

Addressing Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies

Closing the Gap in Africa: Summary

The estimated cost to donors of providing effective protection against vitamin and mineral deficiency for up to 380 million¹ African women and children at risk would be US\$ 235 million per year for five years, of which US\$ 100 million would be needed by the health sector and US\$ 135 million by Social Protection. It is anticipated that after 5 years the extended protection provided by fortified and nutrient-rich foods should allow this cost to fall to US\$ 100 million per year.

Detail

Protecting newborns against brain damage with iodine

One third of the 33 million babies born in Africa each year are unprotected from iodine deficiency, and at least 3.5 million are born mentally impaired as a result. Maintaining the current protection levels while providing iodized salt to the 74 million still-unprotected women would require donor support of US\$ 31 million per year for five years with the cost after five years being largely absorbed by consumers. Of this US\$ 6 million annually needs to support the health sector.

Protecting young children against death and disease with vitamin A

Over 44 million African children are still deficient in Vitamin A and lack its protection against killer diseases. Providing twice yearly high dose supplements to 125 million children aged 6-60 months would need US\$ 50 million from donors, \$ 40 million of this going to the health sector; while protecting breastfed newborns by fortifying food for 25 million mothers a year would need a further US\$ 23 million of donor funding, \$ 4 million of this to the health sector.

Protecting women and young children against iron deficiency anemia

Protecting 74 million African pre-school children, 45 million adolescents and 63 million African women against iron deficiency anemia would require US\$ 131 million from donors, with \$ 52 million for the health sector. This investment would at the same time enhance the productivity of a third of the workforce consuming fortified cereals, contributing to a reduction in the estimated current productivity losses of 2% of GDP.

Donor funding going to Social Protection would support school feeding programmes, the food industry / agriculture, trade and standards, and community-focussed activities of social mobilisation and social marketing.

¹ 125 million children under five; 33 million pregnant + 180 million non-pregnant women of child bearing age; 45 million school girls

New developments in Agriculture including nutrient-rich crops and improved food processing could extend the benefits of improved vitamin and mineral status to the majority of Africa's people over the next 10 years. These projects are being developed and costed under the auspices of NEPAD's Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).