Iodine Deficiency Disorders

Goal
The virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders

Result
The iodization of salt is an enormous success story. Some 91 million newborns worldwide are protected yearly from a significant loss in learning ability as a result of increased usage of iodized salt. In 1990, less than 20 per cent of households in the developing world were using iodized salt. By 2000, some 70 per cent of households in the developing world were using iodized salt.

…but
There are still 35 countries where less than half the households consume iodized salt.

Issue
Iodine deficiency is the world’s single greatest cause of preventable mental retardation. Severe iodine deficiency causes cretinism, and even mild deficiency can cause a significant loss in learning ability. Other effects include goitre and, in women, a higher risk of stillbirth and miscarriage.

In the early 1990s, about 1.6 billion people – or one third of the world’s population – were at risk. The solution was relatively simple and low-cost: the iodization of all edible salt.