



# IAEA

*Atoms for Peace: The First Half Century*

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## Neonatal screening for congenital hypothyroidism in the Philippines

### *The challenge...*

Congenital hypothyroidism, if not diagnosed in the first few days after birth, can condemn a child to a miserable life. A simple blood test can identify this medical problem, which can then be treated, resulting in a completely normal life for the child.

### *The project...*

The Philippines became part of the IAEA regional newborn screening network in 1999. IAEA provided the platform for the Philippines to assist other 'starting-up' newborn screening programmes in the region, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan and Vietnam.

The IAEA also offered assistance to the pilot newborn screening activities through laboratory upgrade/automation, data computerization, scientific visits and expert missions.

### *The impact...*

The project has contributed to saving Filipino babies from mental retardation and possible loss of life simply by increasing awareness and bringing newborn screening to those who can not access it easily. Newborn screening has become accessible to families outside Metro Manila, particularly in the Visayas and Mindanao group of islands. Awareness of the programme in health professionals has risen, and the number of hospitals offering newborn screening has greatly increased (now 1500+). Trainings and orientations have created a multiplier effect – many of those trained have become advocates, sharing the information with their patients, colleagues and families.

The programme has also been instrumental in the development of the Newborn Screening Act of 2004. A cost benefit analysis showed that projected net benefits of the newborn screening programme in the Philippines is US\$12 million annually, with 33 000 lives saved every year.



*Awareness raising poster from the Philippines project*

RAS/6/032: Neonatal Screening Program for Neonatal Hypothyroidism, PHI/6/019: Expanding the Capability and Coverage of Neonatal Screening Program for Congenital Hypothyroidism in the Philippines