

Progress toward Sustainable Elimination of Iodine Deficiency in the Kyrgyz Republic:

Focus on Universal Salt Iodization



**A progress report on activities in 2005
to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**

January, 2006

UNICEF Progress Report No.:	Third Progress Report
Donor Country/Code:	G45602 1000 USAID/Washington for UNICEF
Assisted Country/Code:	Kyrgyz Republic/0327
Assisted Programme:	SI402/H137: Access to Social Services /Mother and Child Health Care and Nutrition/Micronutrients
PBA Number:	SC/2003/0633-1
Board Ref. (P/L Reference Number):	E/ICEF/1999/P/L.15
Total Contribution Pledged:	US\$ 105,002
Incremental field office administrative and programme support:	US\$ 4,998
Total Contribution (Programmable) as 1 January 2005:	US\$ 71,459
Funds Committed to Date:	US\$ 71, 459
Funds spent:	US\$ 43,712
Funds available:	US\$ 27,747
Balance of Funds:	38.8 %
Duration of Contribution:	30 October, 2003 – 30 September, 2007
Period Covered by the Report:	January, 2005 – January, 2006
Date Prepared:	January 2006

IDD damage assessment:

The damage caused by IDD in Kyrgyzstan is as follows: approximately 20,000 babies are born each year with intellectual impairment caused by iodine deficiency during pregnancy (Kyrgyzstan, Damage Assessment Report, UNICEF-MI, 2004). The goiter rate is more than 20% which means that IDD lowers the average national IQ by 10 to 15 percentage points every year.

Progress towards the goal

Kyrgyzstan has made a remarkable progress in achievement of USI during 2005 and most probably will achieve USI by the end of 2006.

Currently, according to different sources:

- a) about 95,4% of households use iodized salt in cooking and 94,7% think that adding of iodized salt to dishes positively influences the health of children (2004, Sociological research “Child rearing practices”, UNICEF).
- b) 92,8% of household used iodized salt, 93,6% samples of tested salt at household level was iodized (ADB project “ Early childhood development” survey, 2005)
- c) 86% of households consume iodized salt (Swiss Red Cross/UNICEF, 2004-2005) after interventions with testing salt by MBI test kits

This means that almost 85,000 babies born in 2005 were protected against intellectual impairment caused by the brain damage due to iodine deficiency because of an increase in consumption of iodated salt in households from 75% in 2004 to 87% in 2005.

According to Kyrgyz Salt Association, 85% of country needs of iodized salt were covered by Kyrgyz salt producers in 2004.

UNICEF strategic support to sustainable elimination of IDD in Kyrgyzstan

Utilization of USAID funds

This submission of progress donor report includes reports on progress in implementation of activities dedicated to IDD elimination programme and the utilization of USAID funds in 2005.

UNICEF has consistently advocated on the priority for IDD elimination through Universal Salt Iodization (USI) with the Government and the national partners. The National Fortification Alliance was established with UNICEF support in 2004 with balanced involvement of public (government, medical institutes), private (salt industry) and civic partners (consumer groups) to plan, manage and monitor key efforts to improve the ongoing national iodine deficiency elimination activities.

USAID funding has been used for activities, particularly in strengthening external and internal monitoring and reinforcement mechanisms, as well as for raising consumer awareness and build the capacity of those who are involved in social mobilization and dissemination of information with a particular focus on children and women. Special attention was paid to the sustainability of salt iodization and national ownership.

The main partners on project implementation are ADB, Swiss Red Cross, Kyrgyz Association of Salt Producers, and the Ministry of Health. Through partnership with the Asian Development Bank, elimination of IDD has become a part of National Food and Nutrition Action Plans in Kyrgyzstan. The Swiss Red Cross cooperated with the UNICEF project on the system of control over iodized salt consumption at household level and in increasing knowledge of the population on IDD. The Association of Salt Producers, created with the assistance of the UNICEF project, undertook responsibilities for

various aspects of production and sales of adequately iodized salt. The areas where UNICEF has provided assistance are as follows: assessment, institutional development, capacity building, policy development, service delivery, advocacy and communication.

Activities implemented during the reporting period:

1) Re-advocacy for high political commitment and USI legislation

- “Leadership Briefing” was held for high-level members of the National Fortification Alliance and media representatives, chaired by Vice Prime Minister at the State House.
- Draft National Plan of Actions (NPA) to eliminate VMD, 2005-2010, was developed and presented to members of NFA.
- Video film “Children can not wait” was produced and presented to the members of NFA and mass media.
- Special document was developed for mass media to inform them about Damage Assessment Report (DAR), Protection Audit Report (PAR) and NPA to stimulate continued interest in reporting on the results of executing the NPA.
- Adjustment of legislation baseline was promoted by UNICEF CO and ADB project to set up appropriate conditions for IDD elimination
- Vice Prime Minister and journalists visited the main markets and the largest salt industries. During these visits, salt samples and the system of internal control were checked

As the main result of implemented activities, political leaders understood the significance of NPA execution for the health and development of the people of Kyrgyzstan. Political commitment of key decision makers was renewed and strengthened.

2) Programme management and coordination

- Review of Vitamin and Mineral Deficiency programme in the country was undertaken with UNICEF technical and financial support
- 2/3-day multi-sector workshop was conducted to facilitate joint development of a draft a 5-Yr National Plan of Action for Elimination of Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency in Kyrgyz Republic with involvement more than 50 people from key agencies and institutions. A 5-Yr National Plan of Action for Elimination of Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency in Kyrgyz Republic was drafted and presented to the members of the National Fortification Alliance.

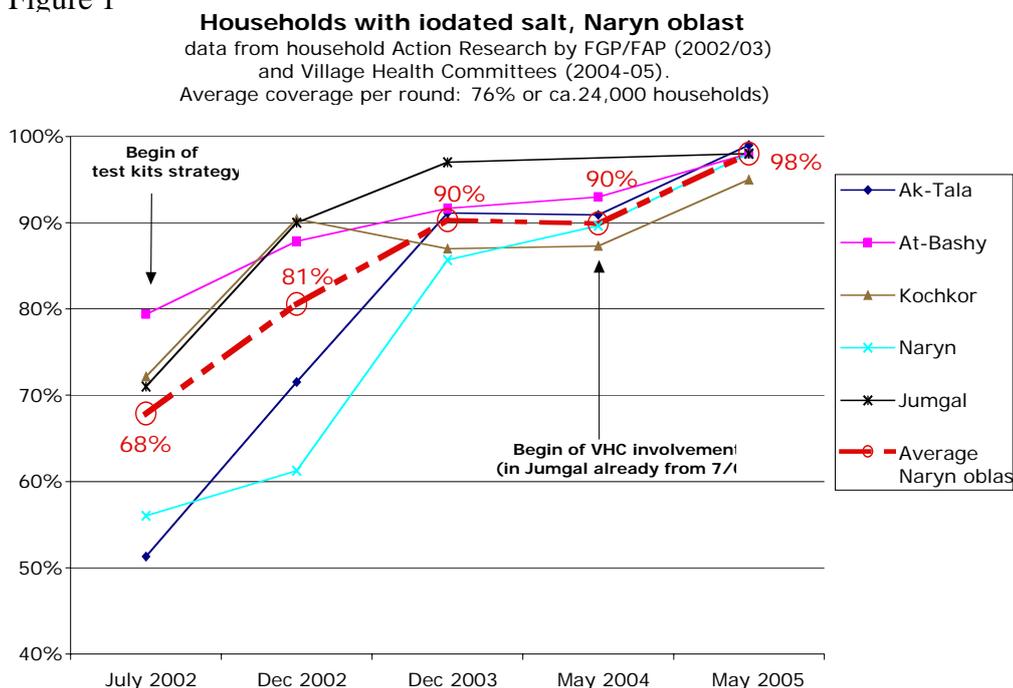
As the main results of implemented activities, the key barriers/constraints in the progress to VMD elimination in the country were assessed and debated, clear and balanced roles for all partners in implementing VMD elimination programmes in the country were formulated.

3) Monitoring of programme performance and impact

Strategy to promote and monitor consumption of iodized salt at household level was developed and has been implementing by Swiss Red Cross with UNICEF support since 2002. This strategy of iodised salt promotion consists of the following three elements: participatory research by communities, testing of retailers and providing them with test kits.

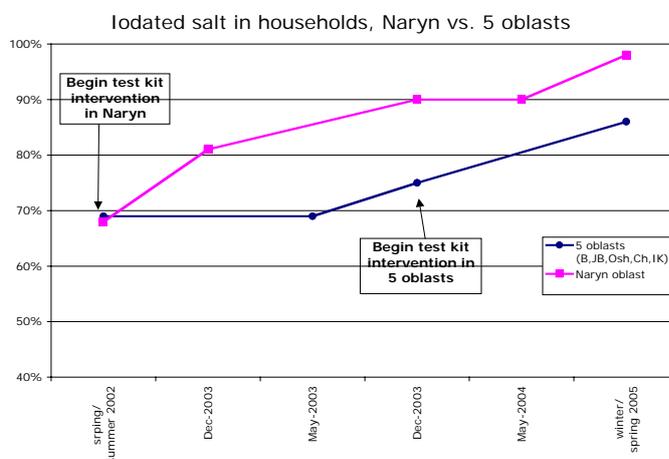
At the beginning, this strategy was tested in Naryn oblast. Figure 1 summarizes the effectiveness of this strategy: Within three years iodated salt in households has risen from 67% to 98% for the oblast

Figure 1



- In 2004-2005 “Naryn” strategy was extended country wide with UNICEF support. The results of 2005 cluster survey with a sample size of 5,400 households nation wide showed that there is an increase in iodated salt in households from **75% in 2004 to 86% in 2005**.
- MICS3 survey started in Kyrgyzstan in November 2005. Module on iodized salt availability and its consumption by children and pregnant women is part of this survey at household level and will be used to monitor USI efforts in the country.

Figure 2



4) Awareness raising and ensuring acceptance among partners and the end users

- Video film “Children can not wait” has been produced. It illustrates DAR for Kyrgyzstan and calling to strengthen efforts to alleviate VMD. This film was used as advocacy tool during National Fortification Alliance meetings, trainings with customs, salt producers and salt retailers.
- More than 700 salt retailers in the largest markets of Bishkek city have learned how to test salt using MBI test kits and are convinced to procure and sell only iodized salt. Seventy customs workers were trained to test salt using MBI testers and were convinced that only iodized salt should be imported into the country. The test kits were provided to all retailers and customs to test salt before procuring and importing it.

- One training session was conducted for customs officers. More than 70 custom personnel were trained to test salt using MBI testers and were convinced to allow only iodized salt to be imported into the country.
- Communication strategy will be developed and implemented during 2006-2007. It will help to increase consumer demands and acceptance of iodized salt

5) Production and supply of iodized salt

By the end of 2005, iodized salt production and use increased in Kyrgyzstan. For now, there are 14 local salt enterprises officially registered in Kyrgyzstan. They produced up to 85 % of iodized salt in 2004 compared with 2002 (35%). Fifteen percent of salt is still imported from neighboring states, mainly from Kazakhstan.

- Salt Industry managerial and technical capacity was strengthened. Fourteen salt producers were trained to produce better quality iodized salt. Production and supply of iodized salt by local salt industries has been increased up to 85% of the country's needs.
- Marketing analyses on iodized salt started in 2005 to assist salt producers to develop efficient communication strategy to increase demand, better promote iodized salt at market level and increase consumption of fortified food by population.
- Procurement mechanisms to purchase fortificant and equipment were discussed and developed during the Second CARK Regional Conference of Salt Producers in 2005. Manufacturers of Potassium iodate and importing companies were identified and more favorable import conditions were negotiated

Main Constraints 2005:

1. Political situation has been unstable during most of the year and has had an impact on implementation of IDD elimination programme. Chair person of the National Fortification Alliance has been changed twice during the year. Because of it, political commitment to eliminate IDD needs to be re-advocated again
2. Food processors do not use iodized salt for food processing obligatory as stated in Law. Contradiction in law and regulations did not allow SES to sustain appropriate and regular control over the salt quality, consumption and availability.
3. Salt industries became self sufficient in procurement of potassium iodated since 2005. SES control of internal monitoring systems at the industry level has showed that the internal monitoring system is still weak and producers still are lack of managerial and technical skills. Therefore, capacity of local salt producers needs to be strengthened through workshops, exchange of expertise, strengthening monitoring system.
4. Need to further strengthen advocacy and mobilization of all agencies involved in process of import, production, control and trade of salt and fortified food.
5. Accelerated action is needed to increase capacity to build acceptance and increase consumer's awareness and improve the marketing of iodized salt. But, efforts to raise awareness and ensure acceptance by the general population are still supported only by international organizations.

Perspective for short-term and medium-long term:

Kyrgyzstan belongs to 7 countries in CEE/CIS and the Baltics Region where IDD elimination will need to be extended beyond 2005.

UNICEF Country Office will use the funds provided by USAID by the end of 2006 to make sure that:

1.5-year National Plan of Actions to eliminate VMD, 2005-2010 is adopted. Appropriate budget lines are increasingly being adopted in Government budgets (quality control, monitoring of biological data and public reporting of progress).

2. Well functioning external monitoring system is developed by SES. Food processing industry (bread bakeries, cheese manufacturers, meat processors, vegetable preservation) is regularly checked and reports are consolidated by SES. Feedback mechanism between SES and salt producers is existed. Food processing industry is being supplied with only iodized salt. Results of monitoring are reported by producers and SES to National Fortification Alliance twice a year.

2. Community-based household/retailer salt monitoring system is maintained countrywide in collaboration with Association of FGPs, Republican Center of Health Promotion, ADB and Kyrgyz-Swiss Health Reform Support Project

3. IDD/USI topics are inserted in mainstreamed educational curriculums including the use/demonstration of iodized salt with test for their effectiveness.

4. A consolidated module of household salt testing is developed and incorporated to integrated analyses of households (5 000 households) conducted by National Statistical Committee quarterly.

5. Rapid IDD/USI survey among pregnant women and school children is conducted by Endocrinology Center Bishkek to monitor trends in iodine nutrition among the most sensitive group

6. The Salt Producers' Association is being continuously stimulated. Potassium iodated is regularly procured by salt producers, internal quality control system is strengthened at salt industries level, the progress in iodized salt supplies is reported to NFA. Management and technical capacity of salt producers is strengthened.

7. Communication strategy to maintain awareness, ensure acceptance and consumer demand for fortified food including iodized salt is developed and communication campaign is implemented countrywide.