

India Micronutrient National Investment Plan For 2007 -2011 Launched Today

The Micronutrient Initiative, an international not-for-profit organisation, launched the India Micronutrient National Investment Plan (IMNIP) for 2007-2011 today. The Investment Plan seeks to provide micronutrient protection to 206 million high risk beneficiaries per year (average) over a five year period at an additional cost of Rs 587-733 crore per year (USD 130-163 million). It is about Rs 5.40 per capita per year, which is fifty times less than the estimated per capita yearly loss to GDP resulting from micronutrient deficiencies (Rs 284). The IMNIP builds on the significant activity currently underway in the country and the infrastructure already in place.

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The Micronutrient Initiative, an international not-for-profit organisation, launched the India Micronutrient National Investment Plan (IMNIP) for 2007-2011 today. The Investment Plan is the result of a highly participatory process carried out in 2005-06 by a task force consisting of representatives of government departments, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and international organizations. The Investment Plan seeks to provide micronutrient protection to 206 million high risk beneficiaries per year (average) over a five year period at an additional cost of Rs 587-733 crore per year (USD 130-163 million). It is about Rs 5.40 per capita per year, which is fifty times less than the estimated per capita yearly loss to GDP resulting from micronutrient deficiencies (Rs 284). The IMNIP builds on the significant activity currently underway in the country and the infrastructure already in place.

The Investment Plan and the current situation in India was discussed in detail with senior Government Officials, leading scientists from across India and international agencies who were present on the occasion. It was also recognized that the IMNIP's total additional costs for activities addressing children under two and preschool age children (excluding Vitamin A supplementation), was working out to be Rs 77.6 crore per year on average. Compare this to the 2005-06 annual ICDS budget of Rs 3315.25 crore, which targets the same age groups!

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Luc Laviolette, Regional Director, Asia, The Micronutrient Initiative, said, 'More than 2 billion people worldwide suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies, of which 35 per cent of them live in India. Women and children are the most affected and these deficiencies kill children and women, damage health, impair work capacity, impact reproduction, reduce intelligence and occupational choices.'

Mr. T.S.R. Subramanian, former Cabinet Secretary, Government of India and currently Chairperson of the Micronutrient Initiative India, an Indian non-profit Trust, said, 'The lower end total cost (Rs 587 crore per year) represents the highest priority interventions and will accounts for only 0.1 per cent of the total expenditure budget for 2005-06 and less than 5 per cent of the Central Health budget (2006-07). Given the small additional costs compared to the huge potential benefits in the field of public health, we are confident that these proposed interventions can be funded in the 11th Plan.'

In addition to being an input to the 11th Plan which is currently being drafted, the Investment Plan constitutes a template for the interested state governments to develop comparable micronutrient investment plans on the grounds, now well established, that the cost of a comprehensive programme to reduce micronutrient deficiencies will be far less than the cost of not addressing the

problem.

The proposed India Micronutrient National Investment Plan (IMNIP) expenditures should be viewed as an investment in the health and well-being of children, adolescents, reproductive age women and the population as a whole. While, over extended periods of the time, economic growth alone could lead to reductions in some of these deficiencies, financial support of the interventions presented in this Investment Plan represent a commitment to provide for this generation cost-effective solutions that improve human well-being and enhance human resource potential. The World Bank estimates that it would take until 2034 for India to reach even the malnutrition rates currently observed in sub-Saharan Africa if it relies only on economic growth.

The IMNIP explicitly seeks to address those targets of the Planning Commission's 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-2006) that have yet been achieved, i.e. Eliminate Vitamin A deficiency as a public health problem. Reduce the prevalence of anemia by 25 per cent and moderate and severe anemia by 50 per cent in children, pregnant and lactating women, and adolescents. Achieve universal access to iodized salt. Generate district-wide data on iodized salt consumption. Reduce the prevalence of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) in the country to less than 10 per cent by 2010.

The report further recommends that a public-private-civic partnership be established, with a time-bound 5-year plan specifying targets, priorities, interventions, delivery channels, investment and recurring costs. The report suggests that financing mechanisms and partnership arrangements be developed and adopted by the Central and State governments. The private sector's role should be to develop, finance and implement programmes while the civic organisations could add value in terms of consumer protection, public education, media services, research as well as local commodity delivery. Some of the recommendations outlined in the report include strengthening and scaling up existing interventions with additional interventions and enhanced delivery systems to control vitamin and mineral deficiencies in India.

To elaborate further, the interventions recommended by the report include: promotion of exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months; twice yearly Vitamin - A syrup for children in the age group of 9-59 months, home based fortification premix for children aged 6 - 24 months, nutri-candies for children in the age group of 24 - 72 months. Vita-shakti to fortify the food for children aged 24 - 72 months in the ICDS and Mid- Day Meals programmes, fortification of staple foods consumed by the poor (e.g. wheat flour, oil, milk).

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About The Micronutrient Initiative

The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) is a not-for-profit organization specializing in addressing vitamin and mineral deficiencies. MI is governed by an international Board of Directors. MI supports and promotes food fortification and supplementation programs in Asia, Africa and Latin America and provides technical and operational support in those countries where micronutrient malnutrition is most prevalent. MI carries out its work in partnership with other international agencies, governments and industry. MI is based in Ottawa, Canada and maintains regional offices in New Delhi, India and Johannesburg, South Africa.

The MI has been present in India since 1997 and has since then worked closely with National and

State governments as well as the private sector and civil society to increase awareness about vitamin and mineral deficiencies. The MI has developed unique products (e.g. fortified nutri-candies) and helped reinforce existing delivery systems (e.g. Integrated Child Development Scheme - ICDS). MI-supported programs have reached more than 100 million vulnerable people in India.

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