure that the iodine status of populations in these countries is optimal and that IDD does not re-surface.

Today's twin challenge is to introduce salt iodization in all communities where it is not yet available, particularly the most disadvantaged, and to ensure that salt remains iodized forever in populations where iodized salt is in use. Effective surveillance and monitoring systems need to be established to help ensure both appropriate salt quality and adequate individual iodine status.

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CHINA

Tackling the problem of iodine deficiency

China's swift progress towards achieving the World Summit goal universal salt iodization has improved the lives of millions of children and has made a strong impact on the global campaign to eliminate IDD. The country's salt iodization coverage, which stood at 30 per cent in 1995, has reached more than 90 per cent today.

China began to tackle the problem of iodine deficiency in 1993, convening a high-level meeting of its State Council. Participants at this historic meeting launched the Salt Iodization Project, which covers all aspects of salt production and distribution, including legislation, management, production technology, marketing, monitoring and social mobilization. State laws and a number of provincial regulations were enacted to address production and other issues.

With the help of international partners, the country began to modernize a salt industry thousands of years old and gear it to salt iodization. A World Bank loan provided partial funding for a large-

scale upgrade of production facilities and for monitoring IDD. UNICEF supported product monitoring and quality assurance. And recently, the Netherlands-based chemical company

Akzo Nobel, with support from the Government of the Netherlands, agreed to provide technical assistance and management training to producers.

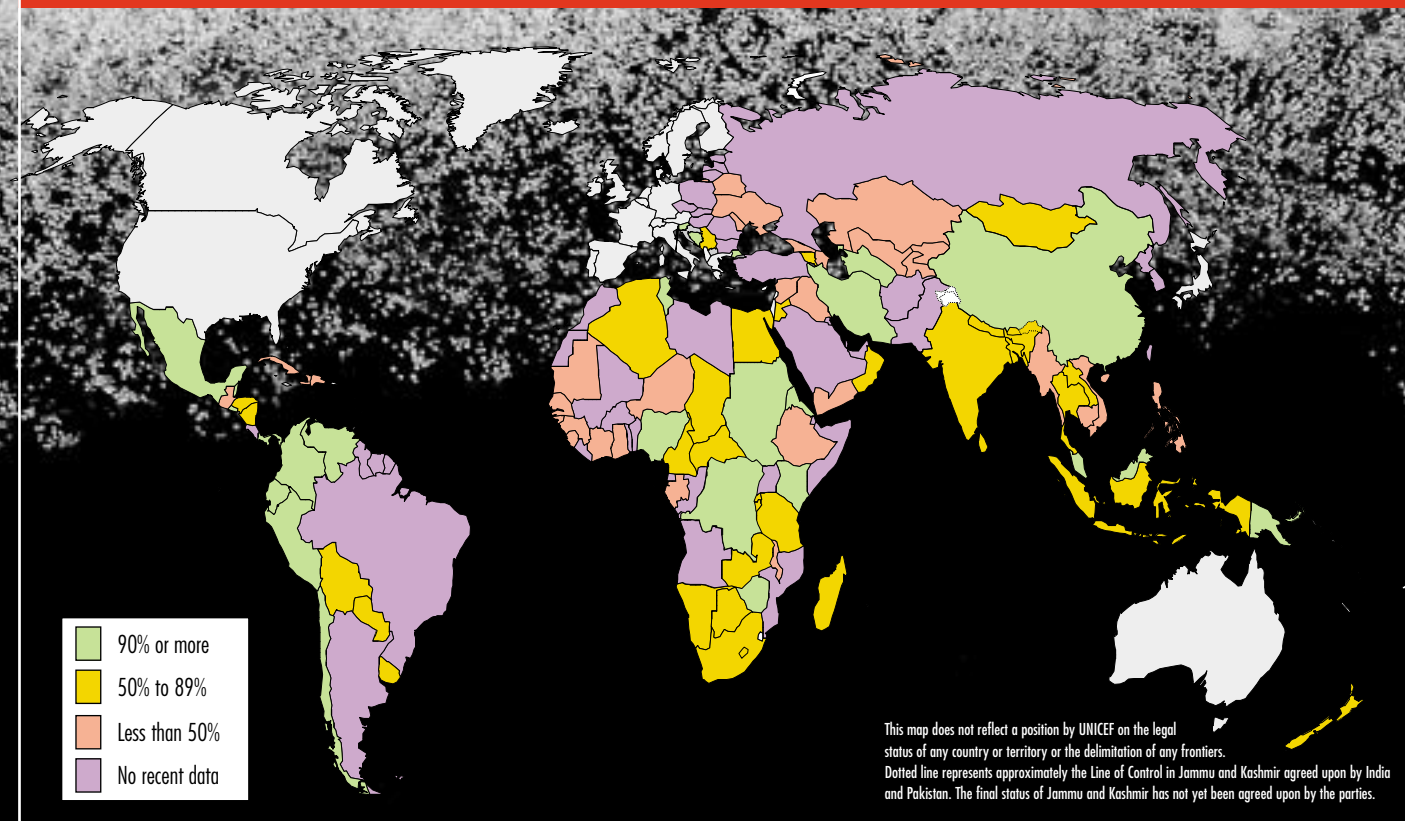
As a result of these efforts well over 1 billion people now enjoy the benefits of iodized salt in China. Yet the country must reach a small percentage of the population that still does not consume the fortified product. Many of these people live in coastal or lakeside areas, where easy access to raw salt cuts down on the demand for iodized salt. In these areas, the Government, together with the National Salt Corporation, plans to step up its campaign to promote the

health benefits of iodized salt and to improve distribution. If successful, the endeavour will help millions more of China's people avoid the terrible consequences of iodine deficiency.



UNICEF/92.578/China/Roger Lemoine

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS CONSUMING IODIZED SALT (2001)



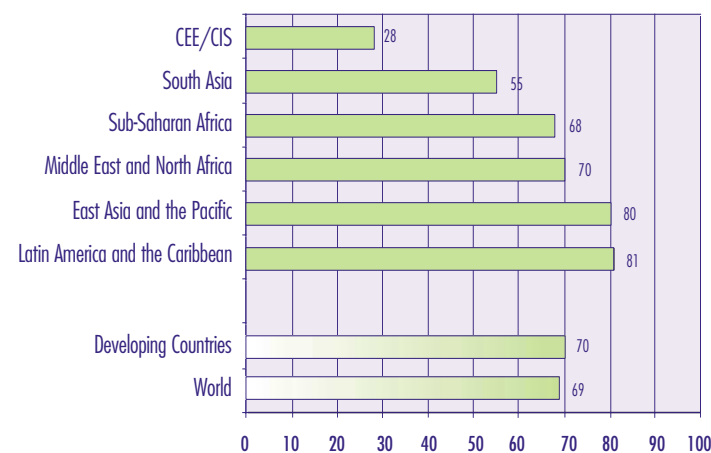
This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Cuba	0	Moldova, Republic Of	33	Indonesia	64	Jordan	88
Trinidad & Tobago	1	Palestine, West Bank & Gaza	37	Botswana	66	Congo, Dem. Rep. Of	90
Guinea	2	Belarus	37	Tanzania	67	Mexico	90
Mauritania	3	Yemen	39	Burundi	68	Venezuela	90
Ukraine	5	Mongolia	68	Croatia	90	Turkmenistan	90
Gambia	8	Lesotho	69	Kenya	91	China	91
Georgia	8	Algeria	69	Colombia	92	Zimbabwe	93
Haiti	11	Bangladesh	70	Peru	93	Iran	94
Guinea Bissau	12	Armenia	70	Sudan	96	Panama	95
Cambodia	14	Togo	73	Eritrea	97	Tunisia	97
Gabon	15	Yugoslavia	73	Tunisia	98	Ecuador	99
Dominican Republic	18	Niger	44	Chile	100	Jamaica	100
Uzbekistan	19	Myanmar	46	Cameroon	84	Saint Kitts & Nevis	100
Kazakhstan	20	Thailand	74	Nicaragua	86	TFYR Macedonia	100
Tajikistan	20	Madagascar	76	Lebanon	87	Sri Lanka	87
Philippines	22	Rwanda	76	Senegal	31		
Sierra Leone	23	Sudan	96				
Kyrgyzstan	27	Eritrea	97				
Ethiopia	28	Tunisia	97				
Ghana	28	Nigeria	98				
Cote d'Ivoire	31	Ecuador	99				
		Chile	100				
		Jamaica	100				
		Saint Kitts & Nevis	100				
		TFYR Macedonia	100				

Source: UNICEF field offices, DHS, MICS (1997-2000)

SIGNIFICANT GAINS

Iodized salt consumption increases in most regions



Source: UNICEF (1997-2000)