



Lessons from the Field Salt Reduction in VIET NAM



SETTING THE AGENDA

A national stakeholder consultation launched salt reduction efforts in Viet Nam. Three objectives were established, including raising awareness, collaborating with organizations to develop a national strategy, and steps for immediate action. A salt reduction working group and framework for the development of a salt reduction strategy were established.



GATHERING EVIDENCE

Viet Nam has implemented small-scale salt reduction interventions, one focused on consumer awareness. In 2013, an 8-week randomised controlled trial was conducted in Thanh Oai district to assess the effect of sodium-reduced, potassium-enriched condiments. A decrease in salt intake and blood pressure among men and women aged 45-64 was reported following the trial.

A *Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI)* intervention was implemented in Phu Tho province in 2013-2014, involving media campaigns, interventions in schools, community communication programs and home visits for high risk and hypertensive groups. An evaluation showed a decrease in population salt intake from 8.48g/day to 8.05g/day, and improved knowledge, attitudes and behaviours related to salt intake.



DEVELOPING A NATIONAL PLAN

Viet Nam's national strategy for NCD prevention established a target for salt reduction, which was further prioritized in a national plan for population salt reduction introduced in 2018. Objectives include:

- Raising awareness to promote behaviour change;
- Strengthening the responsibility of authorities in developing and implementing policies;
- Increasing the responsibilities of food providers to reduce salt in the diet, and;
- Increasing capacity and efficacy of surveillance and nutrition counselling relating to low-salt diets.



TAKING ACTION

Implementation of a communication campaign and development of recommendations on salt targets in processed foods is planned with support from Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies.

SHAKE the Salt Habit

Key Events

2012

- A national stakeholder consultation between the WHO country office, Ministry of Health, National Institute of Nutrition, Centre for Health Education and Communication, and WHOCC SALT was held to prioritize salt reduction on a national level.

2013

- An 8-week randomized controlled trial on salt substitutes found that reduced sodium condiments lowered sodium intake and reduced blood pressure in men and women aged 45-64.

2013

- The COMBI salt reduction intervention resulted in decreases in population salt intake, and positive changes to knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards salt.

2014

2015

- Spot urine analysis study in adult population estimates national mean salt intake of 9.4 g/day.
- The National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (2015-2025) was established, with the objective of a 30% reduction in salt intake by 2025.

2018

- The National Action Plan (2018-2025) was introduced, with the objective to reduce population salt intake to 7g/day by 2025.

Viet Nam adapted interventions from the **SHAKE** Technical Package, a how-to guide for salt reduction based on very cost-effective interventions ("best buys"). See next page for more information.

Lessons learned from implementing SHAKE interventions in Viet Nam

Salt Reduction Activities

Lessons Learned

Stakeholder Insights

SURVEILLANCE

- S** ✓ Mean population salt intake estimated at 9.4g/day in 2015.
- ✓ A dietary survey in a rural population indicated that 81% of salt intake was from discretionary sources including table salt and condiments.

- Formative research is necessary to assess salt intake among a culturally diverse population.

"In Vietnam it's very different between the big city and remote area, very different in culture, so we need assessment, activity or intervention suitable with every ethnic population because the behaviour is different."

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HARNESS THE FOOD INDUSTRY TO REFORMULATE

- H** ✓ Voluntary salt reduction targets included in National Action Plan for Salt 2018-2025.
- Testing of reduced salt condiments showed decreases in salt intake and blood pressure.

- Technical guidance and funding for food industry is needed to support reformulation.
- Scaling up the use of salt substitutes can be effective but requires feasibility analysis and facilities for mass production.

"To advocate and advise producers to reformulate their products to have low-sodium... there is a need for technical support as well as funding."

Government

ADOPT STANDARDS FOR LABELLING AND MARKETING

- A** ✓ Proposed research on labelling of high salt foods included in National Action Plan.

- Marketing of reduced salt products can drive consumer demand and encourage industry to reformulate.
- Regulatory measures need to be in place to enforce labelling practices.

"There is no regulation to make the food industry label the sodium content on the label of the product. It's up to the food company if they want to put it or not."

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KNOWLEDGE - EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- K** ✓ Year-long communication campaign on salt reduction was implemented in the city of Viet Tri.
- ✓ Community interventions to promote behaviour change are planned.

- Given regional dietary differences, regular surveys throughout Viet Nam are needed to target knowledge and behaviour change interventions.
- Co-ordinated, practical and effective consumer education strategies need to be established, scaled up and sustained.

"We start with who is in charge of preparing the meal, how to reduce the salt. It is very important."

Government

ENVIRONMENT - SUPPORTIVE SETTINGS FOR HEALTHY EATING

- E** ✓ Salt reduction initiatives in school and hospital dining facilities implemented in Ho Chi Minh City.

- Provincial level initiatives should be scaled nationally for population-wide impact.

"We developed guidelines for school meals, so that's why we also consider and include the salt-reduction component and then develop the menu for the school lunch."

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