

Bridging science and programs: iodine highlights from the 2014 Micronutrient Forum

Source: www.micronutrientforum.org

The 3rd Micronutrient Forum Global Conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 2–6 June 2014 and marked the revival of the Micronutrient Forum. The meeting brought together an estimated 1,000 leading nutrition, food security, global health, and sustainable agriculture experts and practitioners from all over the world.

organizations presenting at the conference included the United Nations World Food Program, the World Bank, UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, MI, GAIN, and WHO.

ICCIDD Global Network (GN) had a strong presence at the Forum, taking the lead in several well-attended sessions.

The first, coordinated by Dr. Roland Kupka, Senior Advisor on Micronutrients at UNICEF and ICCIDD GN Board Director, focused on optimizing iodine status in the context of salt reduction strategies. The second, coordinated by Prof. Michael Zimmermann, Executive Director of the ICCIDD GN, examined recent evidence on iodine interventions from randomized controlled trials. ICCIDD GN, with support from the Micronutrient Initiative, also sponsored a symposium dedicated to two decades of progress against

IDD in Africa, which examined how science and policy have been used to build sustainable nationally-owned programs. Regional progress and challenges across Africa were highlighted in presentations by the three ICCIDD GN Regional Coordinators in Africa, Dr. Vincent Assey, Dr. Roland Kupka and Prof. Pieter Jooste. Greg Garrett, Director of Mass Fortification at the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) highlighted the importance of private-public partnerships in salt

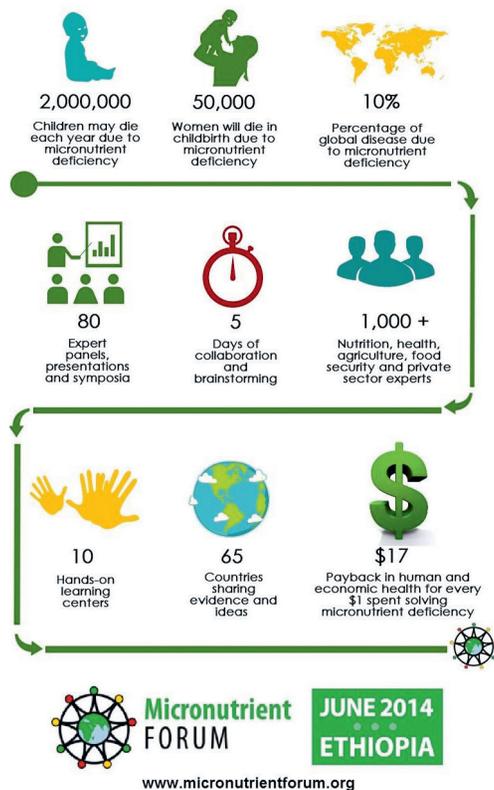
iodization programs. In other places, nutrition hasn't been given due attention in Ethiopia until recently," he explained. "As of the past few years, both at the governmental and the administrative level, we are working alongside the implementation of the national nutrition programs. We are already noticing a lot of changes in terms of reducing problems related to malnutrition."

Between 2005 and 2010, only 15–20% of households in Ethiopia were using adequately iodized salt, about a third of all school-age children living in endemic regions had goiter, and the national median urinary iodine concentration (MUIC) was 24.5 µg/L (IDD Newsletter, May 2014). Since the introduction of mandatory salt iodization in 2011, the country's salt supply has changed dramatically. Ethiopia has successfully developed new production sites, and salt processors have made great progress in increasing the supply of adequately iodized salt to the population.

Abstracts, presentations, and posters from the Micronutrient Forum Global Conference in Ethiopia will be made available on the organizer's website: www.micronutrientforum.org/events/outcomes. The next Micronutrient Forum will take place in 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.

About the Micronutrient Forum

The Micronutrient Forum is a consultative group, representing a cross-sector approach with stakeholders from nutrition, health, agriculture, social protection, food security, and the private sector. It brings together the most exciting and current research and programming on nutrition, with the focus on micronutrients, to provide an arena for the best evidence-based approach for programming.



An infographic promoting the June 2014 event

The theme of this year's conference, "Bridging Discovery and Delivery" was driven by the need to approach micronutrient malnutrition differently than in the past by strengthening the link between research, policy, and practice. Global agencies and

iodization programs.

Amha Kebede, Director General of the Ethiopian Public Health Institute, believes that choosing Ethiopia to host the forum was apt, since its aim was to raise awareness and advocate for nutrition. "Like in many