

# Guideline for Conducting a Salt Situation Analysis

## Rationale and Justification

In preparation for a Salt Producer meeting, the barriers faced by salt producers in universal salt iodization should be investigated. This information is needed for devising an agenda that ensures that participants in the Salt Producer meeting have ample time for discussing practical ways of tackling their problems. The overall aim of a salt situation analysis, therefore, is to clarify the barriers and opportunities for salt industry to achieve full coverage and consistent quality of iodized salt.

The salt situation analysis (SSA) described in this guideline is meant to be commissioned by UNICEF offices in countries participating in a regional Salt Producer meeting. The UNICEF officer-in-charge will provide oversight to ensure that the work of a SSA proceeds well, and on time. The consultant(s) contracted, apart from being knowledgeable of the salt industry, should have access to existing records (in industry *and* in government), and have entry to “captains” of salt industry for a visit for interview and discussion (See: [Key Informant Interviews](#) below). Only in exceptional cases is an outside consultant recommended. If new data should be collected, for instance on salt iodine levels in key brands in the market, it is suggested that students from a local polytechnic or university college could be used, for instance as part of their field work requirements.

## How to Conduct a Salt Situation Analysis (SSA)

Prior to commissioning a SSA, the following persons are recommended to be consulted by the local UNICEF officer for their advise. As appropriate, they are asked to be “national key informants”:

- *A strategically well-placed representative from the national salt industry, for instance, the Planning Director or Marketing Manager of a major salt producing or importing company <sup>1</sup>, the Chairperson of the National Salt Producers Association, or the representative from salt industry on the National IDD Committee, etc*
- *A data/monitoring specialist involved in the national IDD program*
- *A scientist knowledgeable of assessment and evaluation of public health nutrition programs, for instance from the national university*
- *A practitioner of a public health program, who is responsible for field work implementation and familiar with the details of how to conduct field data collection.*

The suggested Terms of Reference (TORs) for the SAA will be provided from the UNICEF Regional Office. After adapting the TORs to the local situation, and after defining the initial outline of the data needed and a workplan for its collection and interpretation, the UNICEF country officer should

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<sup>1</sup> Be sure to avoid the impression of favoring one company over the other.

consult with national key informants to find out how practicable the SSA proposals are. Suggestions for conducting the SSA are as follows:

### **Three Steps in Information Collection and Analysis**

The process of a SSA consists of three steps:

- *Preparatory work*
- *Data collection and verification, and*
- *Interpretation and dissemination.*

A technical expert is contracted by the local UNICEF office. A time plan of <1 month for completion of the SSA is sufficient. The UNICEF country representative will organize a briefing to inform high-level representatives of salt industry, key government departments (planning, industry, health, etc), other support agencies (WHO) and consumer organizations, while involving the press. In the briefing meeting, the UNICEF representative should explain the purpose of the SSA, outline the need and approach for information collection, and encourage common understanding that the SSA takes place in the *national* interest (not just the interest of industry or government).

#### **Preparatory work (1 week maximum)**

With help of UNICEF and the national entities briefed at outset, existent documents are collected to the extent accessible (see list of suggested documents and sources below). The consultant will review the records obtained, and submit to UNICEF a preliminary analysis which should cover the following aspects:

- *Achievements made in salt iodization*, as apparent from existing documents
- *Gaps of information* in the accessed documents (if any), and
- (A short-list of the) *Likely barriers for salt producers* to achieve universal salt iodization.

#### **Documents suggested for review**

- Government, agency, organization, or NGO reports on the salt supply (production/import quantities, brand distribution pattern, household coverage, and availability of iodized salt)
- Industry non-proprietary records on production, importation and distribution
- Industry guidelines on quality assurance procedures, activities, and corrective action
- Retail records of ordering, pricing, and sales
- Standard Operating Procedures/manuals for industry *laboratory* methods and procedures
- Industry laboratory assay *data and results* from QA performance
- Inventory records (procurement records, reagents, diagnostics, consumable items, etc.)
- Production and lab technician training and performance records
- Industry marketing development plans for various geographic regions.

It is recommended that the consultant verifies the conclusions of the preliminary analysis in a few quick interviews by telephone with the national key informants.

### **Data Collection and Verification (1 - 3 weeks)**

From the initial analysis, the consultant should proceed by:

- if needed, define the *justification for obtaining further information*
- develop a *proposed plan for data collection*, and
- submit a *proposal* to the commissioning organization.

Proceeding with the collection of additional data is the most critical decision. The aim of additional data collection should be to obtain the *minimum* amount of information which is considered *essential* for drawing conclusions about barriers and opportunities for salt producers (or importers) to attain universal salt iodization in the country concerned.

If additional information is needed, two methods for data collection are recommended:

- *observations during visits*, and
- *interviews of key informants*.

If all the sources of edible salt for a given country are known, no data collection on the *sources* of salt supply is needed, and only a decision is needed on which producers, importers or processing facilities to visit. In other situations, it is recommended that only the *significant* sources of edible salt are identified up to, say, 80% of all salt supplied, rather than a full salt supply for a given country.

### **Observations during visits**

- Visit salt iodization plants of a *typical selection* of large, medium and small salt producers or importers, to observe and record operations in iodized salt processing, procedures for quality assurance of iodized salt, and on-site laboratory methods and records of salt quality tests
- If relevant, obtain similar observations at salt packing facilities, particularly if salt processing (washing, crushing, refining, etc) takes place there
- Visit the warehouse(s) of (a) *typical selection* of wholesale and retail trader(s) to observe storage conditions and handling practices, to review purchase and sales data, and records of the turnover of edible salt
- Observe the types and varieties of edible salt for sale in (a) *typical selection* of market places, and collect information from vendors on prices, sales and regular clientele
- *Obtain samples of salt at each visit and determine salt iodine levels at each location.*

### **Key informant interviews**

- The general manager (often, the owner) of *significant* salt production plants; marketing manager, iodized salt production foreman, and the laboratory technician who is responsible for salt iodine tests
- The person(s) in-charge of importing and selling potassium iodate to salt companies
- A few *key* salt traders (wholesale, retail)
- Persons in-charge, if any, of *large* consumer groups (e.g., army, large factories, schools, etc)
- The *highest* possible placed food *standards* officer at national level
- One or two officers from the Provincial/State level regulations/ordinances and/or inspections office, who are *in-charge of enforcement procedures* (with preference in areas with important

- salt production or import facilities)
- Customs and/or Internal revenue official(s), as appropriate for the amount of salt imported
- Representative(s) of consumer organization(s).

By a selected combination of visits and interviews, the consultant should aim to be finished with data collection and analysis within 2-3 weeks. For each of the key informant interviews, a checklist should be prepared, prior to the visit, of the essential information to be obtained.

### **Interpretation and Dissemination (1 week)**

The consultant will compose short (possibly, only a few sentences) *factual* summaries of the findings from each visit and interview. Assisted by phone calls to the key respondents, the consultant should then proceed with drafting the judgments of the national salt situation, and prepare carefully worded conclusions for submission to the commissioning organization.

After acceptance of the report, the UNICEF representative should call a meeting to share the outcome of the SSA and conclusions and recommendations with the parties briefed at the start. Other means of dissemination (for example, the press) should also be explored.

## **Regional and Global Collaboration**

The Salt Situation Analysis in a country forms part of a coordinated global effort to strengthen the responsibility of salt producers in the global elimination of IDD through salt iodization. Similar SSAs, or local adaptations of the methodology described, will be carried out in neighboring countries. It must be remembered that for the salt industry, often the national boundaries do not determine where salt is produced, supplied and sold.

After completion of the SSA, the report should be shared with the regional UNICEF officer who is in charge of the preparations for a regional Salt Producer meeting. At this time, the UNICEF country office can also submit suggestions of possible participants for the regional Salt Producer meeting, on basis of the experience in the SSA in the country. To ensure access and exchange of state-of-the-art knowledge and information at the regional Salt Producer meeting, the [Salt 2000](#) organizers from reputable global salt industries are participating in its preparation and conduct.