



New & Noteworthy in Nutrition



POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU

Welcome to the first PRB issue of *New & Noteworthy in Nutrition*.

As many of you know, *New & Noteworthy in Nutrition* was first published in May 1980 as an internal newsletter for World Bank staff. It was prepared by Alan Berg, a pioneer in policy and program work on international nutrition and then senior nutrition adviser of the Bank. The early versions of *NNN* provided information about major research findings; lessons from recent conferences; new policies and programs; insights from program evaluations; and other cutting-edge issues that compelled the nutrition community at the time. Each edition was known for its clarity, wit, and lighthearted tone, which made it especially interesting to its readers. Eventually, the audience expanded beyond Bank staff to include “friends of nutrition” in many places.

Alan Berg continued writing *New & Noteworthy* until July 2000, when the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) took over its production and distribution. IFPRI’s work on *New & Noteworthy* was led by Stuart Gillespie, and continued until 2003 with the support of several organizations. IFPRI has now graciously turned *NNN* over to PRB. *New & Noteworthy* added value in two ways. First, it helped those working in nutrition, many of whom are narrowly specialized, to obtain information across the many domains of their field. Second, *NNN* provided information about key nutrition concerns in a clear and readable manner to a wide variety of people working on health and development.

Our goal in reviving the publication of *New & Noteworthy in Nutrition* is to enhance learning opportunities on nutrition and to complement SCN News, produced by the United Nations’ Standing Committee on Nutrition, and other relevant materials. We hope to maintain the clear and engaging style of *NNN*’s earlier editions. While it may not always have the exciting headings and wording that Alan Berg could uniquely provide, we hope that it will continue to be helpful and something that you and others will look forward to reading.

We plan to use the Internet in several ways to enhance *NNN*’s quality and reach. First, we will link information in *NNN* to source materials online. Second, we will have a regular section called “Whatever Happened to . . .” that will be based on selected reader submissions. Lastly, we will seek continuous e-mail comments from readers about how we might ensure that *NNN* meets its substantive aims.

Though we hope to be able to expand its production, *NNN* for the moment will be published every four months and will be based on a review of recent literature, news articles, and outcomes of important events and conferences related to nutrition. We will also enlist the input of experts in nutrition research and practice as we prepare each issue.

If the response to *NNN* is a good one and if sufficient financing is available to underwrite its modest production costs, we will produce it quarterly and translate it into Spanish and French. We would also appoint an editorial board to help review each edition.

Before signing off, I would like to thank the many people who provided input and advice for this issue of *NNN*, including Stuart Gillespie. I would also like to offer special thanks to Anne Hoffa and Soo Lee, interns at PRB, who were very helpful to this effort.

With best regards to all and looking forward to hearing from you,

Richard Skolnik
Director, International Programs
Population Reference Bureau



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In the Headlines

PRB Enters the Nutrition Arena. The Population Reference Bureau, long known for its objective and evidence-based work on demography, population, and reproductive health, has entered the nutrition arena with a package of nutrition efforts. PRB's involvement in nutrition reflects its concerns about the centrality of nutrition to other issues of human health, productivity, and well-being. In July, PRB sponsored a seminar on nutrition and chronic diseases. In August, PRB held a press briefing focused on nutrition for the release of its annual *World Population Data Sheet*. Nutrition was also featured in an accompanying PRB *Population Bulletin*, and in a policy brief on malnutrition written by James Levinson and Lucy Bassett. The brief is an effort to summarize in a clear, user-friendly, and evidence-based manner the most critical nutrition issues in global health and what we have learned can be done about them in cost-effective ways.

www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2007/2007WorldPopulationDataSheet.aspx

PRB also recently published a brief on nutrition and the elderly, as part of a program on aging sponsored by the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

www.prb.org/pdf07/TodaysResearchAging8.pdf

Gates Foundation Adopts Nutrition Strategy.

Considerable interest exists in the nutrition community about the entry of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation into nutrition. As foundation staff have already indicated in a number of forums, the overriding goal of their efforts in nutrition will be to reduce the DALYs lost from undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in low- and middle-income countries by 70 percent over the next 20 years. The strategy will pay particular attention to low birth weight and undernutrition from conception to 24 months of age. In support of these goals, the foundation will:

- Help to close selected gaps in nutrition science, including, for example, questions concerning

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interactions among certain micronutrients and between iron and malaria.

- Support population-based interventions in nutrition through fortification and bio-fortification, building on efforts already underway with foundation assistance.
- Seek to reduce underweight through targeted interventions among children 0 to 24 months of age, paying particular attention to breastfeeding and low-cost complementary foods; related to this, the foundation will also support efforts to gain a greater understanding of the factors that influence birth weight.
- Strengthen the capacity of nutrition programs in selected countries by enhancing both awareness of the importance of nutrition and by improving country capacity to deal with nutrition issues.

Importantly, the foundation will not support efforts to address the nutrition/HIV link as a separate matter, or therapeutic feeding.



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The nutrition community will, no doubt, follow closely the relative priority that the Gates Foundation will attach to different parts of its strategy; the extent to which it will support “operational” and “research” efforts; and how fast any research findings can be put into practice.

www.gatesfoundation.org

The Lancet on Nutrition. In early 2008, *The Lancet* is planning to publish an important series on nutrition in maternal and child health. This will be similar to other special series published in the last several years on neonatal health, child health, and reproductive health. The aim of the coming series will be to provide evidence of the importance and determinants of maternal and child undernutrition in global health; provide evidence of the effectiveness of nutrition-related interventions and programs with respect to morbidity, mortality, and human potential; and place nutrition-related interventions within a broader context of policies and programs that may affect nutrition and health. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is planning to support the dissemination of the series, with a special emphasis on five countries. A question on the minds of some in the nutrition community is whether *The Lancet* series will place more emphasis on immediate action to implement what is known or on calling for more research.

www.thelancet.com

Clinton Global Initiative Turns to Nutrition.

Especially noteworthy at the Clinton Global Initiative’s September annual meeting was inclusion of a session on “Addressing Over and Under Nutrition.” Among other things, that session highlighted the importance of “harnessing business models to help deliver public goods,” such as the Danone Group’s creation of a fund to invest with Grameen Bank in plants that will make fortified yogurt that will be affordable to the poor in Bangladesh. Similar efforts are underway in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh with the Britannia Corporation to develop fortified foods for school feeding. Ready-to-eat therapeutic foods are now being manufactured in cooperation with the private sector in a number of countries as well, including Malawi, Ethiopia, and Niger. Clearly, business models are increasingly being applied to a number of social areas, including nutrition, and it will be very important to carefully evaluate their lessons, general applicability, and the extent to which they meet the needs of the truly poor. For the complete webcast of the nutrition section of the Clinton Global Initiative:

www.kaisernetwork.org/cgi2007/

Ending Hunger and Child Nutrition Initiative.

To strengthen the focus on reaching the Millennium Development Goal target of halving by 2015 the number of people suffering from poverty and hunger,

UNICEF and the World Food Program (WFP) have taken the lead in establishing a new program called the Ending Hunger and Child Undernutrition Initiative (ECHUI). Emphasis will be placed on assisting national governments to mainstream the elimination of child hunger and undernutrition; providing policy support and well-informed advocacy; and mobilizing additional resources in support of national efforts to use resources effectively and efficiently and in a coordinated manner. Interested parties are watching how this fits with the many other initiatives underway. For more information: www.unicef.org and www.wfp.org. Be on the lookout for a new website for the initiative.

The Micronutrient Forum. Istanbul hosted the first annual Micronutrient Forum in April. It focused on multiple micronutrients, expanding upon the work of the International Vitamin A Consultative Group and the International Nutritional Anemia Consultative Group. The theme of the meeting was “Consequences and Control of Micronutrient Deficiencies: Science, Policy, and Programs—Defining the Issues,” and it included sessions on the most recent findings on breastfeeding and HIV/AIDS transmission; neonatal dosing of vitamin A, particularly in South Asia; and the impact of zinc on diarrhea, as well as a preventative measure in other contexts. Information about the forum, as well as slides from participants and poster presentations, can be found at:

www.micronutrientforum.org/Meeting2007/

The proceedings of the forum are going to appear as a special supplement to Sight and Life magazine: www.dsm.com/en_US/html/sustainability/sight_life.htm

New Approaches

‘Rapid Results.’ Attention was focused at a recent meeting at the World Bank on an effort in Kenya to get vitamin A-fortified cooking oil on the market 100 days after the initial commitment, using a unique business approach called “Rapid Results.” In formulating their strategy, the team worked backward from the target, and then identified the specific steps and financial resources necessary to achieve the goal, which they ultimately met. The rapid development of this new product was a combined project of the Micronutrient Initiative and the Rapid Results Institute. More information on it can be found in an article in the 2007 Commonwealth Health Minister Book, “Accelerating Food Fortification,” by Milla McLachlan, Julia Moorman, and Danny Manitsky.

Carrots and Sticks. Several months ago, the World Bank hosted “Carrots and Sticks—The Political Economy of Nutrition Policy Reform,” one of the first



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meetings ever held on the politics of nutrition. The discussion focused on several topics, including nutrition efforts in Senegal, and particularly the political advocacy work of Biram Ndiaye, national coordinator of the National Committee Against Malnutrition in the Prime Minister's Office, and his team. The workshop also brought out the extent to which nutrition efforts in the Iringa District of Tanzania, once well-known for its pioneering community-based nutrition efforts, had fallen into disrepair and now has the highest rates of malnutrition in the country.

Programs Without Projects? Perhaps because of concern over so little progress, or even backsliding in nutrition, the government of Tanzania, the World Bank, and UNICEF are working together to leverage general support to the Tanzanian national budget toward encouraging improvements in nutrition. This effort aims to enhance the coverage of vitamin A and deworming; spread iron supplementation; and increase the knowledge and uptake of appropriate caring behaviors. It also aims to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of nutrition efforts by decentralizing them, reducing the size of the central nutrition unit, and increasing the inputs into nutrition of other sectors such as education. It will be important to review the specific results of this effort later, given both its innovative nature and the skepticism of some in the development community that general support to a country's budget can be used to encourage improvements in specific health and nutrition outcomes.

Update on GAIN. Early data from a Chinese project to fortify soy sauce with iron suggests a one-third reduction in iron-deficiency anemia among women and young children, reports the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), which is supporting this project in conjunction with the China Centers for Disease Control. GAIN is hoping to achieve important progress against micronutrient deficiencies as well, by working closely with national fortification alliances in another 16 countries, including Ghana, Code d'Ivoire, Vietnam, and Bolivia. GAIN has also launched a major project to fortify 70 percent of the cooking oil in Bangladesh with vitamin A by 2010. GAIN is turning additional attention to the feeding of children ages 6 to 24 months, and is issuing an expression of interest for GAIN support for six to seven large-scale efforts in enhancing the nutritional status of this group. As GAIN continues to grow, it is also working with others on a "ten-year strategy process" to harmonize and coordinate efforts across existing micronutrient agencies, in hopes of capturing for nutrition some of the gains that the Stop TB Partnership, for example, has garnered for TB. www.gainhealth.org

'Appropriate Technology' Wins Development Marketplace Award. A gravity-fed flour mill that automatically adds correct amounts of iron, folic acid, and vitamin A to the grains being milled was among the first awards ever for nutrition at the Development Marketplace of the World Bank. The mill was developed by the Micronutrient Initiative (MI), in conjunction with its Nepali partner, Imagine Lalitput, and is meant to fortify flour in villages without electricity. The final pilot testing of the mill was conducted in 2006-2007 with the financial assistance of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and this effort will now be extended to 100 mills and 22,000 villagers. For more information: 2006-2007 annual report of MI at www.micronutrient.org

Nutrition and Health

Is Vitamin D the Next 'Big Thing'? Walter Willett, the prominent nutrition epidemiologist at the Harvard School of Public Health and the person responsible for the longitudinal nurses' diet studies for several decades, is taken with the increasing evidence from his studies about the importance of vitamin D. This is far more important than calcium, he says, in the prevention of bone fractures, and he is certain that increasing attention will be given to vitamin D in coming years.

A study recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* concludes that an abundance of vitamin D seems to help cut the odds of developing multiple sclerosis (MS). Of the 7 million samples studied by researchers at Harvard, people with the highest blood levels of vitamin D were 62 percent less likely to develop MS than people with low levels. <http://jama.ama-assn.org>

Yet another new study suggests that a shortage of vitamin D may play a direct role in poor physical performance among the elderly. In the April issue of *The Journals of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*, researchers said that elderly people with low levels of vitamin D did worse on tests involving physical skills. <http://biomed.gerontologyjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/62/4/440>

Given recent evidence on the widespread deficiency in vitamin D in children even in regions of the world with abundant sunshine, the rationale for fortification of staple foods with vitamin D appears strong. In several developed countries, milk is fortified with vitamins A and D. Appropriate forms of vitamin D can also be added to cereal flours or with vitamin A to cooking oils. The incremental costs of this would be minimal, at only about 5 cents per capita for a whole year.



... And Folate? In a well-controlled study of U.S. Medicare patients published in the *Archives of Neurology*, those in the highest one-quarter of folate intake, from both diet and supplements, were 50 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's than those in the lowest one-quarter. Interestingly, there was no significant association of Alzheimer's risk with dietary folate alone. <http://archneur.ama-assn.org>

A somewhat similar study among older people in the Netherlands (*The Lancet*, May 12, 2007) found that those taking folic acid supplements scored, on average, significantly higher on five tests of mental functioning than those receiving placebos. And a study last year in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* concluded that folic acid may stave off cognitive impairment. However, a new study in *JAMA* concludes that folic acid does not lower the odds of heart disease, stroke, or death of heart patients, as some had earlier thought. www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/full/84/2/361
<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/contentfull/296/22/2720>

Promising preliminary results have been achieved from feasibility studies of fortifying sugar and iodized salt with folic acid and testing of similar efforts is set to begin in Guatemala shortly. This work has been led by the Micronutrient Initiative, in conjunction with the University of Toronto. While prevention of folic acid deficiency for pregnant women has been effectively achieved in several countries where wheat flour is a staple food, neural tube defects have not been appropriately addressed in regions of some countries with the highest burden of disease from this deficiency, such as in areas of India, where wheat flour fortification does not reach millions of women at risk.

And What About Omega-3s? A recent study in *The Lancet* showed that children of women who ate little fish during pregnancy had lower IQs, more problems with fine motor skills, and more behavioral and social problems than children whose mothers ate plenty of seafood. The latter children, at age 8, showed significantly higher IQs. www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673607602773/abstract

Walter Willett, at a recent talk at the Population Reference Bureau, stressed the significance of Omega-3s. He said it now looms largest in his mind as a nutrition need that demands a wake-up call: "I don't see how you can build children without it."

Nutributter for Prevention? A recent study in Ghana conducted by Seth Adu-Afarwuah, Anna Lartey, Kenneth Brown, Stanley Zlotkin, and Kathryn Dewey was the first time that the effects of three different strategies for home fortification of complementary foods were compared, and also marked the first time that a fat-based product (Nutributter) was used for prevention of malnutrition and not just for treatment. The study found that all three strategies improved iron status and reduced anemia but only Nutributter had an impact on growth. The Nutributter group showed no growth faltering between 6 and 12 months, whereas the other groups all showed a decline in length for age. In addition, the percentage of children who were able to walk independently at 12 months was doubled in the Nutributter group (from 25 percent in the nonintervention group to 49 percent in the Nutributter group), and the percentage who achieved this milestone was the same as would be expected in a normal healthy population (50 percent). In other words, growth and gross motor development were normalized using a low-cost, fortified, fat-based supplement that can be added to the child's usual food. A paper with these findings has been submitted for publication.

Breastfeeding Is Still Best? A massive outbreak of diarrhea and related child fatalities from diarrhea that occurred after severe flooding in early 2006 in Botswana raised issues for breastfeeding that were not anticipated. Investigators from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the government of Botswana investigated the epidemic and found the diarrhea to be caused, among other things, by "infant feeding-bottle contamination with human waste and ongoing person-to-person transmission." www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=58668

In addition, the investigators found that affected children were 50 times more likely to not have been breastfed. It appears that recommending formula feeding to HIV-positive mothers, put in place before antiretroviral therapies became widely available, was partially responsible for the outbreak of diarrhea. This study highlights important concerns about the use of breast milk substitutes in sub-Saharan Africa; if Botswana cannot safely manage their use then it is unlikely that other countries in sub-Saharan Africa could do so. www.retroconference.org/2007/data/files/webpage_for_CROI.htm (see the presentation by Tracey Creek)

Growing Obesity in Brazil. The burden of obesity is shifting to the poor in Brazil and public health policy must now focus on obesity for all segments of Brazilian society. This is the conclusion of a new study



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by Carlos Monteiro, Wolney Conde, and Barry Popkin, published in the October 2007 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*: “Income-Specific Trends in Obesity in Brazil: 1975 -2003.”

www.ajph.org

Fat and Getting Fatter. The share of children in the United States who are overweight has tripled in the last 20 years and now exceeds 17 percent, according to a recent CDC study featured in *The Economist* (Aug. 25, 2007). There has been a continuing drop in the proportion of school-age children in the United States who have daily physical activity at secondary school, and 99 percent of the country’s secondary schools sell snack foods. The article suggested that, despite a 2004 federal law directing school districts to have “wellness programs,” efforts at the federal, state, and local levels to address obesity in school children have been “haphazard,” with less than half of the schools meeting new nutrition guidelines.

Curing HIV With Nutrition??? Neither food nor food supplements are alternatives to drug therapy in treating people with HIV, according to a long-awaited report by the Academy of Science of South Africa, released recently. For many this is not news, but in South Africa the climate is quite different following the health minister’s sustained advocacy of garlic, lemon, and African potatoes as substitutes for antiretroviral drugs. The report’s release also coincided with President Mbeki’s sacking of the pro-ARV deputy health minister. Among several disturbing aspects of this long-running national debate in South Africa is the persistent political framing of the issue as “either/or”—either good nutrition or ARV drugs—when both are clearly needed.

In fact, there is considerable concern among those who work on HIV and on nutrition that HIV-positive people who are malnourished cannot benefit as they should from treatment with antiretroviral therapy alone. Related to this, recent appropriations legislation in the United States includes language that “suggests” the spending of US\$100 million of PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) resources on nutritional support—though it is not yet clear what the final bill will look like. One challenge is the need to promote understanding that food can benefit people who are only moderately malnourished and not only those who are severely malnourished.

On the Food Front

Feeding Our Cars. Will rising demand for ethanol and biofuels adversely affect food supplies of the global poor? An article by C. Ford Runge and Benjamin

Senauer of the University of Minnesota in the May/June 2007 issue of *Foreign Affairs* argues that Americans should take measures to conserve energy more and diversify the sources used to make ethanol. The authors assert that the United States could make ethanol more efficiently from products other than corn, but uses corn for this purpose because of the powerful corn and soybean lobby. They also argue that the use of these products for ethanol will eventually affect the prices of staple foods substantially. This worry, however, is not limited to corn: Cassava and palm oil, often eaten by the poor in food-insecure regions, are also prime candidates for ethanol production in countries such as China and Nigeria.

www.foreignaffairs.org

An analysis by Joachim von Braun and R.K. Pachauri of the International Food Policy Research Institute, however, is more optimistic. They argue that, due to its labor-intensive nature, ethanol production has the potential to raise incomes and reduce food insecurity in spite of the unavailability of certain staple foods. Furthermore, they believe that poor farmers stand to benefit from the increasing demand for agricultural inputs, and/or energy-based crops that can grow even in degraded and marginal lands where food production is no longer sustainable. They predict that there will be less of a tradeoff between food and energy than some expect, particularly as technology improves. They do insist, however, that more must be done to inform the poor about the opportunities which ethanol presents, and that policies to prevent environmental degradation must be put in place.

www.ifpri.org/pubs/books/ar2005/ar05e.pdf

Big Project Plans

The Mother of All Nutrition Projects? An effort is underway to revamp the world’s largest nutrition and child development program, India’s Integrated Child Development Scheme, to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency and to more forcefully address the country’s very high rates of young child undernutrition. Among other indications of seriousness, the prime minister discussed the need to act on undernutrition in his Independence Day speech. Nutrition mapping of districts at risk has been done and an investment is being prepared that is likely to be the largest effort ever undertaken to try to enhance the nutritional status of young children.

Ghana Nutrition and Malaria Control for Child Survival Project. In July 2007, the World Bank approved the Nutrition and Malaria Control for Child Survival Project. This project will be financed by



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an interest-free credit from the Bank for the equivalent of \$25 million, of which about \$13 million will be for community-based health and nutrition service delivery. The project will cover 62 districts with about 600,000 children under 2 years of age. The indicators for the project include the proportion of infants exclusively breastfed for six months, infants 6-to-9-months-old receiving appropriate semi-solid foods, and children under 2 who receive oral rehydration therapy for diarrhea. The project also includes indicators on the proportion of children under 2 who are regularly weighed, households using iodized salt, and children 6 to 59 months who receive vitamin A supplements. <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?Projectid=P105092&theSitePK=40941&pagePK=64283627&menuPK=228424&piPK=73230>

Complex Humanitarian Emergencies

Afghanistan still suffers from chronic food shortages and malnutrition. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, 45 percent to 59 percent of children under 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition. Poor diets, consisting largely of wheat, tea, and oil are also blamed for pervasive levels of micronutrient deficiency.

www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2007/1000485/index.html

Gaza has become more food insecure after the recent dissolution of its unity government. According to World Vision reports, fully one-third of children are now anemic, and with family incomes falling, that rate and the rate of malnutrition are only expected to rise. www.worldvision.org/news.nsf/582cb1bdec5d4d44872570a00063a2e0/621fee6118c01128825731b005d97ea!OpenDocument

UNICEF estimates that about three in 10 children in **Iraq** are chronically malnourished or stunted and have low height for their age. Poor sanitation is a major contributor to nutrition problems in young children, as is the breakdown in health services.

www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=23920

North Korea suffered floods in October that ruined 10 percent of its crops and further threaten the nutritional status of its population. North Korea has a very limited food inventory, and a study by the Korean Rural Economic Institute indicated that the country will need an additional 1.4 million tons of food to meet the population's nutritional needs. There is no agreement about the extent to which the recent floods will cause famine. However, the floods cannot be helpful to the almost 40 percent of North Korea's children who were chronically malnourished when the last UN nutritional survey was done in 2004.

www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L18370792.htm

Other News to Note

The Last 40 Years of Nutrition and Counting.

We encourage readers of *NNN* to participate in a survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=y9VmUhRODT4bM_2ba2cpHu4A_3d_3d. Last month, the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition announced an important new study of the international nutrition community to be led by Alan Berg and F. James Levinson. Forty years ago *Foreign Affairs* published "Malnutrition and National Development," an article by Berg that made an initial effort at placing the problem of malnutrition in a development context. A main thesis, now generally accepted but new then, was that malnutrition was an important drag on the level of national development and not just the result of it, and that there were low-cost and effective actions that could be taken to address it. Alan has been asked to revisit the analysis and prescriptions of that *Foreign Affairs* piece, which was later expanded into his seminal book, *The Nutrition Factor: Its Role in National Development*. Results from this current survey will feed into the broader study. Ten years ago, Jim Levinson surveyed the international nutrition community to gather its perceptions in conjunction with his 1997 Martin J. Forman Memorial Lecture, "How Are We Doing in International Nutrition?" published in *SCN News* 15. In that lecture, Levinson reported the community's views on such matters as the most important advances and major disappointments encountered; the prospects for a career in the field; and the relative ranking of international organizations in their service to countries and their malnourished populations. The new study will look at some of these same issues, as well as:

- How does actual experience over this period compare to the earlier vision?
- What worked and what did not work, and why?
- And what are the implications of these findings for the future?

The results of the survey are scheduled to be presented at the 35th SCN Session in Hanoi in March 2008, as part of SCN's 30th anniversary, and will be published in *SCN News* 36 (July 2008). (Thanks to the SCN for this information.)

www.unsystem.org/SCN/Publications/html/scnnews.html

Copenhagen Consensus 2—Making the Skeptical Environmentalist Less Skeptical.

The Copenhagen Consensus is updating its 2004 assessment of the extent to which investments in development were "good buys." The earlier effort concluded that providing micronutrients was among the very best buys in development and that another good buy was



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developing new agriculture technologies. Reducing infant and child undernutrition and low birth weight were considered “fair” investments.
www.copenhagenconsensus.com/Default.aspx?ID=158

Susan Horton is taking the lead in work on nutrition and Juan Rivera and Harold Alderman are also involved in this effort.
www.copenhagenconsensus.com/Default.aspx?ID=788

Nutrition Resources and Education

Study at Tufts From the Comfort of Your Own Home! Tufts University’s Friedman School of Nutrition is beginning a new venture in distance learning on nutrition. It will be a combination of online learning and face time with Tufts faculty, similar in some ways to “executive education courses” in business.
http://nutrition.tufts.edu/1172048107668/Nutrition-Page-nl2w_1174562918741.html

nutrition—the Magazine. The aim of *nutrition* is to improve field-level practice by encouraging nutrition practitioners to write up their experiences and share them with others. It also provides updates on nutrition-related policy, research, and technical issues. Each issue has a theme and three issues have been published so far, covering nutrition and HIV/AIDS, breastfeeding, and anemia. A poster is provided with each issue. *nutrition* is free and available in English, Vietnamese, and Portuguese and disseminated to subscribers on the nutrition database (over 12,000 organizations and individual subscribers worldwide). The magazine is produced by a partnership of northern- and southern-based nutrition institutions. The central northern-based agency is NutritionWorks, a partnership of three independent international nutritionists based in the U.K. To subscribe:
www.nutritioninternational.org.uk

Hot-Button Topics

Iron and Malaria. Important questions remain about the extent to which one should provide iron in zones that are endemic for malaria, since “iron supplementation at doses recommended for otherwise healthy children carries the risk of increased severity of infectious disease in the presence of malaria or undernutrition.”
www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/New_Publications/CHILD_HEALTH/WHO_statement_iron.pdf

The two largest randomized trials on this issue to date are parallel randomized placebo-controlled studies conducted by Johns Hopkins University in Tanzania and

Nepal to assess the efficacy and safety of iron and folic acid supplementation with or without zinc for children under 2 years of age. The results, published in 2006 in *The Lancet*, confirmed the efficacy of iron supplementation, including a reduction in mortality in iron-deficient children. However, they also raised questions around the safety of iron and folic acid supplementation for children in high malaria transmission settings who are not iron deficient.

Following the study, WHO issued a statement on iron supplementation of young children in regions where malaria transmission is intense and infectious diseases are highly prevalent. They advised that supplementation in malaria-endemic areas should be targeted to those who are anemic and at risk of iron deficiency. WHO also advises that conclusions from the Pemba study on iron supplementation cannot be extrapolated to fortification or food-based approaches. Subsequently, WHO convened a technical consultation in Lyon, France, which confirmed these recommendations and reiterated the safety of fortified foods, specifically fortified complementary foods, also including fortified cereals and double-fortified salt. However, the meeting concluded that in-home fortificants, such as Sprinkles, needed more research. *NNN* will follow this important issue closely.

Growth Monitoring and Promotion? Markedly increased attention is being given by some of the international nutrition set to community therapeutic care for severely malnourished children in developing countries beyond that which is used in emergency situations. Related to the increased interest in therapeutic feeding is also the perception of some members of the nutrition community that there is a decreasing interest in growth monitoring promotion—the monthly weighing of young children with responsive behavior-change action as appropriate. One important question, borne partly of the experience from HIV/AIDS, is the extent to which increased attention to therapeutic feeding can be carried out without being at the expense of the much greater problem of moderate malnutrition, given both the time and the financial costs of therapeutic feeding.

‘Conditional’ Attention. Another topic much discussed these days in nutrition is the use of conditional cash transfers (CCTs). Generally, these are cash payments made to families to encourage them to participate in programs that will enhance their nutritional, health, or educational status. A family might get a monthly allowance, for example, for each month that they bring their child for a well-baby checkup. These conditional cash transfers have been used more in



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Central and South America than elsewhere, but their use is spreading. Some nutrition and development professionals believe that CCTs have already shown they can work effectively and efficiently. Others believe that the word is still out on them, that we need more evidence before adopting them so vigorously, and that they may not be promoting needed behavior change in a sustainable manner. The World Bank is now completing an important evaluation of the experience with such transfers to date. Stay tuned to *NNN* for more on this important topic.

Whatever Happened to . . . ?

We will close each issue of *NNN* with a section entitled “Whatever Happened to . . . ?” in which we take a look back at the ideas that were supposed to help save the world nutritionally but didn’t, such as prescriptions for program emphasis on fish protein concentrate, lysine fortification, single-cell protein, and leaf protein concentrates —part of the preoccupation in the nutrition community in the late ‘60s and ‘70s with protein. Whether the ideas fell through for a lack of resources, because the necessary technology didn’t exist at that point, or for some other reason, we invite you to think back and send in one-paragraph write-ups of ideas, projects, plans, or people worth remembering.

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