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commitment and support has made  
these and millions of other IDD  
success stories possible.

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KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL & U.S Fund for UNICEF  
**giving children A SMART START in life**

STORIES OF PROGRESS  
TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD



## TELLING THE HUMAN STORY OF A WORLDWIDE CAMPAIGN

In the years since the Kiwanis Family Worldwide Service Project and UNICEF have worked together in the global campaign to eliminate iodine deficiency, hundreds of millions of children have come into the world protected against losses in learning ability and severe mental retardation caused by lack of iodine.

The numbers are large, and the global impact on both human and economic development is enormous. But these broad statistics are just one aspect of the work of eliminating iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) by iodizing the world's salt.

The people whose faces you will see in this brochure tell the story of this worldwide campaign in an entirely different way. Whether Kiwanians, teachers, nurses, UNICEF staff, or others, their experiences show us why the work of eliminating iodine deficiency forever is, and continues to be, so important to people's lives.

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Educators in Romania feel that students are brighter and more likely to finish their schooling.





## BETTER GRADES FOR PANAMANIAN SCHOOLCHILDREN

"When Kiwanis started here with their program to detect goiter...we were scared to see so many people." Nurse Avis Masson works at Ocú hospital, about 90 miles from Panama City. The hospital attracts patients from Herrera and Los Santos provinces, where iodine deficiency in Panama hit hardest.

Kiwanian Ernesto Boyd headed up national efforts to eliminate iodine deficiency, working closely with Nurse Masson on the Ocú program. "When I see Ernesto coming, I'm glad because he always brings the answer to our needs," she says.

The results are clear. Thanks to Panama's salt iodization program and the work of dedicated people like Nurse Masson and Ernesto Boyd, Ocú hospital, which initially saw 1,500 patients with goiter, now deals with about 70, all mild cases.

Local teacher Graciela Vega de Ochoa sees a change since the program began. "The children's performance in school kept getting better. Some even received scholarships and have gotten good grades. And I tell people here how necessary it is to use iodized salt, that it has a big effect on children's academic performance."

Ernesto, whose work was publicly acknowledged during 2003 ceremonies to certify Panama IDD free, says his greatest reward is "knowing that 70,000 to 80,000 children won't be born with mental disorders" due to iodine deficiency. And as for Nurse Masson, she would like to continue working with Kiwanis, not only on iodine deficiency, but on other problems like iron deficiency. "Because we know that after five years, we will be successful," she asserts.

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Nurse Avis Masson has seen a dramatic turnaround from days when her hospital clinic was overrun by IDD patients.

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Ernesto Boyd talks with Bernardino Moreno about how Bernardino and his family benefited from Kiwanis funded programs in Panama.

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# PANAMA



## ANATOMY OF A PROJECT

“This is a complex project,” says UNICEF’s Dr. Tania Goldner of Romania’s program to eliminate iodine deficiency. “It’s about changing people’s knowledge and behavior, it’s about education, and then it’s about consumer behavior.”

Anna Dumirica and her classmates at Rosu-Chiajna Primary School learn about the importance of nutrition, especially iodized salt.

Urine is tested by Madalina Adriana Vlad, lab technician at the Center for Mother and Child, Bucharest, Romania. Urine samples from around the country indicate the increased levels of iodine in the diets of Romanians.

In Romania, before salt was iodized, the government had first to recognize that IDD was a problem, and then commit to solving it. Initial Kiwanis funds helped the national laboratory to monitor population iodine levels. The results pointed to the need for national action.

In 2002, legislation required all salt to be iodized. Kiwanis supported the purchase of two iodizing machines for the national salt producer, SalRom. By 2003, iodized salt had reached most markets. A national media campaign began, with an easily identifiable character – an animated sheep – featured on billboards and in television and radio announcements. Schoolchildren were targeted with curriculum-based messages about the importance of iodized salt, and asked to discuss the issue with their parents.

# ROMANIA

Once people were using iodized salt, salt and population iodine levels were monitored, ensuring that iodization levels were adequate to prevent the potential losses in intelligence and greater mental retardation that can result from lack of iodine. Now, monitoring is showing good results.

For Tania, herself a mother of two, working on the project has been rewarding, not only in terms of the link between iodine deficiency and intelligence, but because investment in the program can pay off in other ways. "Other very important effects of iodine deficiencies include miscarriage, low birthweight babies, and premature births. In a country like Romania where we have both high numbers of low birthweight babies, and very high numbers of premature births, we cannot **not** think about linking this to iodine deficiency," she says.

While it's a moment to celebrate success, Tania warns against complacency. Romania must bring its monitoring facilities to international standards, provide iodizing machines to other salt plants, and monitor salt imported from neighboring countries, much of which is not iodized. She is confident that with Kiwanis, they can do what needs to be done. "It was due to Kiwanis support that we were able to have the successes that we have right now. So we consider the members of the Kiwanis Family as our friends, not only as our partners. And we'd certainly like to continue the partnership and to continue the friendship."

A billboard from  
Romania's national  
media campaign.





## A GIFT OF SALT

Soudsadi admits that before she married fourteen years ago, she knew she had the small knot under her neck. Everyone had them in those days. But after she married and became pregnant, her goiter began to grow larger. When she gave birth, the baby was slow to develop. Now fourteen years old, her daughter Naly does not have the mental resources or the physical energy of a normal child.

"Luckily, after the first child was born, some of our relatives were visiting us from Vientiane, and noticed I had Adam's apple disease," Soudsadi said, using the expression common among the Lao Leum tribe to describe a goiter. "They decided to send us three kilograms of iodized salt. When I was pregnant with the second child, our relatives sent more salt. After that, the thyroid gland got smaller, and since then, I've taken salt with my meals every day."

That gift of iodized salt not only reduced Soudsadi's enlarged thyroid, but protected her three younger children from the harmful effects of maternal iodine deficiency. It's a preventive measure that was not available to many other Lao women until the campaign by Kiwanis International and UNICEF began.

"If from now on everybody uses iodized salt for cooking, more family business will emerge in the village, people will make more products to sell, and our living conditions will gradually be improved," says Vanhdy, Soudsadi's husband, headmaster of the village primary school. "During my class, we discuss the importance of iodine, and many students express their willingness to collectively fight against the spread of the Adam's apple disease. They all want to become more clever."

"Our family along with the whole village is looking for ways to guarantee the constant supply of iodized salt for the whole village," Soudsadi says, "so we will be able to make use of iodized salt everyday forever."

Soudsadi Keothavone takes time off from her work on the farm. She is raising four children with her husband Vanhdy Keothavone, the headmaster at Ban Tha Primary School.

# LAOS

## SUCCESS IN A REMOTE AND LANDLOCKED LAND

In 1993, Laos was listed as one of the most severely affected iodine deficient countries. In 2004, it was projected to be the first country in the region after China to achieve universal salt iodization.

Landlocked with a mountainous terrain and monsoon climate that work against micronutrients being retained in the soil, the vegetables and rice consumed in the provinces do not have sufficient iodine. Most of the major food sources of iodine—salt-water fish and seaweed such as kelp—are not featured in the traditional diet.



In the mid 1990s, UNICEF and Kiwanis International supported national action to end endemic iodine deficiency. They worked with salt producers, teachers, and the government to get salt iodized, ensure people understood its benefits, and to monitor results. Those results have been good, but the in-country team is quick to point out that in the short term, there is still much work to do.

“We still have more than 20% of the most hard-to-reach households without iodized salt,” says UNICEF’s Dr. Intong Keomoungkhoun. Non-iodized salt continues to cross the border from other countries, some salt even packaged in plastic bags labeled as iodized.

Dr. Intong, a passionate advocate of education and testing as critical parts of the iodine campaign, says: “The next two years will determine whether we can reach our goal, and beyond that, the sustainability of the iodization program. If not for Kiwanis International, we would not be within reach. I hope they realize how much this means to so many people in Laos. If we make it, this will change our children’s lives forever.”

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UNICEF’s Dr. Intong Keomoungkhoun talks with Vanhdy Keothavone, headmaster at Ban Tha Primary School, about lecturing on the importance of the micronutrient iodine in the diet.

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Student at Ban Tha Primary School writes on the blackboard. In recent years, less students have been held back.

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