

Preventing undernutrition in South East Asia by food based strategies



Policy advocacy meeting on public interventions in nutrition – SMILING project Bangkok, 27th and 28th of June, 2012

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Bring together key stakeholders and policy makers from five south-east Asian countries (Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam), and discuss with them the opportunities and potential benefits of food based interventions to prevent vitamins and minerals deficiencies in women and children is the objective of the meeting organized in Bangkok on June, 27 and 28. This meeting is part of the SMILING project, a project funded by the European Union. It aims at translating scientific knowledge to actions taking into account the specific context of each country.

Undernutrition, especially micronutrient deficiencies (vitamins and minerals) that concern more than two billion people over the world, early in life are keys in determining the development of individuals, as well as the health and well-being of adults. The first “1000 day period” has been shown to provide a unique window of opportunity to shape a healthier and more prosperous future for individuals, communities and the larger society. Thus, preventing micronutrient deficiencies in women of reproductive age, before and during pregnancy, and in infants and young children is essential not only for their immediate good, but for the health benefits that last their entire lives and perhaps even for future generations. An abundance of research shows that various preventive interventions offer high development returns and that the MDGs cannot be achieved without urgent attention to nutrition. Hence, the time is right for action.

Successful country-wide strategies require multi-sector ownership. Nutrition needs to be integrated within multiple sectors such as health, social protection, agriculture, education, and urban and rural development. The effectiveness of implemented actions requires an understanding of nutritional problems, their complex and interrelated causes, and the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders.

The “Sustainable Micronutrient Interventions to Control Deficiencies and Improve Nutritional Status and General Health in Asia” project (SMILING), funded by the European Commission, aims at informing the stakeholders and policy makers, and proposing priority agenda, strategic, efficient and sustainable actions which countries can adapt for effective implementation.

Coordinated by the NUTRIPASS Research Unit on “Prevention of malnutrition and related diseases” of the Institute of Research for Development (IRD) in Montpellier, the SMILING project brings together eleven partners, from government agencies and universities of South-East Asian countries and from European universities and research institutes specialized in research on nutrition in developing countries. The Institute of Nutrition at Mahidol University is the partner of the project for Thailand and responsible for the management and coordination of the project in its country.

Consequently, a meeting co-organized by the Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University and IRD was held in Bangkok the 27-28th of June to inform, discuss and advocate to policy makers and stakeholders of the 5 participating Asian countries and the international community on the potential of food based approaches, especially food fortification program for preventing/ improving micronutrient deficiencies among reproductive age women and infants and young children.

About Mahidol University: The Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University (INMU) was established in 1977 with the mission of strengthening the National Food and Nutrition Plan. To promote better nutrition for all throughout the life cycle through food and nutrition system, INMU has strategically conduct interdisciplinary research, provide education and training, and technical services. INMU has played significant roles in alleviating national nutritional problems through its active involvement in national food and nutrition policy-making, expert consultation and other technical supports to nutrition programs in the country. INMU has been designated as a Centre of Excellence and a Collaborating Centre by FAO and WHO, respectively. www.inmu.mahidol.ac.th

About IRD: The IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement) is a French research organism, original and unique on the European development research scene. Emphasizing interdisciplinarity, the IRD has focused its research for over 65 years on the relationship between man and its environment, in Africa, Mediterranean, Latin America, Asia and the French tropical overseas territories. Its research, training and innovation activities are intended to contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of southern countries. www.ird.fr

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