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This is the story of an idea. This is the account of its journey from birth to the delivery of new hypotheses. Reproduction, birth, but also death, are indeed at the heart of this research in which we assessed, in Burkina Faso, the health benefits of providing pregnant women with multiple micronutrients. The main expected outcome of such intervention was the prevention of intra-uterine growth retardation, a strong predictor of mortality and morbidity during childhood and of lifelong ill health.

This is also the story of how fast science can progress nowadays. It was in 1999 that the UNICEF/WHO/UN University proposed that a prenatal supplement containing one RDA of 15 micronutrients (UNIMMAP) could potentially replace standard iron-folate supplements (IFA) for pregnant women in low and middle income countries. Less than a decade later, high-quality studies comparing UNIMMAP to IFA had been carried out in Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, and Niger, and we know much better today what benefits UNIMMAP can, and cannot, provide. This thesis was an important component of that fast-growing evidence.

Dominique Roberfroid is a Medical Doctor with an MSc in epidemiology and an MPhil in anthropology. After several years of field experience in low and middle income countries, he joined the Nutrition and Child Health Unit at the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium. His recent researches focus on the role of nutrition in maternal and child health with a life course perspective, and on the screening and treatment of acute malnutrition in children.



Prevention of Intra Uterine Growth Retardation by Multiple Micronutrient Supplements during Pregnancy in Burkina Faso

Dominique Roberfroid

