

ELIMINATION OF IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDERS THROUGH UNIVERSAL SALT IODIZATION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



**Progress report
submitted to USAID
under PBA SC/2004/0583-01**

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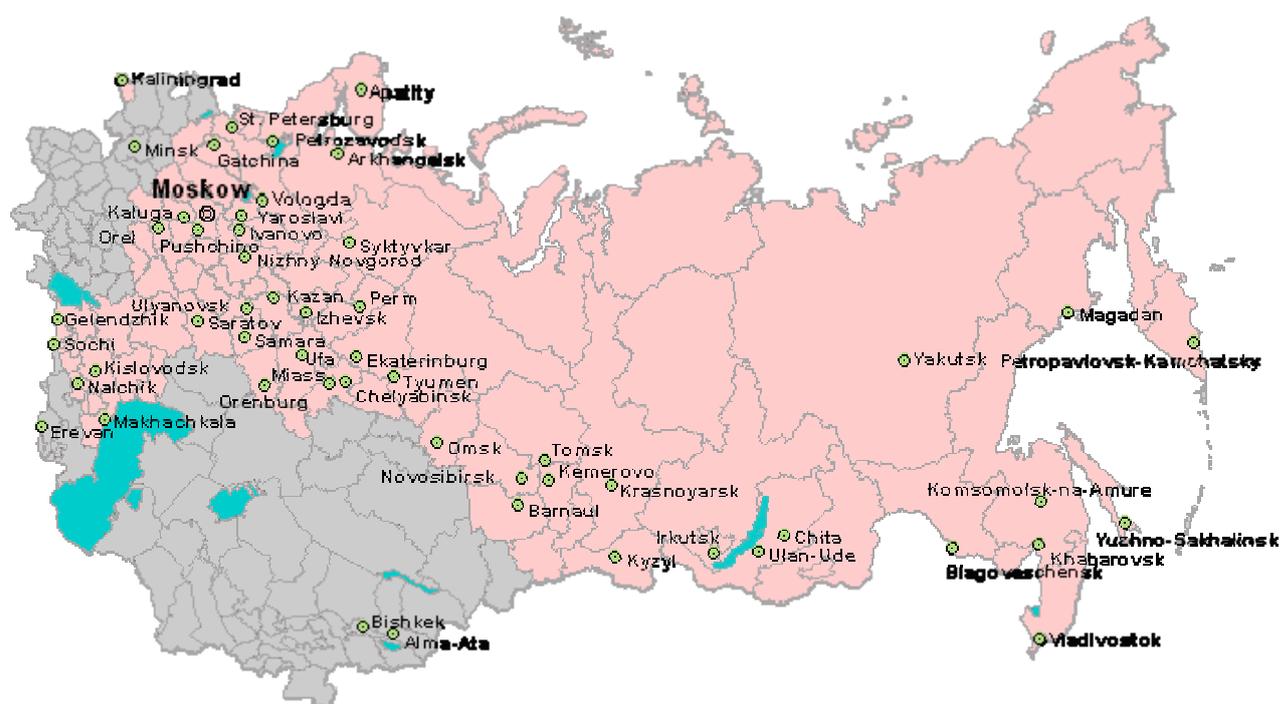
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CONTRIBUTION DATA

Report:	Progress Report to USAID
Assisted Country:	Russian Federation
Assisted Programme/Project:	Early Childhood Development
Donor:	USAID
PBA No:	SC/2004/0583-1
PBA amount:	364, 500. 00 USD
Total programmable amount:	331, 366. 95 USD
Funds used to date:	108, 905. 73 USD
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MAP OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTRY SPECIFIC STRATEGY OF IDD ELIMINATION THROUGH USI

In 2005 UNICEF activities in the Russian Federation were aimed at **promotion of legislation on IDD prevention through USI**, on raising awareness among parliamentarians, government officials, health care providers and other professionals groups on benefits of USI. This has been done through the targeted advocacy, distribution of information, education and communication materials and support to a coalition of most important stakeholders – Public Coordination Council (PCC) on IDD Elimination.

UNICEF also supported national and sub-national activities which were aimed at **increasing production, supply and consumption/use of iodized salt**, on stimulating the networking between interested partners (salt producers, main wholesalers, regional officials, food industry) in order to increase the proportion of households that consume iodized salt.

Promotion of legislation on IDD elimination through USI

The most important obstacle to reaching IDD elimination in Russia is lack of national legislation on mandatory salt iodization, which is associated with relatively low (29%) consumption of iodized salt on the household level. The political commitment to adopt legislation on USI is challenged by a number of reservations from different organizations, including some government agencies, on the “limitation of consumer choice and entrepreneurial activities”. There are also objections from some representatives of the health sector regarding the alleged impact of iodized salt upon the population that has “contraindications” to iodine.

UNICEF has been actively supporting the Government and the Parliament (the State Duma) Health Committee in developing and adopting enforceable legislation and technical documents on various aspects of IDD control and elimination. The draft law “On IDD Prevention” was initially submitted to the State Duma in October 2003. The overwhelming majority of Russian regions (more than 65 out of 89) supported the concept of the draft Law. However, in 2004 the Council of Ministers objected the principle of USI because the law supposedly limited freedom of choice and free entrepreneurship. The safety of iodized salt was also questioned.

Based on recommendations of the Round Table discussion organized in March 2004 by the State Duma Health with support of the Ministry of Health, Russian Academy of Medical Sciences and UNICEF, the Duma Health Committee supported the law and submitted its amended version to the Parliament in December 2004.

In 2005 members of PCC for IDD Elimination with UNICEF support continued lobbying for adoption of the law. UNICEF Executive Director Ms. C. Bellamy raised the issue of IDD elimination and USI at a high political level during her visit to the Russian Federation in October 2004. However, even the revised law (that left the room for some non-iodized salt on the market to satisfy consumer's choice) was again objected by the government in April 2005 citing issues of consumer choice and safety of iodized salt.

In 2005 the Duma Health Committee expert group, representing the Ministry of Health and Social Development, salt producers, health and nutrition research institutes and UNICEF, were working on the language of the new draft Law on IDD Prevention. Supposedly, the third amended version of this Law will be submitted to the State Duma by group of parliament members, including T. Yakovleva, the Chairperson of Duma Health Committee, in 2005 or early 2006. The enactment of the law would require its adoption by the State Duma (in three readings) and the Federation Council (upper chamber of Russian parliament) and the final endorsement by the President of the Russian Federation.

Actions undertaken by UNICEF office to accelerate the progress in 2005

- UNICEF assisted national partners, members of PCC for IDD Elimination, in advocating for legislation on IDD prevention. When the Council of Ministers failed to support the legislation "in present form", UNICEF provided additional support to development of comprehensive legislation in cooperation with national partners and the State Duma Health Committee. UNICEF and PCC representatives contributed to activities of expert group that has developed the amended version of the draft law.
- UNICEF, through PCC members, supported activities on the sub-national level that, in their turn, enhanced advocacy initiatives at the federal level to boost support for legislation on IDD prevention through USI. PCC conducted meeting in the regions (Saratov and Astrakhan) to increase awareness of partners and to support their activities.
- National IDD Center conducted a capacity building workshop with representatives of 10 regions of the Central European Russia. This workshop was aimed at strengthening IDD elimination strategies on the sub-national level, development of more unified and standardized approaches for monitoring of progress in IDD control and elimination. The workshop helped in establishment of several multi-sectoral groups to for coordination of IDD prevention activities in the regions of the Russian Federation.
- Salt Producers Association continued to network with its members and to advocate them for increase of production and supply of iodized salt. With UNICEF support, this Association conducted in November 2005 an annual meeting of salt producers and major suppliers of iodized salt (including representatives of Ukraine and Belarus) to increase industry support for USI legislation. Salt Producers Association is continuing to conduct regular assessment and update its database on production and supply of iodized salt. Preliminary data (Table 1) suggest modest increase (3.9%) of supply of iodized salt to the Russian market.

Table 1. Supply (production and import of iodized salt in the Russian Federation in 1997-2005 (tones)

1997	1998	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005*
25,000	100,000	131,000	136,000	133,500	157,000	163,000

* - estimated amount

- UNICEF supported efforts to improve consumer’s knowledge of iodized salt benefits and to increase sales of iodized salt through retail trade. IMS marketing agency continued its project in 10 major cities (with population > 1 million) in all federal districts of Russia to introduce sets of merchandising techniques for improving of retailers marketing skills and to enhance consumer education on benefits of iodized salt through retail outlets. This project contributed to increase production and sales of iodized salt and its better visibility on groceries shelves.
- UNICEF assisted KONFOP (confederation of consumer protection organizations with network of regional NGOs) in consumer’s education programs, strengthening of local NGOs and civil society organizations to promote iodized salt and monitor availability of iodized salt in both urban and rural areas, to raise awareness of general population of negative consequences of iodine deficiency. Collaboration of UNICEF with NGO “Interregional Center for Public Health and Development” resulted in better acceptance and increased use of iodized salt by food industry, especially bakeries.
- Strengthening of national monitoring system was accomplished through collaboration with National IDD Center of the Ministry of Health and Social Development that conducted special workshop to improve laboratory support to IDD control and elimination program.
- UNICEF supported development and publishing of 3 guidelines for health professionals on prevention and monitoring of IDD.

Support to building up partnership between salt producers, food processing industry and mass-media.

The International workshop on strengthening of IDD elimination strategies conducted by UNICEF in Ankara September 2004 clearly showed that communication efforts should be geared more vigorously towards product promotion to ensure that iodized salt available in all retailed outlets. Such efforts should be directed also to large customers of salt producers, i.e. the food processing industry and large catering institutions – i.e. the army, boarding schools, hospitals, etc.

To tackle this important area the national NGO “Interregional Centre for Public Health and Development” with UNICEF support developed a project aimed at building up social partnership of salt producers, food processing industry and mass-media to increase consumption of iodized salt by food industry and consequently by all population. The activities within the project have been implemented in close cooperation with the PCC for IDD Prevention.

In the course of the project, the data-base of food producers was developed jointly with the Institute of Nutrition. The information letter on the use of iodized salt in the food processing industry was sent to more than 600 enterprises. 380 producers expressed their interest in the project and provided the needed information for the data base. The development of such data-base allowed to establish working contacts with potential consumers of iodized salt in the food industry and to expand the existing alliance of USI supporters. The NGO also developed the web-site which has information on IDD status in the country as well as other special documents related to the project.

To strengthen knowledge of salt and food producers on IDD risks and health benefits of iodized salt 4 round table discussions were conducted with Moscow bread and bakery producers together with the entrepreneurship committee of the Moscow City Government. 78 representatives of the regional bakeries participated in these events. UNICEF advocacy and informational materials on IDD/USI, in particular the brochure on the use of iodized salt in bakery developed with UNICEF support in 2004, were actively disseminated among the participants. These round tables contributed to strengthening the partnership of the salt producers and food processors as well as to better understanding by the food industry of the social responsibility of the private sector in the IDD prevention and elimination through iodized salt consumption. The discussions also showed that the main obstacles for using iodized salt in bakery are lack of knowledge on the iodized salt benefits among the owners and absence of official regulatory documents on the subject.

In November - December 2005 the NGO in cooperation with Moscow bakery guild and Institute of Nutrition organized and conducted the conference "The use of iodized salt in bread bakery" and one day press-seminar to update media knowledge on iodized salt and USI as the key strategy for IDD prevention and elimination; 94 bread producers and 30 journalists participated in this meeting.

To stimulate the increase of iodized salt production and also its import into the country the Center with the PCC support and in cooperation with the Institute of Nutrition organized the marketing contest between the main salt producers and dealers of the three countries – Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The winners were Sibsol (Russia), Artemsol (Ukraine) and Mozyrsol (Belarus). The contest provided the forum for sharing the information, the achievements and problems of different salt producers on iodized salt production and distribution.

The abovementioned activities resulted in overall increase of iodized salt production and use in the Russian Federation.

Critical constraints of the program and lessons learned

The overall status of national IDD program in Russia against ICCIDD/UNICEF/WHO indicators for sustainable progress in IDD elimination is listed in Table 2

The most **critical constraint affecting performance of IDD prevention activities in 2005** is low responsibility of the federal government for meeting its international obligation to eliminate IDD by 2005. Another constraint is lack of ownership and sufficient leadership of the Ministry of Health and Social Development for lobbying of IDD elimination program and legislation within the government resulting in repeated negative responses of the Council of Ministers on USI legislation.

The **key lesson learned** is that stronger advocacy and communication efforts are needed to ensure that IDD elimination becomes the national priority. Efforts to increase production and supply of iodized salt as such could yield only modest results. Advocacy and communication campaign should be focused on promotion of legislation on IDD prevention through USI.

Suggested plans for 2006-2007

Recent political developments (i.e. adoption of four “priority” government programs that include improvement of health and education) increase the likelihood for adoption of legislation on IDD prevention through USI in Russia. If approved by the Parliament and signed into law by the President, this legislation will enable supply of mostly iodized salt to the market and can drastically improve iodine nutrition of the population.

However, most likely the opposition forces to this legislation will increase their activity, including use of the media, to discredit USI. UNICEF and its national partners should increase their advocacy and communication activities to ensure the development of a supportive political and public attitude towards this legislation. On the parallel track, the monitoring system to track both supply and impact of iodized salt should be strengthened.

The main goal of UNICEF activities in Russia in 2006 and 2007 should be assistance to the adoption of legislation on IDD prevention through USI by the Parliament. Suggested plans:

- **Consolidate support from the main stakeholders**, in particular - active members of Public Coordinating Council for IDD Elimination, and to reach the critical mass for adoption of legislation on IDD prevention through on-going advocacy and communication activities.
- Conduct **major advocacy event in the first half of 2006** to review progress made by Russia in reaching the MDG of IDD elimination with the participation of national politicians, decision-makers, civil society organizations, representatives of international organizations (UNICEF, WHO and ICCIDD). This event should consolidate opinions and issue strong message in support of pending legislation on IDD prevention.
- **Enhance the communication campaign** for promoting of the benefits of USI in the mass media through training seminars and press-conferences (central and regional press, TV and radio). Amended Press Kit should be developed and supplied to media outlets.
- Use approaching 20th Anniversary of **Chernobyl accident** to sharpen communication campaign and to underline the negative consequences of iodine deficiency and protection force of iodized salt. These activities should be coordinated with UNICEF offices and partners in Belarus and Ukraine.
- **Build up a strong social partnership** with salt producers and major suppliers of iodized salt and with national food processing industry to promote production, supply and use of iodized salt.
- **Involve more international (WHO, ICCIDD)** and bi-lateral (USAID, CIDA and others) organizations in promotion of effective measures for IDD prevention and elimination in Russia. International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD) is planning to conduct 2007 Board of Directors meeting in CEE/CIS region. This is a unique chance to bring a panel of international experts to

conduct an international meeting on IDD prevention through USI in Russia in early 2007.

UTILIZATION OF DONOR FUNDS

REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	VALUE US\$
CASH		
RUSA/2005/00000 250-0	Project Cooperation Agreement with Interregional Centre for Public Health and Development	76, 433. 65
RUSA/2005/00000 644-2	Salary of Assistant Project Officer, July- December 2005	32, 472. 08
	<u>TOTAL</u>	108, 905. 73
	<u>Unspent balance</u>	222, 461. 22

Table 2. Status of Program for IDD control and elimination in the RUSSIAN FEDERATION in 2005 against ICCIDD/UNICEF/WHO criteria

		Commitment at the national level				Commitment at system, institution, and community level				Outcome at the individual/household level			Impact at the population level	
										Salt iodization			Iodine Nutrition	
Region	Country	National multi-sector Coalition is formed and functional (at least 1 meeting quarterly, discussing accomplishments/achievements, setting plans)	National ISI Law or Regulation has been enacted	A National Officer responsible for ISI is appointed	Commitment to (re)assess national progress is evident (assessment of progress is undertaken at least every 5 years)	Regular Salt Iodine Data is collected at factory, retail & household	Urinary Iodine Data on school children is regularly collected	Salt Industry maintains quality assurance of iodized salt	Database established with mandatory public reporting	Consumer education and social mobilization is continuous	% of Households using adequately iodized salt, mid-decade of 1990s data	% of Households using adequately iodized salt, latest data, and trends	National median UIC (mcg/L) and year	% Population with UIC <100mcg/L
C E E / C I S	R U S / A	YES , Public Coordination Council was established in 2002 with UNICEF support, has regular meetings, discuss plans and lobbying for legislation on IDD prevention through USI	Pending , the third amended draft could be submitted to the State Duma by end of 2005.	YES , the director of National Centre for IDD prevention <i>de facto</i> holds this responsibilities	YES , The Government and scientific community is committed to (re)assessment of progress	YES , There is governmental vertical system in place for iodised salt quality control	YES , Biological monitoring is conducted on the sub national level by health authorities	YES , There are strict industry standards for quality assurance	Pending , National Centre for IDD prevention is in the process of development of such database	YES Mostly with financial support from UNICEF.	<10% (estimate)	2004 - 29% There is a trend for increase of consumption of iodized salt	N/A, sub-national data show that inadequate iodine nutrition (25-94 mcg/l)	N/A, From sub-national data - >80% (estimate)