



# Social Media toolkit A WHA Resolution: Folic Acid Fortification to Prevent Spina Bifida



The 75th session of the World Health Assembly (WHA75)

# Introduction



The 75th session of the World Health Assembly (WHA75) will take place in Geneva, Switzerland from May 22-28, 2022.

On this occasion, the G4 Alliance, the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF), and GAPSBi-F will hold the Side Event titled, **“WHA Resolution: Folic Acid Fortification to Prevent Spina Bifida”** on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 in Hilton Geneva Hotels and Conference Center..

## Why does this side event need to take place?

Recognizing the 63<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly’s Resolution on Birth Defects that appealed to member states to prioritize prevention of birth defects, the high number of pregnancies affected by folic acid-preventable spina bifida and anencephaly globally are concerning.

Worldwide, at least 300,000 pregnancies are estimated to be affected with spina bifida and anencephaly annually, and 75% of them result in elective terminations, stillbirths, or under-five deaths. Those who survive have life-long paralysis and neurologic impairment; most require multiple surgeries, unavailable in low- and middle-income countries. Families face stigma and cannot afford the cost of care.

Folic acid fortification is the most effective public health strategy to prevent spina bifida and anencephaly equitably in the population. Fortified staple foods provide folic acid to women of reproductive age at a critical time in pregnancy, without requiring behavior modification, preventing spina bifida and anencephaly.

Mandatory food fortification with adequate folic acid has been implemented in 58 countries since the late 1990s. **Folic acid fortification is safe, effective, and has high cost-benefit ratio.** Yet, over 100 countries lack this intervention, adversely impacting the most vulnerable populations.

**This side event will bring together key stakeholders, including policymakers, patient care leaders, NGOs, and member states, to discuss a way forward toward a WHA resolution on folic acid fortification to prevent spina bifida.**



# The World Health Assembly

The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the World Health Organization's (WHO) decision-making body, where the Member States come together to vote. It takes place in May and is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States. The assembly focuses on a specific health-related agenda prepared by the Executive Board (WHO EB).

The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine WHO policies, programmes and budgets, in addition to appointing the Director-General.

## Advocating to the WHO: key phrases

Several things are needed to for a resolution to pass. First of all support of multiple partners and WHO Member States as well as the support of the Executive Board in order to make it on to the agenda of the WHA.

**Advocacy towards members of the Executive board is key!**

**Executive Board:** Implements the decisions of the WHA and decides which resolutions go on the agenda for the WHA. Main meeting is in January each year. A WHO Member State is elected to serve on the Executive Board for a 3 year term. The Member State then designates a person who is technically qualified in the field of health to represent the Member State on the board.

**Director General:** Nominated by the Executive Board



# Support actions to create a WHO resolution on folic acid fortification

Join the G4 Alliance, the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) and GAPSBI-f to raise awareness on the important topic of folic acid fortification.

## How?

Social media key messages were developed for you to share with your network as of May 24<sup>th</sup> across your social media portals, more specifically through Twitter.

**Prevention is a collaborative effort.**

**Together with you we can raise awareness all around the world on the importance of folic acid fortification in the prevention of neural tube defects!**





# Social media - Key messages



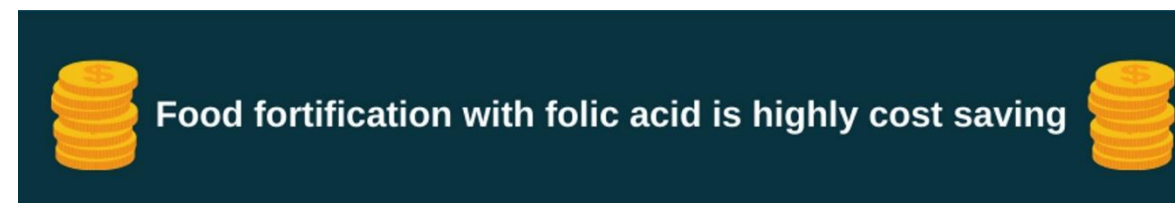
In 2019 alone, 65,380 #BirthDefects were prevented globally due to wheat and maize flour fortified with #FolicAcid—an average of 179 healthier babies every day. Yet this is only 23% of total possible prevention. Countries must act now to mandate #FoodFortification and save lives



Fortifying foods with nutrients like #FolicAcid is key to achieving a healthier, more equitable food system. #Fortification is an accessible way to provide a baseline of essential vitamins & minerals, improve wellbeing, and help societies become more resilient in times of crisis



Food fortification with #FolicAcid is highly cost saving in every country, and the benefit from investing in food #Fortification is comparable to other life-saving programs like insecticide-treated bed nets, or rotavirus vaccines #WHA75 #PreventSpinaBifida



Tag on the picture:  
@GAPSBIF  
@ifsbh  
@theG4Alliance

**Hashtags to use:**  
**#WHA75**  
**#FolicAcid**  
**#Fortification**  
**#PreventSpinaBifida**

**Accounts to tag:**  
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# Social media - Key messages



July 2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the trial by the British Medical Research Council showing #FolicAcid (vitamin B9) prevents most cases of #SpinaBifida and #Anencephaly, yet prevention has reached only a quarter of all preventable cases. We must act now for #Fortification!



WHA resolution on #FolicAcid #Fortification of staple foods will assist more than 100 countries reach their 2030 #SDGs on child mortality and health equity. Inaction is costing lives. #WHA75 #PreventSpinaBifida



An urgent call to action to prevent folic acid-preventable #SpinaBifida and #Anencephaly, globally through food #Fortification with #FolicAcid – 30 years and waiting.  
#PreventSpinaBifida #WHA75 #ChildMortality #SDG2030



There is a global burden and inequality associated with preventable #SpinaBifida. Governments can immediately prevent this major #BirthDefects through mandatory policies on folic acid fortification of staple foods. #WHA75 #FolicAcid #Fortification #SDG2030 #PreventSpinaBifida

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# Social media - Key messages



Mandatory #Fortification of staple foods with #FolicAcid remains the most effective, economical, and equitable strategy to address nutritional deficiency in women of reproductive age leading to preventable #BirthDefects. #WHA75 #PreventSpinaBifida #SDG2030



Join the cause to be a champion for #FolicAcid fortification of staple foods and #PreventSpinaBifida and #Anencephaly. Advocate for folic acid #Fortification in your country. Many resources exist to help countries implement food fortification. #WHA75

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# Social media - Key messages

The following two messages are to be posted together as a thread on Twitter:



Many organizations have joined hands to promote mandatory #Fortification of staple foods with #FolicAcid. Stakeholders include epidemiologists, families of patients with #SpinaBifida, neurosurgeons, pediatricians, food fortification experts, health policy experts, and others

+



Raise your voice for a cause that will benefit hundreds of thousands of babies worldwide. Advocate #FolicAcid fortification of staple foods.  
#PreventSpinaBifida #Fortification

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# Social media - Key messages

These two messages can be posted to react to Tweets about SDGs and climate change to draw attention on the resolution:



Mandating food #fortification of flour and rice with essential vitamins and minerals including iron and #FolicAcid will help countries meet #SDGs targets by 2030. #WHA75 #SDG2030 #PreventSpinaBifida



#ClimateChange will lead to nutrient deficiencies as the rise in carbon in the atmosphere decreases the nutritional quality of foods. #Fortification of staple foods with #FolicAcid can help offset the nutrients lost due to rising CO2 emissions. #WHA75 #PreventSpinaBifida

Hashtags to use:

**#WHA75**

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**#Fortification**

**#PreventSpinaBifida**

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# Infographic to use on Twitter

The picture below can be added to the key messages shared on social media



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# Useful links

- ➡ Learn more about the WHA75. Click [here](#).
- ➡ Check out IF Maternal Health and Prevention video. Click [here](#).
- ➡ Read papers on folic acid fortification. Click [here](#).
- ➡ IF Policy Statement on Prevention of Neural Tube Defects and Mandatory Food Fortification (2005). Click [here](#).
- ➡ Smarter Futures – An African way to Promote Food Fortification. Click [here](#).
- ➡ Advocacy Tool to Promote the Implementation of Folic Acid Intervention. Click [here](#).
- ➡ Food Fortification Global Progress. Click [here](#).
- ➡ World Health Organization. Guidelines on food fortification with micronutrients (2006). Click [here](#).
- ➡ Essential Nutrition Actions: Improving Maternal, Newborn, Infant and Young Child Health and Nutrition. Click [here](#).
- ➡ Global Fortification Data Exchange (GFDx). Click [here](#).



## CONTACT DETAILS

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### The International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF)

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