

# Introducing Zinc in a Diarrhoeal Disease Control Programme

## Guide to conducting formative research

Dr Mark Nichter, Dr Cecilia S. Acuin and Ms Alberta Vargas



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# Foreword

This guide shows how to conduct formative research in the context of introducing zinc in a diarrhoeal disease control programme. It was originally designed to assist a multicentre zinc study coordinated by the International Clinical Epidemiology Network (INCLEN) between 2002 and 2004. The study was jointly supported by INCLEN, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Health Organization (WHO). This zinc intervention and effectiveness trial was carried out in five countries and six sites: Fortaleza, Brazil; Cairo, Egypt; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Lucknow and Nagpur, India; and Manila, Philippines. Prior to the intervention trial, formative research took place in each site to facilitate the construction of the research instrument, develop messages in the local languages, and assist in the monitoring and evaluation of the intervention.

The research methods on which the present guide is based were largely developed during fieldwork in the Philippines by the three authors, social scientists with considerable research experience in diarrhoeal disease and pharmaceutical practice. The guide is designed for use by teams with little expertise in social science.

Researchers at each site were encouraged to review existing social science research on diarrhoea and oral rehydration therapy in their area, and where possible to enlist the assistance of local social scientists in the formative stage of their research. In the event, the research teams at each of the sites chose to conduct formative research on their own, and each team used the formative

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