



# IAEA

International Atomic Energy Agency

*Atoms for Peace*

September 2009

## ***Improving programmes for the reduction of childhood malnutrition in Latin America***

### ***The challenge...***

Malnutrition refers to both under-nutrition, where nutrients are undersupplied, and over-nutrition, where nutrients are oversupplied. Over-nutrition is becoming a problem worldwide in both developing and developed countries. The most common form of over-nutrition is energy intake in excess of need, resulting in obesity. Within Latin America, obesity is a major health problem, driven by changes in diet and patterns of physical activity.

### ***The project...***

This project aimed to design and enhance intervention programmes related to overweight or obese children from Latin American populations and to evaluate their impact through the use of isotopic techniques. Expertise was transferred to the region through five expert missions which included training on methodology, body composition and anthropometric measurement.

Capabilities in the field of nutrition were strengthened through fellowships and scientific visits. Staff from the region were trained in the assessment of micronutrients, energy metabolism and body composition studies and nutritional health related environmental studies. Training was also provided on the development of interventions for the prevention and control of childhood obesity in Latin America.

Existing centres and laboratories were upgraded with equipment including an exercise machine and a CO<sub>2</sub>/O<sub>2</sub> analyser.



### ***The impact...***

- The project provided policy makers with tools for the diagnosis and evaluation of obesity and its causal factors. It contributed to the evaluation of the impact of ongoing intervention programmes in Chile and Cuba. The project also assisted Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and Uruguay to develop and implement pilot intervention programmes.
- Standard operating procedures for validation methods using isotopic techniques were developed through the project.