

## Sustaining Success

David P Haxton<sup>1</sup>

Consultant : 909 Elizabethan Drive, Greensboro, NC, USA, 27410.

Sustaining success requires new approaches and innovative alliances between the private productive sector, the national civil society and the government policy and regulatory groups. It requires commitment to the new norm of consumption of appropriate daily amounts of iodine as the new norm.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The health sector needs a success. Political and financial leaders in most countries are weary of annual petitions that have the sense of endless endeavors. A successful IDD elimination programme would justify arguments favoring public health and public nutrition ventures and demonstrate responsible methods of mutual support. The appropriate combination of national entities . . . public policy, private productive, civic, scientific, political . . . that has effectively placed the goal of elimination within reach gives us confidence that similar coalitions of effort are required for sustained success. Sustained DD elimination challenges a range of professionals and sectors not fully accustomed to collaborative efforts consider the public nutrition benefits to the nation arising from mutually supportive ventures. This paper offers a perspective on such collaboration and suggests minimal ways to accelerate maximum application to national nutritional threats.

It is good business as well as good politics to promote good national nutrition. Both the public sector entities and the private productive sector have much to gain from collaboration. Improved understanding of national interests is a prerequisite. Improved, sustained public nutrition is a key to national resilience, national productivity and national security. Sustained IDD elimination can demonstrate the mutually supportive benefits and provide confidence to undertake even more complicated ventures in public nutrition. If progress is to be made in improved public nutrition, it is imperative that public and private research, policy design and priority setting be mutually supportive in the national interest.

Success in eliminating IDD depends upon interrelated actions by various stakeholders not always conditioned to work together: sustained production of quality salt products at a fair profit; sustained market penetration to reach everyone in a nation; sustained consumer demand for good quality iodized salt at fair prices; sustained political commitment to national nutrition security; sustained civic society support for public investment in nutrition; sustained quality assurance to confirm advancement in human nutrition. A successful, sustained communications strategy is the glue to maintain horizontal and vertical integrity of commitments.

Permanent service delivery requires a different attitude on the parts of bureaucrats, of managers, of entrepreneurs. It demands a shift in operational standards and techniques to *sustain* rather than to *advocate* change.

Modern communications, technologies and management techniques are not employed to maximum benefit in many national programmes. Too often they still depend upon old fashioned reporting tools, outdated communications techniques and consume too many resources for the results obtained. Too few have professionally planned communications strategies.

### 2. SOME CONSIDERATIONS

There are six major issues national authorities should consider when contemplating sustained IDD elimination programmes:

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<sup>1</sup>David P Haxton, former Official of UNICEF; Board Member of ICCIDD; Advisor to Executive Director of MI; Advisor to PAMM; Former Secretary General of Junior Chamber International; Former Production Planner for Anheuser-Busch, Inc.

- Management to consolidate and sustain achievement is different from requirements to promote elimination.
- Modern technologies need to be applied to all operations, and applied more rapidly than now.
- Political commitment is mandatory and requires annual renewal just as renewed commitments for personnel, budget, and operations plans
- Roles of private, civic, scientific, and government entities to be mutually supportive demand new attitudes and operating styles.
- National Public Nutrition is more than a mere sectoral issue and demands more than narrow sectoral views and attitudes and requires a comprehensive, persistent communications strategy.
- Elimination of iodine deficiency is a human right protected by legal international instruments.

Usually, management entails supervision and administration of: raw materials; cash; personnel;

and facilities & equipment under one manager with a business plan. In IDD elimination the resources are spread across government sectors and budgets and in the private sector. Salt, a product of the market, is produced, packaged, marketed and sold under different budget and financial styles and techniques. Academic influence on the process is from outside both those groups. Consumption depends upon availability and consumer demand and preference. Successful sustained elimination requires adjustment of opinions to accept the simple truth that success depends upon management of production of appropriately iodized salt and successful demand creation for it. This includes the need for persistent sharing of knowledge on iodine needs and on dangers of deficiency. The usual IEC (Information, Education and Communication) will pay a part, but market advertising and promotion by private producers for public education and demand creation is a potent force yet to be fully exploited, especially via cultural, social and civic media. Expert services in quality control and training in private and public sector will need to blend as will monitoring services. Too often these are sectoral activities operated independently and do not uncover the latent potential in a range of national allies.

### **2.1. Management to Consolidate and Sustain**

Management to Consolidate and Sustain requires imaginative talent skilled at applying national nutrition policies in ways that stimulate private and civil initiatives;

and to allow those initiatives to develop within guidelines designed to stimulate and encourage more than mere control. It will require monitoring and reporting systems focused on what needs to be counted more than what is interesting to be tabulated. It will require skills at interagency collaboration based on perceived mutually supportive ambitions more than mere administrative governmental mandate. It will require new and modern techniques in personnel management and stimulation. Gradual expansion of use of electronic communications creates individual creativity, usually a challenge to heavy top-down bureaucracy. It also provides more information more rapidly, requiring more rapid management review.

Regular managerial monitoring of the *quality of the product*, the quality of the *process* of national execution, and the *quality of measured progress* in improved human nutrition will demand more rapid application of results all along the chain from salt sites to salt consumption to national analysis, publication and correction.

Any effective management requires regular and timely receipt of information and data bearing on operations and progress. Such information must be fed back into the system in ways that improve the situation, accelerate developments, correct deficiencies or assist in greater understanding. Many current monitoring efforts for sustained IDD elimination do not fully address the managerial needs because the approach is based on a disease surveillance model more often than a model taking account of market issues, public education issues and other factors. This is not to say that no similarities exist. But, too often in these programmes that approach suffers the common problem of inadequate utilization of the information gathered since the process was designed as a 'stand alone' process and not necessarily as a tool for multi sectoral management. Management of a communication strategy to sustain an achievement is much more challenging and requires persistent imaginative approaches than does a communications plan to eliminate a problem; the former is forever; the latter is short term.

### **2.2 Application and Adaptation of New Technologies**

Application and Adaptation of New Technologies will require major decisions on policy and on investment, training and programme design. There is little reason to

delay consideration of these issues. Governments and other entities need to consider the cost to progress of delayed investment in modern infrastructure. Sharing technologies of more advanced production facilities with those less well off in developing markets will have a positive impact on improved quality production and accelerate sustained elimination of IDD. Research and development money both public and private needs to be applied to a range of issues. Those interested in improved public nutrition should consider pressing for priority of allocations to national delivery needs than to institutional needs.

The use of modern communications from computers, electronic systems and cellular telephones and other hand held tools can all be applied to improve management and equally important, to improved monitoring. Imaginative application of these instruments will enhance information management, information sharing, information applications, monitoring, evaluation and correction. The current paper chain system can continue while a time bound plan to apply modern technology is designed and implemented. In looking at monitoring, we might also want to consider a greater focus on access to and consumption of iodized salt using modern cluster survey and market analysis techniques rather than the more laborious process which too often is a 'stand alone' exercise. Modern understanding of and trained personnel regularly to use cluster surveys makes reviews more easily planned and less costly. Once we have perfected the product and the access of people to its use, we can measure success in people more effectively and efficiently.

The near ubiquitous Universal Product Identification label has potential for monitoring iodized salt (and not just the sale of it) that begs urgent exploration on priority for extensive application. This could quickly and conveniently identify producers, production line, iodine level applied and other data to improve monitoring. Because it is not now widely used in some countries or not used for monitoring in this way is no reason to delay investigation of potential.

Research and development resources need to be applied to urgent improvement of the village salt testing equipment to improved laboratory techniques, from production sites to national centers. Where information on early warning of problems is gathered, it languishes in tortuous channels of government offices already clogged with reams of information. More direct communication between the problem identified and the manager with the solution is a priority. Cellular telephone use for reporting and monitoring is an activity to be explored.

Multiple fortification of salt is on the horizon, but is not yet at the priority level required.

Application of modern tools is accelerating between and among professionals, but application of modern tools to problems of poor people is lagging. Sharing of data, information, sources of support and acquisition, descriptions of problems solved, sources of technical and professional advice and consultation are spread across the vastness of the Internet. While certainly valuable, consolidation for management use should be a priority.

### **2.3 Political commitment**

Political commitment demands regular renewal. IDD will slip on the national agenda absent persistent attention to advocacy and to creation of innovative alliances to sustain high level performance. Absent high level political commitment, incentives to modernize bureaucratic procedures and inter agency devices wanes to the detriment of IDD programme efforts. In addition to the obvious national need to eliminate IDD and to sustain that elimination, there are a number of international legal instruments with which the nation must comply. Renewal and reaffirmation of political commitment as regularly as those of financial commitments, personnel planning and resource allocation is vital. Making them well known and publicly supported will create wider political acceptance of the needed priority. Since WWII most government and development agencies put great emphasis on roles of government in all services. Shifts in that emphasis from centralized direction and decision making to decentralized are increasingly evident. Trends toward "privatization" of services and service delivery are increasing. High level political commitment keeps priorities for IDD elimination high on the development agenda. That implies needs for alliance creation to sustain political interest and commitment.

But more than almost anything else, sustained political commitment requires clear and understandable evidence of success . . . and the dangers of regression. A guiding message ought to be "good nutrition is good policy; good nutrition is good politics." It is made easier when public demand supports the national endeavor; when seeking iodized salt is the new norm.

## **2.4 New Roles Require New Attitudes.**

Governments are not alone in 'downsizing'. Development agencies are seeking non governmental channels through which to funnel assistance for a variety of reasons. Essentially, non governmental channels are more flexible than formal institutions. The rapid increase in numbers of such groups combined with decentralized government and the potential of modern communications create new and uncomfortable pressures on national leadership. Part of that pressure is to foster innovative policies what work at sub national level and to overcome static bureaucratic hurdles. The challenge of this growing network of civic groups is not limited to reduced ambitions of governments, but to international agencies that still need to work out ways to deal with this new phenomenon in order to sustain IDD elimination. Since 1948, non governmental organization accredited to the United Nations has risen from about 41 to more than 1500. Many have been instrumental in sparking life into international meetings on the environment, on women and on legal issues affecting human rights. Some have won the Nobel Prize for Peace by their efforts. Improved public nutrition has a range of potential allies yet to be stimulated to see iodine deficiency as the danger it is.

The advent of the Internet with its array of unfettered information and that of the portable computer with its extraordinary expansion augurs well for improving the human condition. Non governmental groups are taking advantages of the facilities for a range of interests, not the least of which is to increasingly insert themselves into national policy discussions and formulation of public attitudes. Allies to sustain elimination of IDD need... on priority... to become involved in this new development vehicle. This will require personnel, professional and organizational attitude changes. Non governmental groups and their vast network now reachable via electronics have addressed vital issues not only of governments, but of private productive sector entities, and civil society.

Collaboration in effective and mutually beneficial ways is still new territory for producers of food and governments in the field of nutrition. That is not to say that progress is not notable; it is only to say that progress is difficult and ought to be made easier and freer. It is important to create mechanisms and systems to improve the ability of mutual support using relative strengths of civic, scientific, public and private sectors. Successful sustained elimination of IDD demands continued orientation to build mutual confidence. The confidence being built in ideation of salt will provide a basis for additional ventures.

## **2.5 Multi-Sectoral**

Multi-Sectoral and multi-professional collaboration is more than a slogan. Effective action to sustain elimination of IDD demand's support from a range of sectors, groups and professionals even wider that to eliminate the maladies. Practice in this kind of national endeavor is regrettably limited; and more so between public and private groups than others. The demands of IDD elimination call out for adjustment of attitudes toward wasteful efforts to maintain turf control. This is especially useless as information transfer via electronic means. The issue is more one of the how all can work together on a national security and development effort than one of seeking support to favored undertakings. IDD elimination offers opportunities to demonstrate ways in which such entities can mutually support one another to the greater good of the national society, but it requires imaginative leadership and an open willingness to share.

Government officials need to comprehend that most problems of development are not sectoral and require a societal approach. Gunnar Myrdal tried to teach us that in the 1950s. Such a stance requires more than repetitive rhetoric. Private producers need to seek new forms of collaboration with policy planners and regulators to be part of the overview not mere subject of decisions. Scientific and professional groups need to improve communications between and between themselves and with governments and private institutions in ways more meaningful than mere document exchanges. In a global environment rapidly approaching 24 hour television and radio, not to mention the Internet, it is important that the information the public receives is the best available. The full influence of education sectors, agriculture sectors and all of the health sector is yet to be exploited. Civic society has demonstrated its interest, but the full range of potential allies has not yet been explored.

Society as it grows more transparent will require public discussion of goals, of failings, and of successes. A transparent society will fairly reward and fairly punish.

## **2.6 Ignorance is not bliss.**

Each child has the right to be born to reach its own genetic potential. IDD prevents that. Elimination of IDD is a human right. National programmes have not yet undertaken to describe elimination IDD ... and thus the most preventable cause of mental retardation . . . as

a human right demanding legal, political, societal, legislative and civic active support.

There are ample international instruments available for political leaders in each nation, most ratified by appropriate legislative means to support national action. There is, however, all too often a disconnect between the international position taken in a UN forum and application in national legislation, national policy, and national enforcement. Ultimately foreign aid will end, and that is as it should be. Meanwhile, however, development agencies of the UN, like the IBRD, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO might provide invaluable assistance to more rapid consideration and implementation of existing UN Covenants, Declarations, and Resolutions. One way might be to agree to make it standards practice that each Head of Government/State be advised that consideration for loans or grants will be slow where implementation of commitments to improve and sustain improvement of the human condition is seen lagging.

### **3. CONCLUSION.**

Withdrawal of foreign aid gradually over time provides an opportunity to governments and producers alike to put permanent policies and practices into place. Many governments and societies have eliminated IDD without direct foreign assistance. In either situation, in the end most of the costs are borne by the consumer in purchase of iodized salt and through taxes to support the programme. UNICEF, WHO and ICCIDD have published "Criteria for Sustainable Elimination of IDD." They are clear, precise and (mostly) measurable. They provide criteria for reaching sustainable elimination. We need now to take the next dramatic step : accept criteria for sustaining the achievement. The Agencies have given guides on reaching the goal of virtual elimination. We must now accept that sustained innovative alliances between producers, the public and the national policy makers are required to assure protection of succeeding generations.

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