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Forging Effective Strategies to Combat Iron Deficiency

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Priority Actions Needed to Prevent and Control Iron Deficiency in the Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan and Other Countries in the Region

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Iron deficiency anemia is a major nutrition and health problem requiring priority actions in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (CARK). An updated set of action priorities must consider the continued high levels of anemia prevalence, current and planned activities, recent progress, ongoing constraints and the potential to mobilize resources. The actions called for take into account over a decade of research and program activity in these countries as well as current health reform achievements and problems in each country.

The first national Demographic Health Surveys in the area, undertaken and conducted by the Nutrition Institute of Kazakhstan (NIK) in 1995, raised significant international notice of the problem. The second DHS survey in Kazakhstan showed the persistence of anemia in that country at levels of over 50% in women of reproductive age and children less than three years of age. National specialists from the area, including those of the NIK, and international partners developed a basic strategy for anemia prevention and control (APC), which requires developing effective interventions of preventive iron supplementation for children and women, flour fortification, nutrition education and ongoing monitoring and key research.

The Asian Development Bank has begun working with the governments and institutions in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Mongolia in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank to utilize a \$6 million grant to support universal iodization of salt and fortification of wheat flour. The NIK plans to provide technical assistance across these five countries for this new project.