



PROFILES

A Data-Based Approach to Nutrition Advocacy and Policy Development

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 **BASICS**

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AND
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BASICS

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Abstract

The PROFILES nutrition advocacy and policy development process uses current scientific knowledge to estimate the cost and effectiveness of proposed nutrition interventions. PROFILES estimates the impact on developmental indicators, such as mortality, morbidity, school performance, and labor productivity, using epidemiological and demographic models, and, using computer graphics, presents the results to decision makers. The program, with funding from major international donors, has been successfully applied in more than a dozen developing countries. This report relates the models, the applications and their results, and lessons learned.

Photograph courtesy of UNICEF/HQ92-0262/Goodsmith.

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Acronyms

BASICS	Basic Support for Institutionalizing Child Survival
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FNRI	Food and Nutrition Research Institute (Philippines)
HHRAA	Health and Human Resources Analysis for Africa
NCHS	U.S. National Center for Health Statistics
NCP	Nutrition Communication Project
NFNC	National Food and Nutrition Commission (Zambia)
SARA	Support for Analysis and Research in Africa
SD	standard deviation
U5	child under 5 years of age
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Executive Summary

Research now shows that investments in nutritional programs can contribute to economic growth and are cost-effective strategies for improving child survival and development. However, decision makers are not generally aware of this knowledge; therefore, effective advocacy is necessary to generate the financial and political support required to scale up from small pilot projects and to maintain successful national programs. To accomplish this aim, PROFILES, a data-based nutrition advocacy and policy development methodology, which includes a collection of computerized epidemiological models, was developed and applied in developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The PROFILES program uses current scientific knowledge to estimate the impact that nutritional improvements would have on important development indicators such as mortality, morbidity, fertility, school performance, and labor productivity. This report provides details about several of the models, including the impact of protein-energy malnutrition on child mortality; the volume and monetary value of breast milk; and the impact of childhood stunting, iodine deficiency during pregnancy, and adult iron deficiency anemia on labor productivity (see figure 1). The costs, coverage, and effectiveness of proposed programs are used to estimate changes in the nutritional conditions and behaviors, thus enabling estimates of program cost-effectiveness.

Figure 1.
Malian Schoolgirls: An Issue of Iodine



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PROFILES has been applied in more than a dozen developing countries, including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ghana, Mali, the Philippines, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia. Figure 2 is a graphic analysis of the possible effects of two nutrition program alternatives in Uganda.

The application in Bangladesh contributed to the approval and funding of a major nutrition program. PROFILES was used to promote the nutrition component of an early childhood development program in the Philippines, and its early success led to its incorporation in a joint Asian Development Bank–UNICEF initiative to promote early child development in seven Asian countries. Partly as a result of the Ghana application, nutrition improvement became a top priority in a new national child survival strategy, and it attracted the attention of major donors. Experience to date suggests that successful applications require scientifically credible projections, estimated improvements large enough to attract the attention of policy makers and compete with alternative investments, and local champions that can sustain the advocacy for at least two to three years. The application of PROFILES in these countries and elsewhere has been supported by a wide range of agencies, including USAID, UNICEF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the Micronutrient Initiative.

Figure 2.
Analyzing Nutrition Scenarios in Uganda

