KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES ON FOOD AND NUTRITION AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN, MOTHERS/CAREGIVERS (OF 1-5 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN), PREGNANT AND LACTATING WOMEN IN SELECTED PHILIPPINE BARANGAYS

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This study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of a product-evaluation-alliance program in improving the micronutrient intake status and awareness on nutrition among children, pregnant and lactating women. The baseline survey was aimed at assessing the existing knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of the target beneficiaries and the changes, if any, in a repeat survey undertaken after a year. Both baseline and repeat surveys were conducted in 3 purposively selected provinces and 3 cities of National Capital Region. Information on general nutrition, fortified foods, functions and sources of micronutrients (specifically vitamin A, iron and iodine) and nutritional deficiencies were gathered with the use of a structured questionnaire. The data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for WINDOWS.

The results of both surveys did not vary very much and showed a generally lower level of nutrition knowledge among the schoolchildren than the mothers/caregivers and the pregnant and lactating women. Generally, all the 3 groups of respondents were more knowledgeable on the sources of the micronutrients than on the deficiency diseases arising from lack of a particular nutrient. More than half of the schoolchildren responded positively to 6 of the 12 attitude statements asked of them while the mothers/caregivers generally agreed to 9 out of 18 statements. The 3 groups of subjects reported consumption pattern of vegetables, fruits and fishes. Majority of the respondents took beverages (i.e. powdered and ready-to-drink fruit juices, chocolate drinks, milk) during meals and snack time. Consumption of fortified foods (i.e. noodles, sardines, snack foods including iodized salt) was found to be low. Sources of information on food and nutrition were basically the schools for the children and health centers for the mothers/caregivers and the pregnant and lactating women as well as television and radios.

The results of this study serve as benchmark for assessing the effectiveness of the program, a valuable input in the campaign for the wide use of fortified foods.