

## **Strengthening the supply chain of iodized salt through national and state level activities**

### **Summary Report**

As per the Coverage Evaluation Survey (CES) 2009, Coverage with adequately iodized salt in India was 71.2% with another 20% consuming salt with some iodine in it. Improving the quality of iodized salt in terms of iodization has been the key concern for achievement of Universal Salt Iodization (USI) in the country. Supply chain of the iodized salt was considered as one of the weakest link in terms of monitoring and is vital in terms of ensuring the quality of iodized salt in the country. A project was launched by ICCIDD in five high priority states in support with GAIN in April 2013 to strengthen the supply chain of iodized salt. States of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh was selected as high priority on the basis of iodized salt production and size of the population.

A National Workshop to develop strategies for strengthening Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme (NIDDCP) and the supply chain of iodized salt through national and state level activities was organized in April 2013 to kick-start the project. Focal points with experience in public health were recruited in each of five states who conducted situation analysis of supply chain of iodized salt and its enabling factors. Following factors were deemed as bottlenecks in strengthening the supply chain and achievement of Universal Salt Iodization (USI) in these five states:

- a) Low priority to USI Programme**
- b) Sub-optimal regulatory monitoring of quality of iodized salt**
- c) Lack of synergy in the action of various stakeholders**
- d) Inadequate capacity among small scale salt producers**
- e) Inadequate bargaining power of traders vis-a-vis salt producers**

National and state level activities were taken by ICCIDD and the state focal points to overcome these bottlenecks.

### **National Level activities**

Intense sensitization of national level policy makers like Salt Commissioner of India, officials in Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) viz. Secretary, MoHFW; Joint Secretary (RCH), MoHFW; officials from Ministry of Commerce and Industries, and officials in Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, officials in the Ministry of Railways was undertaken. ICCIDD took up the concerns of the salt producers and traders with Salt Commissioner and other officials from the Salt Department. ICCIDD also facilitated the participation of Salt Department officials in meetings with traders and producers in Bihar, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

### **State Level Activities**

ICCIDD and state focal persons undertook a series of activities viz. sensitization meetings with policy makers in Ministry of Health, Department of Food and Civil Supplies, Salt Trading Corporations, salt producers, traders and other partner organizations. Advocacy meetings were organized with Health Department officials and officials from Department of Food and Civil Supplies in all five states, with officials from Tamil Nadu Salt Corporation and Tamil Nadu Civil supplies Corporation in Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan Civil Supplies Corporation in Rajasthan.

Sensitization meetings with officials from state Food Safety Authorities were conducted in all states. ICCIDD, in association with GAIN, Salt Commissioner's Office and Indian Salt Manufacturer's Association, organized a national workshop of salt producers "Celebrating success of USI in India for sustainable elimination of IDD in India". Meetings with salt producers and traders were also organized in Tuticorin, Chennai, Nawa, Patna and Lucknow to sensitize them about USI. Salt traders were also supplied with Salt Testing Kits for capacity building for assessing the quality of iodized salt.

ICCIDD also intervened to strengthen the monitoring of quality of iodized salt through two different models-

1. **Monitoring of iodized salt by salt traders 'association-** In Bihar, Iodized Namak Apoortikarta Kalyan Sangh (INAKS), an association of salt traders has established a laboratory to assess the quality of iodized salt supplied to the members of the association. As a result of intense advocacy with state Food Safety Authority, notification was issued for designating the INAKS laboratory as an accredited laboratory. ICCIDD also conducted the training of laboratory personnel of INAKS.
2. **Monitoring of iodized salt by USI cells in academic institutions-** USI cells are established with support from UNICEF in medical colleges for monitoring of quality of iodized salt at major salt trading points in Uttar Pradesh. Through the state technical sub-committee of state USI Coalition, triangulation of information from state USI cells, state Food and Drug Control Administration and state IDD Cell could be achieved for effective action.

**Apart from national and state level activities, mainstreaming of Management Information System in the Salt Department (Salt-MIS) was undertaken with support from an IT agency VBSOFT (India) Ltd.**

## Major outcomes of the project

1. **Higher visibility and priority to the USI Programme-** As a result of intense advocacy with key stakeholders and alignment of IDD Control Programme with Maternal and Child Health Programmes, USI programme could achieve high priority and visibility, which was leveraged to achieve action by other departments and stakeholders to improve monitoring of quality of iodized salt and strengthen the supply chain.
2. **Strategic action by state Food Safety Authorities –** Food Safety Authorities in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat undertook special drives to monitor the salt iodization level. While the drives in the state of Gujarat and Rajasthan covered the production centres, drive in the state of Uttar Pradesh covered the consumer end. In Bihar, Food Safety Authorities started monitoring the quality of iodization of the edible salt in major salt unloading points. These activities were targeted to achieve maximum impact given the paucity of resources in the state Food Safety Authorities in terms of manpower and infrastructure. Action in the salt consuming states also had a cascading impact on quality on the iodized salt in production centres. Action by Food Safety Authorities was also facilitated by sharing of real time information on movement of iodized salt by Salt Department.
3. **Constitution of state USI Coalitions-** State USI Coalitions under the State Health Departments were notified in Bihar and Gujarat. In Uttar Pradesh, a technical sub-committee of the state USI Coalition with participation from various partner agencies and academic institutions was notified and the state USI Coalition is in the advanced state of notification. In Tamil Nadu, a multi-stakeholder meeting on USI under the chairmanship of Director General of Health Services (DGHS) endorsed the state USI Coalition and it is in the process of being notified. Rajasthan already had a state USI Coalition. Two meetings of these state Coalitions was held. State USI Coalitions are acting as a lynchpin in strengthening the supply chain of iodized salt in various states by taking action identified by the members of the Coalition like action by Food Safety Authorities in various states, instructions to District Magistrates in Rajasthan for periodic review of salt iodization, state IDD survey in Gujarat, inclusion of iodized salt in East Champaran district of Bihar etc. Sharing of information on action by Food Safety Authority through the platform of USI Coalition also resulted in cancellation of licenses of salt producers in states of Gujarat and Rajasthan.
4. **Capacity building and increased bargaining power of salt traders-** Abolition of quota system for allocation of railway wagon for transport of the iodized salt and supply of salt testing kits increased the bargaining power of salt traders vis-à-vis salt producers.
5. **Mainstreaming of salt MIS-** Through the training of personnel at different level, the usage of salt-MIS increased by 90% .