

ZINC SAVES KIDS IN PERU - FIRST YEAR RESULTS

“The “Zinc Saves Kids” initiative, launched by the International Zinc Association (IZA) in support of UNICEF, has significantly helped the nutrition component of UNICEF Peru. Our national and local programs are aimed at reducing child mortality and improving the health, nutrition and development of thousands of girls and boys living in the rural areas of the country,” said Paul Martin, Representative, UNICEF-Peru. In its one-year progress report UNICEF indicated that multi-micronutrient supplementation for children under the age of five, as well as zinc supplementation for the treatment of diarrhea, have progressed significantly in Peru.



41.6% of the Peruvian population is at risk of inadequate zinc intake making it one of the highest-risk countries in the world for zinc deficiency. The project supported by the Government of Peru, UNICEF and IZA made multiple micronutrient powders (MNP), including iron and zinc, available to the 101,000 children aged six to 36 months living in the three prioritized regions Apurimac, Ayacucho and Huancavelica. 90% of children started MNP supplementation; in April 2011 58% received the complete dose of sachets covering six months – sachets were to be taken every other day.



“Thanks to IZA’s support, many children have overcome anemia. Health personnel and the parents of children noticed that after taking multi-micronutrients supplements, children were more alert, active, playful and had a better appetite,” commented Paul Martin.

Based on these results, the Peruvian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Social Development, with support of UNICEF, will expand micronutrient supplementation to 13 additional regions targeting 424,607 children between six and 36 months of age.

The Ministry of Health has also incorporated therapeutic zinc supplementation as part of the treatment protocol for diarrhea and has included zinc supplementation in the clinical guidelines for child healthcare. Zinc as a treatment of diarrhea was started in 24 health establishments in Ayacucho and Ventanilla with a population of 45,100 children under the age of five. 40,000 zinc sulphate tablets were distributed to 4,000 children in the Ventanilla district to treat over 5,000 cases of diarrhea. It is expected that by 2012 the administration of zinc tablets for the treatment of diarrhea will be expanded nationwide.