

Sudan launches universal salt iodization

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Millions of Sudanese children will benefit from the new USI program

Iodine deficiency in Sudan is widespread with less than 10% of the population having access to iodized salt. It is particularly severe in the mountains of Darfur and Nile State where goiter rates approach 90%.

An IDD Control Program was initiated in Sudan in 1989 using iodized oil capsules and this program continues in highly endemic regions of the country. In 1994 Sudan adopted salt iodization as the long-term strategy to control IDD, but there was no order or decree prohibiting the sale of non-iodized salt. A recent household survey reported iodized salt coverage was only 9.3%.

The National Nutrition Directorate under the Federal Ministry of Health is the lead government agency responsible for monitoring the salt iodization program in Sudan.

Salt production in Sudan

Salt is produced mainly in the Red Sea State where >95% of Sudanese salt is made by solar evaporation of Red Sea brine. Small quantities of rock salt is produced at Jabal Marra in western Sudan. Based on per capita consumption, Sudan needs about 140,000 tons of salt per year for edible use. Other requirements include about 30,000 tons of salt for production of caustic lye and 15,000 tons for other non-edible uses. Thus, the total annual requirements are about 185,000 tons. No salt is imported and salt produced in Sudan is exported to Ethiopia, Chad, and the Central African Republic. In Port Sudan there are 17 salt manufacturing units, of which two are in the government sector. Two major producers in the private sector account for ca. 130,000 tons of production.

A new initiative

A major new initiative of ICCIDD, with funding from CIDA, plans to increase national awareness of IDD in Sudan at all levels. It will support the USI program in Sudan, define the steps needed to improve coverage of iodized salt and set up a rigorous quality control and monitoring system. The specific objectives are to conduct advocacy meetings and national level workshops; train the salt industry and develop a training manual for sustainable salt iodization and capacity building; conduct a situation analysis and identify the challenges and major constraints for universal iodization in Sudan; establish a robust QC/QA system with training of laboratory personnel; and, finally, establish a national multi-sectoral body to oversee implementation of the program and steer policy.

The ICCIDD team in Sudan, in close collaboration with Sudanese Federal Ministry of Health, is made up of the ICCIDD Regional Coordinator, Dr Izzeldin Hussein, a senior quality control and laboratory expert, Dr Husain Al Jawarnah, and the renowned Professor Mohamed A.



New iodized salt packages produced in Port Sudan

El-Tom, the ICCIDD national focal point in Sudan. Their main partners from Sudan are the salt industry, the Director of Primary Health Care, the Director General of Industry and the Director of the National Nutrition Program, as well as representatives from the UNICEF, WFP, MI and WHO offices in Sudan.

Legislation on USI enforcement

As a first step, ICCIDD contributed to the

drafting of comprehensive salt iodization legislation in 2010 with the Ministry of Health, the National Nutrition Program and other regulatory bodies in the country. The legal provisions on monitoring covered two aspects. First, self-monitoring by the salt industry defined procedures for internal monitoring, where the industry routinely examines its own processes and procedures to identify and correct problems found. Second, external monitoring is



At the launch, the Federal Minister of Health of Sudan, Dr Al Khair El Noor (R) and the Director of Primary Health Care of Sudan, Dr Talal El Fadil (L) are awarded a plaque of recognition from Izzeldin Hussein of ICCIDD (center).

legislated by the government pursuant to its inspection and investigation powers. However, until 2012 the implementation of the law had not been formally approved and this remained a major obstacle.

Launching USI

Therefore, the next step in Sudan was the launching of the new legislation and the national program on USI, a long-awaited event including all stakeholders. In an upbeat and festive ceremony sponsored by ICCIDD, the launch took place in the Red Sea State in June 2012 and was attended by more than 15 federal and state ministers, governors, head of localities and legislative authorities, director generals of various government departments, directors of the police and army, the directorate of measurement and specification and the school health and nutrition department leaders. Attendees included representatives of salt retailers and wholesalers, salt producers, health insurers, as well as representatives of UN agencies in Sudan, the humanitarian aid agencies, and FAO. Also participating were pediatrician and children's organizations, representatives from preventive medicine, pharmacology and laboratories, as well as artists and media representatives.



The ceremony included a moving carnival that started from the Ministry of Health and toured the city, then moved to the

governor's office and on to the exhibition site where the salt iodization plants are operated. The Health Minister and other stakeholders inaugurated the exhibition, and the launching program included speeches from the governor, ICCIDD, WFP, UNICEF. The new salt legislation was read to the public by the chair of the legislative council and officially brought into force. The event received wide media coverage and a full report and video of the activities is available online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNmSxG2MCV4&list=UUUbZgznmnWnyjLihsqNsDwQ&index=1&feature=plcp>

The future

The launching resulted in a consensus statement on actions needed and principles to follow to accelerate the progress towards USI. ICCIDD and the Nutrition Directorate in Khartoum agreed to draw up a Plan of Action for the 5-year period 2012-2017. The plan aims to increase the



to increase coverage of the population with adequately iodized salt. It will also continue to advocate at high levels to ensure continuing governmental interest in enforcing salt iodization to improve national health and economic development.



Hussain Al Jawarana of ICCIDD demonstrates quality control measures during training of Sudanese salt producers on proper salt iodization

knowledge and awareness of the population, increase coverage of iodized salt to 90% of the population, and conduct a national survey to track progress after the introduction of iodized salt. It includes social marketing, social mobilization and training of USI monitors across the country to establish a proper surveillance system. To ensure sustainability, ICCIDD coordinated the formation of the Sudan national IDD coalition and will support their efforts