



## **ILSI Center for Health Promotion Micronutrient Deficiencies Program**

The ILSI Micronutrient Deficiencies Program has been developed to assist in eliminating dietary micronutrient deficiencies through the fortification of staple foods and condiments around the world. The Program's first initiative is called Project IDEA (Iron Deficiency Elimination Action), which develops and implements country-specific fortification strategies to significantly reduce the incidence of iron deficiency anemia, the world's most prevalent nutritional disorder.

The problem of iron deficiency anemia is widespread in most developing countries. Iron deficiency anemia, the most severe form of iron deficiency, affects an estimated 2 billion people worldwide. Its consequences include impaired cognitive development of young children, increased maternal and infant mortality, and diminished work capacity and productivity.

Ongoing Activities of ILSI's Project IDEA:

- 1. China:** The preliminary findings of a recent three month efficacy study of iron fortified soy sauce show that fortified soy sauce is effective in improving the iron status of school age children. A regional efficacy study is planned pending funding availability.  
  
China has a serious iron deficiency problem. About 40 percent of high risk groups, including children and women of reproductive age have iron deficiency anemia. The national prevalence is estimated at 20 percent among all population groups.
- 2. Mexico:** In 1998 the Mexican government began a multi phase plan for fortification of corn and wheat flours. Project IDEA will support this program with an efficacy trial pending funding availability.  
  
Iron deficiency is the most prevalent micronutrient deficiency in Mexico. Studies have documented a national prevalence of anemia of 15.4 percent in women of reproductive age and 18.2 percent in pregnant women. The prevalence was substantially higher in certain sub-populations.
- 3. India:** ILSI India, the Micronutrient Initiative South Asia Regional Office, and Project IDEA successfully conducted a National Conference on Micronutrient Fortification of Foods this past February. A declaration was issued calling on all sectors of government to assign the highest priority to the elimination of micronutrient deficiencies, and specifically, millers of wheat flour are being asked by government to fortify with iron.
- 4. Indonesia:** Project IDEA has collaborated with UNICEF to conduct several workshops to promote iron fortification in Indonesia. As a result, Indonesia began fortification of wheat flour in January of 1999.
- 5. Vietnam:** The generosity of the Nippon Foundation has allowed Project IDEA to focus on iron bioavailability studies, efficacy studies, production of fortified fish sauce, training, monitoring and evaluation of fortified fish sauce. A coordination/review workshop was held in May 1999 in Hanoi to coordinate efforts in China, Vietnam, and Japan.
- 6. Egypt:** The Egyptian Nutrition Institute, the Micronutrient Initiative, and Project IDEA have co-sponsored a workshop on flour fortification with iron to focus on the problem of consumer perceptions of fortified foods and how to make fortification acceptable to the public. The workshop was well received and had strong representation from government agencies, academia, industry, and the general public.
- 7. Zambia:** A 1998 survey of anemia found 65 percent of children anemic, and 41 percent anemia in women of reproductive age. Project IDEA was presented and discussed at a four day micronutrient planning conference in April. The objective of the conference was to plan a five year national program in Zambia to control micronutrient malnutrition. Project IDEA plans (if funding is available) to support research on the fortification of maize meal—a common staple food in Zambia and other Southern African countries.

As detailed above, ILSI seeks to collaborate and work with all relevant partners in order to have the most impact on a specific issue in a defined population.