

FOREWORD

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) views nutrition in the broad sense as important to national development in its developing member countries (DMCs). From 1985 to mid-2004, ADB financed 31 regional technical assistance (RETA) projects in the related fields of health, nutrition, population, and early child development.

Nutrition is integral to the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on hunger and poverty. It is also instrumental in the efforts to achieve other MDGs, particularly those related to improvements in primary education enrollment and attainment, gender equity, child mortality, maternal health, and the ability to combat disease. Malnutrition is a multigenerational issue, as fetal development during gestation is influenced by maternal nutrition status. Women who were malnourished as infants are more likely to give birth to malnourished babies, and malnourished children have lower resistance to infection, thus making them more likely to die from childhood ailments. Those who survive are prone to frequent illnesses that worsen their nutrition status, trapping them in recurring sickness and faltering growth. Hence, infant malnutrition, especially for girls, plays an important role in perpetuating poverty and malnutrition across generations.

Within the region, there are glaring problems of malnutrition. For example, 60% of women in South Asia and 40% of women in Southeast Asia are underweight. Micronutrient deficiencies are widespread, affecting child survival and growth, women's health and pregnancy outcomes, brain development, educational achievement, adult productivity, and resistance to illness.

In 2004, ADB undertook a special evaluation study to review and analyze current and future nutrition and food fortification issues with a view to guiding future interventions in the broad area of health, nutrition,

and population. The study also explored whether links with malnutrition were included and examined in ADB's poverty assessments conducted in 24 DMCs, as well as 33 of ADB's country strategy and program updates. Also included in the evaluation were four of five RETAs undertaken since 1996 that were directly related to improving nutrition.

The results of the evaluation are presented in this document. Among others, the study shows that nutrition efforts should be appropriate to the nature and level of nutrition risk, and the capacity of government and other stakeholders. It is hoped that the lessons that can be drawn from past experience of a multilateral bank, such as ADB, and the recommendations for future interventions in this field will be of use to other agencies, both national and international.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people assisted in preparing this publication. First, the author would like to acknowledge Professor Yu Xiadong, People's Republic of China; Professor Sukirman, Indonesia; Dr. Buiuklianov Artur, Kyrgyz Republic; and Dr. Nguyen Cong Khan, Viet Nam; both for their advice during the Special Evaluation Study and for their valuable contributions in the effort to eliminate micronutrient malnutrition. Inputs and suggestions from Asian Development Bank (ADB) colleagues at headquarters and resident missions helped to sharpen the focus of the study. Dr. Robert Tilden and Pedrito dela Cruz provided consultant support, Maria Rosa Ortega provided research assistance, and Anna Rocel Alba gave administrative backup. Together, their contributions were invaluable in shaping the content of this document and its recommendations. The strong support of Bruce Murray and Graham Walter of ADB's Operations Evaluation Department in disseminating the findings and lessons from this study is greatly appreciated.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	–	Asian countries in transition
ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
ADF IX	–	Eighth Replenishment of the Asian Development Fund
CIP	–	country investment plan
CSPU	–	country strategy and program update
DALY	–	disability-adjusted life year
DANIDA	–	Danish International Development Assistance
DMC	–	developing member country
GAIN	–	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GDP	–	gross domestic product
HNP-ECD	–	health, nutrition, population, and early child development
ILSI	–	International Life Science Institute
JFPR	–	Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
JSF	–	Japan Special Fund
MDG	–	Millennium Development Goal
MI	–	Micronutrient Initiative
MOST	–	Micronutrient Operational Strategies and Technologies
NGO	–	nongovernment organization
RETA	–	regional technical assistance
SCN	–	United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition
SES	–	special evaluation study
TA	–	technical assistance
TCR	–	technical assistance completion report
UNICEF	–	United Nations Children’s Fund