

**Abstract of a major presentation at the  
International Conference**

**Forging Effective Strategies to Combat Iron Deficiency**

**Atlanta, GA USA  
7-9 May 2001**

**Organized and sponsored by:  
ILSI Center for Health Promotion  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Emory University  
Micronutrient Initiative**

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found at the website of the International Life Sciences Institute  
(<http://www.ilsa.org/>)**

**Measuring Progress: Strategies for Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Dr. Rebecca J. Stoltzfus, Dr. Gita Pillai**

Departments of International Health, and Population and Family Health Sciences,  
Bloomberg School of Public Health, The Johns Hopkins University  
Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Monitoring and evaluation are an essential part of all good programs, including programs to control iron deficiency. Good program evaluation is especially critical in the case of iron programs because of the widespread (and sometimes erroneous) perception that programs do not work. Program evaluation is needed:

1. To provide the best programs possible by detecting problems or limitations and thereby giving opportunity to solve them.
2. To sustain funding for an existing program
3. To advocate for new funding, either locally and/or on a regional or global basis.

A plan for monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated into a program plan right from the start. The opportunity to demonstrate success (and to detect and address program limitations) is never so great as when a program is first initiated. Several strategies will be presented for designing an evaluation into a new program. These include probability evaluations, plausibility evaluations and program monitoring. For any program, the potential parameters that could be measured in program evaluation should be listed out and the ones finally chosen for measurement need to reflect a best balance of resources, feasibility, usefulness, sensitivity and policy relevance. Different levels of evaluation parameters will be discussed, using examples from iron programs. Finally, evaluations are only useful if they are disseminated. This takes time and resources, and is often a neglected part of the evaluation. These concepts will be illustrated using a recent evaluation of an enhanced antenatal supplementation program implemented by CARE, India.