

**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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Policy Directions

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A very important principle coming out of this meeting is the need for partnerships--for people working in different areas such as research and development, communications and program operation to find ways to overlap, link and work together towards common goals. In that regard, there is a critical need for a clear, well-defined, global goal that expresses the need for a substantial reduction of iron deficiency in children and women by 2010. Having a goal is crucial, both to support policy development and to secure adequate resources.

Not only is a clear goal needed, but we must also make sure that the goal is on the global agenda. We have heard about the concerted effort to include an iron deficiency goal as part of the outcome of the upcoming Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Having such a goal is critical because it will provide a focal point to stimulate actions and generate support at both the global and national levels.

Effective mechanisms to achieve our goals in addressing iron deficiency include sound advocacy, balanced research, and effective program action. Sound advocacy is needed to obtain political commitment and resource support. Balanced research is also needed that addresses not just what to do, but also how to do it well, which implies a need for investment in program evaluation. And, of course, progress in preventing and controlling iron deficiency will depend on effective action programs.

The key to effective advocacy is communication. We may look back to see this meeting as the event which marked the mainstreaming of communications in our fight against iron deficiency. To have effective advocacy we will need clear and consistent messages. We must emphasize not only that the burden of iron deficiency is costly and unacceptable, but also that the solution is feasible and cost-effective. Advocacy strategy should be based on carefully selected issues and proposed actions, in order to keep a focus. And, messages must show the conviction that we can do it.

Effective programming requires being sensitive to the local situation in defining the strategy mix and priorities. Choosing the right strategy will need to utilize the best available evidence to define the technical and operational feasibility of the proposed program actions. Also, we must show evidence that programs work by building in and maintaining adequate monitoring and evaluation.

Moving forward requires that we use the knowledge and skills we now have for the design and implementation of action programs. Of course, ongoing research and development is also needed that is linked effectively to communications and that supports program operations. Finally, we must emphasize the importance of effective

communications that are linked to an overall strategy, understand and cater to demand, are precise, focused and convincing and that support advocacy efforts and behavioral change.