

# A state-level salt iodization coalition achieves success in Bihar, India

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Bihar, one of the most populous states in India, has recently reported one of the highest coverages of iodized salt in the country: 93.6% according to the 2014 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) report (Figure 1). The USI success story in Bihar is even more remarkable considering that, in all previous surveys, Bihar had always ranked in the bottom half among all states as far as iodized salt coverage was concerned. The key role in the USI success story of Bihar was played by the State USI Coalition, established in 2012, and the advocacy group of the salt traders of Bihar, better known under the name of Iodized Namak Apoortikarta Kalyan Sangh (INAKS).

The state USI coalition in Bihar was formed as part of ICCIDD's (Indian Office of the Iodine Global Network) strategy to emulate at state level the success story of the National Coalition for Sustained Optimal Iodine Intake (NCSOII). Along with Bihar, state level USI coalitions were also formed in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Odisha – states traditionally associated with endemic iodine deficiency. The key objective of the state USI coalition was to provide a common platform to bring together government departments, development agencies, salt industry, civil society, and academic institutions, and to bring about harmonization and synergy of the state IDD elimination plan.

Since its inception, the Bihar state USI coalition had organized several successful meetings with active participation of senior government representatives and other key stakeholders (*Box 1*).

## The National IDD Control Program (NIDCCP) State Level Workshop and Training Program held in Patna, Bihar on 28–30th June 2017

A state level workshop-cum-training program was conducted by the State IDD Coalition, National IDD Control Program (NIDCCP), Bihar state at the Patliputra Continental Hotel in Patna. The workshop was inaugurated by Mr. Sanjaya Kumar Singh, Additional Executive Director, State Health Society, Bihar. He spoke about the risk of insufficient iodine intake and that the program was striving to encourage and promote the availability and consumption of adequately iodized salt in households.

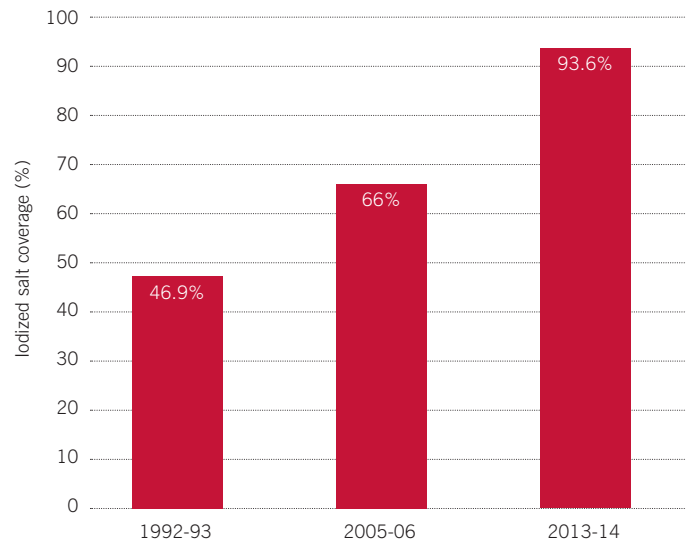
Dr. M. K. Sinha, State Program Officer, NIDCCP, Government of Bihar, presented a brief outline of the purpose of the workshop. Dr. Shivani Dar, Nutrition Officer, UNICEF, talked about strengthening the supply and demand sides by providing technical support, economic and social incentives to salt producers/traders, and also by taking into consideration the community, perception, media involvement, and educational activities.

Dr. Rashmi Singh, Professor and Head, Department of Community Medicine, Patna Medical College Hospital (PMCH) highlighted the involvement of the college in strengthening the Micronutrient Program of the Government of Bihar since 2013. Evidence from a study conducted in Tirhut district by Dr. Singh's Department showed that the number of households consuming iodized salt was significantly higher when the salt was distributed through the Public Distribution System (PDS) as compared to other methods (86% vs. 55%).

Mr. J. K. Singh, Master Trainer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) spoke discussed the FSSAI regulations applicable to iodizing salt. Mr. Rajendra Kumar Mishra, General Secretary, INAKS, shared his experience related to the implementation of the Tirhut model, its challenges as well as opportunities for scaling it up through the PDS system.

The success of the USI Coalition in Bihar should also be credited to the advocacy role played by the salt traders' association, INAKS. Under the able and dynamic leadership of Mr. R K Mishra, INAKS has been a tireless supporter of strengthening the IDD program in the state. INAKS, with technical support from ICCIDD and UNICEF, has been helping the salt wholesalers and retailers in the state to source adequately iodized salt from the salt producing centers across the country. INAKS has established a salt iodine monitoring laboratory to test the iodine content of salt in the state. It has also closely collaborated with and has received technical support by ICCIDD on a continuous basis. Following initial assistance establishing the iodine monitoring laboratory, the ICCIDD has also provided refresher training to INAKS laboratory staff (Box 2).

**FIGURE 1 Iodized salt coverage trends in Bihar state of India**



**A Laboratory Training session conducted by the IGN/ICCIDD for laboratory personnel from INAKS, Bihar, August 2017**

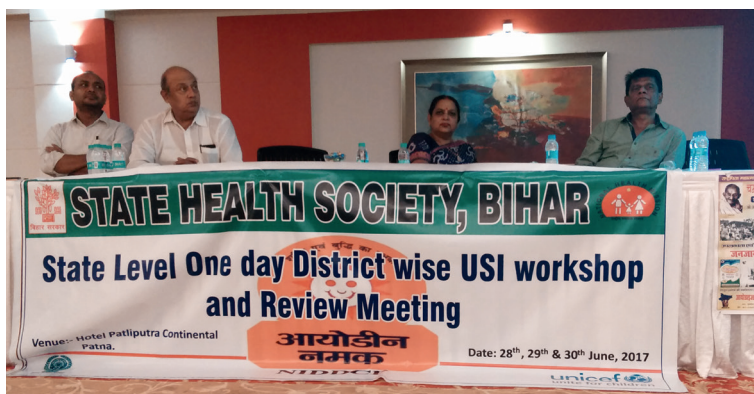
Iodized Namak Apoortikarta Kalyan Sangh (INAKS) is a voluntary organization under Patna Society Registration Act 21, 1860. INAKS is helping the National IDD Control Program (NIDDCP) of the State Government of Bihar and has been working for the past 13 years to prevent and control of iodine deficiency disorders.

With technical help from UNICEF and the ICCIDD, INAKS has undertaken awareness campaigns dedicated to iodine deficiency and salt iodization. The key highlights of INAKS activities over the past several years have been: 1) establishing an iodine monitoring laboratory, 2) advocating for iodized salt in the PDS, including a pilot in six tehsils of Trihut division of Bihar, and 3) coordinating with the Ministry of Railways and the Salt Commissioner's Office to strengthen the supply chain monitoring of salt iodine levels.

A two day training session was conducted by Mr. Rajesh Lal, Senior Laboratory Technician, ICCIDD on laboratory procedures for estimating iodine concentrations in salt using a titration method. The trainee was Mr. Abhishek Kumar who is currently working as the laboratory in charge of (INAKS) located in Patna, Bihar.



Mr. Rajesh Lal (ICCIDD) with Mr. Abhishek Kumar (INAKS) during the laboratory training.



Inaugural session of the workshop