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REPORT ON CONSULTANCY TO  
THE FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY  
PLANNING DIVISION, MINISTRY OF  
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, GOVERNMENT  
OF SRI LANKA.

June - August 1980

by

F. James Levinson.

## Introduction

This report covers the period June 16 - August 15 1980 during which time I served as consultant to the Food and Nutrition Policy Planning Division of the Ministry of Plan Implementation in Sri Lanka. Consultancy was arranged and financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, through the Nutrition Economics Group, U.S. Department of Agriculture. At the outset, I would like to convey my compliments to that Nutrition Economics Group which, since its inception in 1977, has been working diligently to try and determine the consumption effects of food and agricultural policies in low income countries. One senses that if the activities of this small group could be increased 10 - fold, the U.S. Government might begin to have a reasonably accurate picture of the distribution of benefits resulting from its still substantial assistance programmes in food, agriculture and rural development.

This report and this consultancy differ conceptually from that in which I was engaged in Sri Lanka in January 1980. That shorter visit was a broad - based examination of food and nutrition policy and programme needs and, more specifically, an assessment of the direction and activities of the Food and Nutrition Policy Planning Division (FNPPD) at its request. By contrast, this consultancy was spent working with the Division on several specific activities. Accordingly, this report will be concerned primarily with a discussion of these activities and the work carried out, without much reference to nutrition and malnutrition in Sri Lanka.

### 1. The FNPPD and Its Role

The most satisfying element of this visit was seeing the remarkable progress and development of the Food and Nutrition Policy Planning Division. After several years of relative dormancy, the Division under new leadership in September 1979, and with the active and encouraging support of the Secretary of the Plan Implementation Ministry, began to define an active role for itself and develop its capacity to perform that role. By June 1980, several of these activities were well advanced: as a reflection of its effectiveness, I quickly noted a quantum leap in the seriousness with which its activities were now taken.

There has been much talk about what such divisions should be doing in low income countries, but the FNPPD is the first nutrition policy division I've yet encountered whose activities actually address priority needs. Its present activities in fact, fall neatly into the following priority categories:

- A. Maintenance of an active data bank and surveillance system;
- B. Assessments of the effectiveness of direct nutrition intervention programmes;
- C. Assessments of the consumption/ nutrition effects of broader-based development programmes.

Unlike other such divisions with which I've worked in Asia, this work is carried out with much care and wisdom, with good judgement, and with remarkably effective follow-through. The leadership of the Director, Dr. Raja Amerasekera, in this regard, compares favorably with that of any development administrator with whom I've worked in recent years.

Accordingly, the competence and capacity of this Division is unlikely to be a limiting factor in the operation of a sound food and nutrition policy in Sri Lanka. Under the best set of conditions, this Division will be able to:

- Operate a system to monitor effectively nutritional status, consumption, food prices and wages in each part of the country, indicate to operational ministries the existence and nature of problems before they become serious, and be assured of rapid, operational followthrough;
- assess on an ongoing basis, operational programmes designed to improve consumption, and reduce malnutrition which remains a serious problem for 30 - 40 percent of the population.
- Similarly assess the most important of the country's broad-based development programmes in terms of their distribution of benefits, their effects on employment and income generation, and ultimately their effectiveness in meeting the basic human needs of the lowest income 30-40 percent - again with assurance that these assessments will be taken seriously in the future operation of these programmes;
- make regular assessments of the likely nutrition/ consumption effects of proposed policies or programmes under government consideration.

In each case, the Division will soon be in a position to undertake these responsibilities.

What concerns me, then, is not the Division's capacity to do the needful, but the difference it will make in formulating and reformulating policies and programmes. Each of the above operations is based on the assumption that the Government is committed to improve consumption and reduce malnutrition, and that with the information provided by the Division, it will act promptly and effectively to formulate or reformulate policies and programmes accordingly. With such commitment, the F.N.P.D. will be of immeasurable value in improving the nutritional well being of Sri Lanka's population. Without such commitment, and in the worst case the Division's activities, no matter how well done technically, will be of no value in terms of nutrition improvement, and simply represent a token gesture, diverting public attention from the serious problems which exist.

Of the roles indicated above, the last - helping the Government assess the likely consumption/nutrition effects of proposed policies and programmes - is of major importance. The Division, through such a role, can, at the very minimum, help the Government avoid-or at least think twice about - programmes and policies likely to have negative consumption effects.

This is not an abstract, theoretical issue in Sri Lanka. During the short period between my two visits, for example, the Government made at least three policy decisions with virtually certain negative consumption effects.

The first was the decision to eliminate, all at once, the consumer subsidy on wheat flour. Whatever the macro-economic value of doing this (strongly encouraged by the International Monetary Fund, an organization which has never been known for its concern with hunger and poverty), the

decision resulted in a price increase of over 50 percent and an immediate decline\* in the consumption of wheat. Income-specific data on food consumption make it clear that those suffering most from this action are the rural poor who were highly dependent on wheat flour, and who, almost certainly, have suffered an absolute reduction in calorie intake as a result.

The second such case concerned the Food Stamp Programme, and involved a decision to draw a line on food stamp recipients, so as not to exceed the figure of 7.5 million beneficiaries. Again one understands the Government's desire to place a limitation on recipients, but this decision has resulted in a growing number of clearly eligible families (often with a recently deceased or recently unemployed head of household) with no available means of procuring even minimal food needs.

The third case was a Government decision to collaborate with the Nestles firm in a programme of dairy development which includes the production and promotion of infant formula. As is well known, Nestles has been at the centre of major international concern based on their marketing and promotion practices in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These promotional practices have led to the widespread use of infant formula by low income families, many of whom, inevitably, have prepared it in highly dilute form with impure water, and many of whom have, in the process, abandoned the clearly healthier practice of breast feeding. Many reports are now available which indicate the unfortunate, but again inevitable results: a major increase in the incidence of diarrhoea, nutritional marasmus, and infant death. (It is ironic that such an agreement was announced at a time when the governments of many third world countries are seeking ways to redress this problem, and when there is a major boycott of Nestles products by concerned people around the world).

The point here, however, for purposes of this report, is not the pros and cons of these three decisions but rather the fact that, despite their obvious nutrition implications, the FNPPD was not involved in any of them. (In fact, it appears that in the third case not even the Ministry of Health was involved). If an evaluation of FNPPD effectiveness were to be carried out two years from now, I would recommend, as a primary evaluation criterion, the number of such decisions in which the Division is and is not involved.

#### (11) Analysis of Survey Data

- In 1979, the FNPPD using a limited questionnaire, carried out surveys in the districts of Hambantota and Matara.
- In early 1980, under new FNPPD leadership, more complete surveys were carried out in six districts;
- About the same time, a survey using a still different questionnaire was carried out with the assistance of F.A.O. in the Mahaweli area, as part of a four country F.A.O. study seeking to develop a methodology for determining the consumption effects of agricultural policies.
- During the summer of 1980, using a fourth questionnaire, a survey was carried out in Kalutara and Galle districts with the involvement of personnel from Cornell University.

\* by roughly 50 percent.\*

Each of these surveys has had a small coterie of government staff and outsiders identified with it, and interested in using it for their own purposes. Each probably will have contributed something to the overall state of knowledge about nutrition in Sri Lanka. But the confusion, inconsistency, and cost resulting from four sets of surveys, each done differently, have been high and most unfortunate.

One important task of the F&NPPD at present, is the analysis of this data to permit, in the first instance, an interim report to the Government by the end of September, 1980. Such a report would permit consideration of these findings in the preparation of the 1981 national budget. Accordingly much of our work this summer has involved efforts to try and organize data from at least the first three sets of surveys in ways which will permit meaningful analysis. The draft report of the Hambantota survey, prepared by former FNPPD staff, indicated that unless this is done, data may well be processed in a mechanical fashion, with little thought given to its practical utilization.

The most serious shortfall in the first and third sets of surveys is the complete absence of data on food consumption. It seems unusual that surveys carried out for nutritional purposes would fail to deal with the clearly central question of how well people are eating. The absence of consumption data also virtually eliminates any possibility of meaningful causality analysis.

The Six District surveys are far more complete and should permit valuable analysis, not only on the nature and magnitude of the problem, but also on its determinants. While the analysis of determinants, initially, is being done in tabular form, the hope, subsequently, is to carry out multiple regression analysis, perhaps using the Divisions new (but presently broken down) data processing equipment.

Based on the work done this summer, the following information should be available for inclusion in the September 1980 Interim Report:

1. District by district comparison of nutritional status based on weight and height for age and weight for height and comparison with the 1975 - 76 CDC - assisted survey.
2. For the six districts, inter - district comparisons of family food consumption.
3. Indications of the relative importance of the socio - economic determinants of malnutrition on a district and all - island basis, to facilitate consideration of alternative government policies and programmes.

Finally this data should be valuable to the Government in serving as a basis for subsequent monitoring and surveillance in the country. Surveillance activities undertaken in several countries, with the active assistance of international agencies, are likely to be of limited value given

1. the absence of policies or programmes to evaluate and
2. the inability or unwillingness of the governments to follow up even when problems are identified.

In Sri Lanka, this is not the case. The existence of multiple policies and programmes affecting food consumption, and a government with the capacity to deal with problems, makes surveillance in Sri Lanka a potentially valuable undertaking. To be really worthwhile, however, such data rarely should be collected exclusively for surveillance purposes. Instead, the maintenance of weight charts in villages, for example, should be carried out, first and foremost, to help mothers identify children at risk of malnutrition.

Similarly the collection of birth weight data and price data should be used locally to improve the well being of needy population groups, and not be collected simply for statistical analysis in the capital city.

(111). Evaluation of the Food Stamp Programme

In recent months there has been much discussion, within the Government and outside, of the need for an evaluation of the national Food Stamp Programme. The Programme which has been operating since September 1979 was initiated as a substitute for the previous ration and food subsidy systems. To date Sri Lanka and Colombia are the only low income countries to have undertaken food stamp programmes. The Philippines is now contemplating a similar programme and sent a team to Sri Lanka this summer to examine the programme here. Rapid inflation in Sri Lanka which has reduced the value of the stamps by roughly 50 per cent since initiation of the programme, gives some urgency to the evaluation and to reexamination of the programme by the Government.

The Food Stamp Programme evaluation was undertaken at the request of the National Food Policy Committee and was designed by an evaluation committee of representatives from the Office of the Food Commissioner, the Co-operative Development Dept., the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Ministry of Health, the Central Bank, and FNPPD with the participation of this consultant. The present plan is to complete the evaluation by September 30, 1980, again in order to provide necessary information for formulation of the 1981 budget.

There was much discussion on the scope of the evaluation. Initially it was hoped to include analysis of the macro effects of the programme on, for example, food prices, domestic food production, and public spending. There also was consideration of a detailed management study of the operations of the programme. These components ultimately were considered too complex and time consuming to be carried out in the time allowed.

Instead, agreement was reached on the following five components. Each is discussed below with an indication of its status as of mid-August.

A. Determination of Adequacy of Stamp Value and Validity

of Rs. 300 Cut off -

To make these determinations, it was decided to establish a nutrition-based poverty line, i.e. that income level associated with calorie adequacy for the household. This will be done by using consumption and income data from the recently completed Six District Survey. Although this Survey did not cover the entire island, and although the survey population may be slightly younger than an ideal statistical selection (only families with at least one pre-school child were included), the committee was of the view that the results should be adequate for evaluation purposes.

The nutrition-based poverty line represents that income level below which assistance, ideally, should be provided. Such analysis also will indicate the calorie short-falls associated with lower income levels, and will indicate the extent to which the stamps, at present value, meet these short-falls.

Together with the information collected in component E below, it will be possible to estimate the costs of a range of family income cut off points, and a range of stamp valuations related to family consumption benefits. Finally, the analysis will provide the basis for a sliding scale of stamp benefits based on income level, should this be considered desirable.

Assuming completion of the computer analysis of the Six District Survey by August 15, as scheduled, it should be possible to make these determinations as planned.

B. Comparison of Household Food Consumption Before and After Introduction of the Programme :

Instead of carrying out new consumption surveys for this purpose, it was decided to compare overall food consumption patterns among low income populations before and after introduction of the Programme, by comparing calorie intake data from the 1978 -79 Consumer Finance Survey of the Central Bank, with that from the 1980 Six District Survey.

While this comparison will not isolate the effects of the food stamps exclusively (other changes have taken place during this period including rapid inflation) it will provide the Government with a critically important overall picture of whether Governmental intervention has been adequate, during a period of inflation, to keep consumption levels from falling.

Several meetings were held between statisticians of the Central Bank and FNPPD to determine a basis for these comparisons. It finally was decided that Central Bank data for the same six districts studied by FNPPD should be isolated for the comparison. Efforts have since been underway to get this Central Bank district data analysed on a priority basis.

C. Determination of Stamp Usage:

One of the primary needs of the Government in regard to this Programme is information on foods purchased with the stamps. The committee decided that this information can best be collected by Inspectors of the Co-operative Development Department through examination of bills from a selected number of co-operatives covering the period March 1 to June 30. (The most recent change of prices of eligible commodities took place on February 23).

The bills indicate when food stamps are used, what commodities are purchased, and their prices. At the end of each month the bills are sent to local cooperative head quarters where they are stored.

One critical variable to examine in this part of the evaluation is the relative prices of rice in the co-operative and rice on the open market. As long as open market prices are lower, consumers will, on the margin, choose to purchase other necessities with stamps and buy rice outside, - this unless their overall disposable income is very low. In the latter case, there is a temptation to purchase any allowable item with stamps, sell it, and use the proceeds for lower cost, open market rice. These dynamics must be examined carefully in the study.

Another concern to examine here is that the stamps, as essentially legal tender, progressively lose value with inflation. If, as some suggest, most of the stamps are used to buy rice, it may be possible to consider conversion of stamps to a "rice quantity value", thus assuring a constant value in food purchase terms. Similarly, if the stamps are not used to buy milk for children, as was originally anticipated, it may be useful to reconsider the higher value of stamps given to younger children, and consider the higher calorie requirements of adults.

The Cooperative Development Dept., accordingly, initiated this component of the evaluation by requesting their inspectors in each district to collect this information from the bills of two co-operatives each. Means were found to assure appropriate rural-urban balance.

The results of these reviews should be returned to Colombo by August 15.

D. Determination of Coverage and Consumer Reactions:

- (1) This component of the evaluation will determine:  
The extent to which deserving families have been excluded, or are not using the Programme,
- (2) Reactions of food stamp users to the Programme, and
- (3) The Extent of selling of stamps or stamp - purchased commodities, in a general manner.

This component also will measure the extent to which participating families also benefit from other Governmental interventions (e.g. Triplosha distribution, school biscuits, and social services assistance).

It was decided that to assess these questions, survey work should be carried out by Development Officers (D.O.'s) attached to the Ministry of Plan Implementation and working at the district level.

Questionnaires were developed, printed and distributed to each district in late July. The number of areas within each district was determined on the basis of population. Altogether, roughly 18,000 households will be interviewed, not only on the above questions, but also on stamp usage, in order to complement and extend the analysis under Component C. above.

Given the substantial processing requirements involved, a subsequent decision was made to process first the data from those six districts in which the other FNPPD survey work was undertaken, and then, subsequently, to analyse data for the country as a whole.

Questionnaires for at least the six districts are expected back in Colombo by August 15

E. Assessment of Programme Costs:

It was decided to collect, from the Office of the Food Commissioner, cost data on the Programme as a whole and per Programme beneficiary, in as disaggregated a manner as possible. This information will be combined with that collected under Component A to make cost projections of alternative procedures.

The first installment of cost data was provided by the Food Commissioner's Office in mid July, and additional information is expected shortly.

\* \* \* \* \*

It may be worth repeating here the caveat I included in my January report. Again at the urging of the International Monetary Fund and of various other donor agencies, some groups within the Government view the Food Stamp Programme as a temporary "half-way house" between food subsidies and the total elimination of food assistance. Some, in fact, appear to view the daily attrition of food stamp value with inflation as a desirable means of gradually eliminating such assistance without overt Government withdrawal of the Programme.

The FNPPD, by contrast, and other groups in the country genuinely concerned about the well being of low income groups and the meeting of their basic needs, should insist upon maintenance of this programme or of equivalent food assistance at constant value levels until hard evidence exists (collected by FNPPD) that the need for such a programme has been eliminated. (Those who believe this need is likely to be eliminated quickly through the Government's development policies, however, need only look at the United States, a far wealthier country, with far less unemployment, where the need for its Food Stamp Programme has not yet been eliminated.) The cost of the food stamp programme (Rs. 130 Million or \$ 8 million per month) is less than half the cost of the food subsidy system which operated two years ago. On an annual basis, the food stamps now represent roughly 9 percent of government expenditures (compared with figures as high as 25 percent in the past), a price which does not seem exorbitant given the contribution such food assistance has provided in keeping consumption levels high and mortality and birth rates low in Sri Lanka over the past decades.

The evaluation, hopefully, will indicate ways in which the Programme (which has decreased in value to consumers by roughly 50 percent since its inception) can be revamped or restructured to assure greater benefit to low income groups without significant increase in its cost.

The time is past when development administrators should think of these subsidized consumption programmes as expensive "political" gestures to be replaced as rapidly as possible by sound "economic" policies. Analysis of subsidized food programmes in recent years indicates, to the contrary, that, when sensibly targetted, such programmes can be an invaluable element in a "growth with equity" development policy. The World Bank, in a recent major publication on nutrition and basic needs, in fact, concludes that subsidized food programmes may be the only feasible way to improve consumption and reduce malnutrition significantly in a relatively short time period.

Donor agencies, accordingly, particularly those which endorse the concept of basic human needs, should seek ways to assure the maintenance and improvement of such programmes, and not quietly acquiesce in their disintegration.

(iv) Evaluation of the Thripesha and School Biscuit Programmes.

As in most countries, many questions are always being raised in Sri Lanka about the effectiveness and costs of nutrition interventions. On the effectiveness side, there are recurring concerns about the distribution of benefits, and the effects of the activities on the malnourished. Similarly, even where these programmes are based on foreign - donated food (as is the case in both of these programmes) the food processing, transport and administrative costs can represent sizeable chunks of limited budgets. In the case of the School Biscuit programme these costs in 1980 come to Rs. 47.5 million (almost \$3 million). Accordingly it is eminently sensible for the FNPPD to evaluate and monitor these programmes on a regular basis.

In the case of these two programmes, the FNPPD has contracted with the National Institute of Business Management to evaluate them and recommend ways in which they might be monitored regularly by the Division. The Institute will provide preliminary results to the Division by the end of September for inclusion in the FNPPD Interim Report referred to earlier. A complete report will be available at the end of December.

The evaluations will be based on interviews with beneficiary families, with health clinic staff and school principals, and with regional directors of education and health. In addition, the evaluation will examine cost and distribution data of the programmes. Finally, the Thripasha evaluation will attempt to assess the nutritional value of the pre-school feeding through examination of growth charts, and of the maternal feeding through examination of birth weights.

The primary questions being addressed in these evaluation are the following:

A. The Thripasha Programme Evaluation:

1. Coverage

a In what areas is Thripasha distribution concentrated? Are these areas characterized by lower nutritional status? What percentage of households with children or mothers in the target age group actually receive Thripasha in each district/ sector/ zone? What percentage of rural landless households with target group persons receive Thripasha? What percentage of households with children below the age of 3 receive Thripasha? What is the distribution of households participating in the programme according to distance from the center?

In those households which receive Thripasha, what percentage actually is consumed by (a) target group children and by (b) pregnant and lactating mothers? What effect has the Programme had on breast feeding practices?

What has been the effect of the food on the nutritional status (measured anthropometrically) of the children who receive the food, and on the birth weights of children whose mothers regularly have received Thripasha during pregnancy.

2. Integration with other Services-

Where it is the practice to withhold solid food from children until 12 months of age or later, what is done/ can be done within the context of the Thripasha programme to change this practice?

Where the early provision of Thripasha or other solid food precipitates diarrheal infection, what is done / can be done within the context of the Thripasha Programme, to utilize simple oral rehydration therapy?

In general how well is the Thripasha Programme integrated with the country's network of N C H services, and how might better integration be achieved?

3. Programme Management and Costs -

What is the total cost and cost breakdown of the Programme? What is the cost per beneficiary? What share of total costs are born by the Government and by external agencies? What administrative and logistical improvements can be made to reduce operational costs? Finally, might programme resources be more effective if distribution were concentrated during the traditional "lean seasons" of the year, at which time, traditionally, food availability is more limited, food intakes reduced, and infection highest?

## B. The School Biscuit Programme Evaluation

1. Coverage: What proportion of the malnourished children, aged 5-12 attend school? Of these what proportion benefit from the biscuit programme? On what basis has selection of the schools been made? (Is distribution carried out in schools in those areas with the lowest nutritional status?) (Could feeding be restricted to children in the lower grades?  
to
2. Nutritional Benefits and Acceptability: What is the range of calorie deficits of school age children? What proportion of the deficit is the biscuit programme supposed to meet? To what extent do the children actually eat the biscuits? (at school? after school?) To what extent do other family members consume the biscuits? Do the children like the biscuits, tolerate them or dislike them? Would the children prefer other foods instead? Do children consuming the biscuits at school receive less food at home?
3. Other Benefits: To what extent is school registration or attendance affected by existence of the biscuit programme? What is the likely effect of the programme on school performance? What is the real income benefit of the programme to the family of a school child?
4. Costs and Production Process: What is the total cost and cost breakdown (imported and local ingredient costs, processing costs, administrative costs, and distribution costs) of the programme. What is the (a) cost per biscuit (b) cost per child (c) cost per calorie (d) cost per unit of protein? What is the value of imported and domestic machinery provided to the manufacturer for the programme? Is this machinery also used by them for other purposes? Is there accountability for use of the machinery? What financial arrangements relating to the biscuit programme exist with the manufacturer? What profit is realized by the manufacturer on the biscuit programme? Of total costs, what are the proportions of the cost born by the Government and by external agencies?
5. Comparison with Alternatives: What locally available alternatives to the biscuit programme exist which would not require onsite preparation (e.g. fruits, nuts etc.)? What alternatives exist which would utilize PL 480 commodities via CARE, but similarly not require on site preparation (bread, buns, etc)? What is the likelihood of central processing and distribution of local preparations (e.g. roti, hoppers etc)? What is the likelihood of cooking at some portion of the schools? Is it possible to consider a subsidy to schools to purchase prepared food locally, with an equivalent value of CARE stocks provided to the Government?  
The study should select, from the above possibilities, several of the most likely alternatives, and compare them with the biscuit programme using the benefit and cost questions in 2-4 above as the basis for comparison.

## v. Training:

As a complement to, or an alternative to expensive and time consuming training overseas, the Director asked if I would carry out a practical training programme for FNPPD and other interested Ministry officials in food and nutrition planning and economics. The course of ten sessions, each an hour and a half long, carried out the summer, was roughly equivalent to a semester course at a U.S. university. during

The sessions were geared specifically to ongoing food and nutrition planning and programming in Sri Lanka, to present data collection efforts and to existing data. The sessions covered the following subject matter:

- a. measures of nutritional status and food consumption
- b. nutrition causality analysis and its data requirements
- c. the income- food intake relationship
- d. uses of income and price elasticities of demand
- e. techniques of food demand projections and their role in agricultural planning
- f. the relationship of income distribution to nutrition and consumption, and the calculation of Gini coefficients
- g. uses and limitations of linear programming for nutrition.
- h. use of a nutrition - based poverty line, and the pricing of a "food market basket" as a surveillance tool.
- i. examination of nutrition interventions in terms of their effects on income distribution, consumption, and nutritional status
- j. subsidized food consumption in Sri Lanka and other countries
- k. evaluation of nutrition intervention programmes (employing the example of the Thripasha Programme) using cost benefit, cost effectiveness, and cost efficiency analysis
- l. effects of nutrition and basic needs - oriented development on rates of population growth.

(vi) Nutrition Jingle

Since my arrival in Sri Lanka in June, there has been much discussion in the Division of a nutrition "Jingle" to be used on the radio and other media as a means of increasing nutrition consciousness. I have my own doubts that such gimmicks are of much value. But, if there is to be one - and it seems there is - the following is the English version of my submission. (Underlining indicates syllables to be stressed.)

We can improve our health ourselves,  
It needn't be too hard.  
If we follow a few simple rules,  
Our nation's strength we'll guard.

Mothers need more food for sure,  
While pregnant or nursing your new.  
To be sure to have baby's strength endure,  
Remember you're eating for two.

Mother's milk is best by far,  
It's the safe and healthy way.  
And high food prices will be no bar,  
If you breast feed through the day.

Mother's milk makes sense for two whole years,  
It's good and nourishing, too.  
But from the age of 6 months on,  
Your baby needs solid food too.

Most local foods are good to eat:  
Grains, Pulses, Vegetables, Fruit.  
No need for tins and costly sweets,  
Simple foods your health will suit.

Heart disease is a very sad tale.  
It's the number one killer in our land.  
But if we reduce our coconut shell\*,  
We'll have it well in hand.

We can improve our health ourselves;  
It needn't be too hard.  
If we follow these few simple rules,  
Our nations health we'll guard.

\* oil

We tried to have a verse on glucose electrolyte solutions,  
but there was no way we could get it to rhyme.