

A Draft WHA Resolution on Safe and Effective Food Fortification



Introduction

The International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) together with partners has been advocating towards the WHO and its Member States for the past year. Together we call for a World Health Organization (WHO) resolution on large scale food fortification of staple foods with folic acid to reduce the prevalence of Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) including Spina Bifida worldwide.

At the 152nd session of the WHO Executive Board, the **draft resolution** “Accelerating efforts for preventing micronutrient deficiencies and their consequences, including spina bifida and other neural tube defects, through safe and effective food fortification” was accepted after extensive negotiations by sponsoring WHO Member States, led by the government of Colombia. This means that the draft resolution will be put on the agenda of the **seventy-sixth World Health Assembly**, where if approved, the proposed resolution will be adopted, paving the way for significant progress in advancing large scale food fortification with folic acid globally.

In light of the above, it is vital that all stakeholders, including IF, IF member associations and partners be vocal and visible in their support for the draft resolution. This can be achieved by signaling to the governments of WHO Member States that this resolution has widespread support from diverse directions, from healthcare professionals, health policy advocates, relevant private sectors and most of all, from the Spina Bifida community.

In this toolkit you will find a variety of information and messages to assist you/your organisation's online campaign in support of this important draft resolution.

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 usually 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.

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

Introducing the Draft Resolution



EXECUTIVE BOARD
152nd session
Agenda item 18

EB152/CONF./5
31 January 2023

Accelerating efforts for preventing micronutrient deficiencies and their consequences, including spina bifida and other neural tube defects, through safe and effective food fortification

Draft decision proposed by Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, European Union and its 27 Member States, Israel, Malaysia and Paraguay

The Executive Board, having considered the report on the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025),¹ highlighting the need to accelerate progress in safe and effective food fortification,²

Decided to recommend to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

The Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly,

(PP1) Recalling resolutions WHA39.31 (1986) on prevention and control of iodine disorders; WHA45.33 (1992) on national strategies for prevention and control of micronutrient malnutrition; WHA58.24 (2005) on sustaining elimination of iodine deficiency disorders; WHA65.6 (2012) on comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition; and WHA68.19 (2015) on outcome of the Second International Congress on Nutrition, which promote food fortification as a mechanism to prevent micronutrient deficiencies and birth defects associated with nutritional deficiencies;

(PP2) Recalling resolution WHA63.17 (2010) that called on the Organization to support Member States in developing national plans for implementation of effective interventions to prevent and manage birth defects within their national maternal, newborn and child health plan,

¹ Document EB152/24.

² And supplementation strategies. According to the FAO Codex Alimentarius, for food fortification is understood, "...the addition of one or more essential nutrients to a food, whether or not it is normally contained in the food, for the purpose of preventing or correcting a demonstrated deficiency of one or more nutrients in the population or specific population groups...". The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Guidelines for vitamin and mineral food supplements CAC/GL 55 – 2005) also defines that vitamin and mineral food supplements are "sources in concentrated forms of those nutrients alone or in combinations, marketed in forms such as capsules, tablets, powders, solutions etc., that are designed to be taken in measured small-unit quantities but are not in a conventional food form and whose purpose is to supplement the intake of vitamins and/or minerals from the normal diet".

'Accelerating efforts for preventing micronutrient deficiencies and their consequences, including spina bifida and other neural tube defects, through safe and effective food fortification'

The draft resolution which is due to be proposed to the World Health Assembly 21-30 May 2023 calls on Member States to make decisions on food fortification with micronutrients including to prevent birth defects on the basis of public health needs and national food systems. As well as to build multi sectoral collaborations, strengthen surveillance, screenings and national estimates of conditions which micronutrient deficiencies contribute to including Neural Tube Defects.

What IF Advocacy Champions Say About Fortification



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Fortification is not to **end NTDs** such as Spina Bifida but is very effective in reducing the **prevalence of NTDs**.

Gerry Maguire

CEO, Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, Ireland



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Pregnancies cannot always be **planned**, which makes providing **folic acid** to all women of reproductive age on a **daily basis** even more important.

Victoria Sandoval

Trustee, Asociación Guatemalteca de Espina Bífida (AGEB), Guatemala



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The international milling community is proud to serve such an **integral** role in **preventing NTDs**. We appreciate the leadership of governments that understand the **benefits and mandate** fortification.

Melinda Farris

CEO, International Association of Operative Millers (IAOM)

What IF Advocacy Champions Say About Fortification



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Folic acid food fortification is an **unparalleled sustainable**, cost savings opportunity to prevent death and paralysis for thousands of children worldwide while preventing **anemia** among adults as well.

Dr Godfrey Oakley

*Director, Center for Spina
Bifida Prevention, Emory
University, Atlanta*



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In Sudan the use of low quality cereal crops such as sorghum grains and wheat as the main source of food can lead to malnutrition. The need for **fortification** is an important issue to overcome the **nutritional value** balance and **prevent physical and mental disabilities** in a community with an overwhelmed health care system and may not have access to other types of preventive health care services.

Dr Aziza Elnaeema

*Spina Bifida Federal
Association of Sudan (SBA-S)*



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Food fortification with **vitamins and micronutrients** will improve nutrition by providing healthy diet from foods that are commonly consumed, this will prevent micronutrients malnutrition, save lives, **prevent physical and mental disabilities** and improve learning in communities that has weak and/or overwhelmed health care systems and do not have access to other types of **preventive health care services**.

Scott Montgomery

*Director, Food Fortification
Initiative (FFI)*

What IF Advocacy Champions Say About Fortification



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Two in three women globally suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, including **folic acid deficiency** with severe, lifelong and immediate consequences for their own health and the health of their babies. And yet we do know what to do to prevent this: highly cost effective solutions are available, including **flour fortification** with folic acid and other micronutrients and can help build **stronger futures** for billions of women and their children around the world.

Dr Saskia Osendarp
Director, Micronutrient Forum



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Addressing global **micronutrient deficiencies** through flour fortification requires active involvement by **public-private-civic partnership**.

Dr Sylvia Roozen
*Secretary General
International Federation for
Spina Bifida and
Hydrocephalus*



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Fortification with folic acid is a **critical intervention** to improve the health and **well-being** of the population.

Dr Luz De-Regil
*Unit Head, Multisectoral
Actions in Food Systems
World Health Organization
(WHO)*

Support the WHA Adoption of the Draft Resolution on Safe and Effective Food Fortification

Join the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) to raise awareness on the important topic of folic acid fortification and participate in this global momentum to promote and strengthen primary prevention of NDTs through food fortification.

How?

- Contact your national government representatives asking them to support the resolution at the next World Health Assembly. If you would like to receive individualised support and materials to assist you in contacting national representatives please contact IF at **info@ifglobal.org**
- Share key social media messages with your network
- Cross promotion on your communication channels
- Co-sign the letter in support of the draft resolution

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 CHANNELS

Hashtags:
#WHA76
#FoodFortification
#SpinaBifida

In order to engage with us for the draft resolution campaign on safe and effective food fortification, follow our social media channels. IF will publish messages and seeks to cross-promote activities through our different channels.

You can also tag your national representatives and/or ministries in order to raise awareness of the draft resolution among policy makers.

Other hashtags to use:

**#NDTs #FolicAcid #Nutrition #WHO
#Micronutrient #BirthDefects #SDGs**

Accounts to follow:

**@ifsbh @WHO @EU_Health @FFINetwork
@Buhler_Group @NutritionIntl
@MNForum @Nouryon @HellenKellerIntl
@GAINalliance @muehlenchemie
@SternVitamin @GAPSBIF @WFP @UNICEF
@WHO_Europe @WHOAFRO @WHOSEARO
@pahowho @WHOEMRO @WHOWPRO**





Key messages



The #WHA76 will be presented with a proposed resolution on safe and effective food fortification. #Fortification with #FolicAcid is the most effective policy to reduce the risks of #NTDs. @IFSBH calls on all #WHO Member States to support the resolution, for the advancement of equal access to #Nutrition and successful pregnancies for all

#Fortification of staple foods with #FolicAcid is an essential advancement in #Health and #Nutrition policies for all #WHO regions. Lets show global support for the draft resolution on safe and effective food fortification at the #WHA76 @WHO_Europe @WHOAFRO @WHOSEARO @pahowho @WHOEMRO @WHOWPRO

It cannot be ignored that the rates of #NTDs are not spread equally across the globe. Low-income communities are at significantly higher risk of pregnancies affected by NDTs.

Support #Fortification for #HealthEquity and #Nutrition for all. Support the draft resolution on safe and effective food fortification at the #WHA76

#Fortification of staple foods with #FolicAcid is a safe and cost-effective policy that significantly reduces the impact of #Micronutrient deficiencies on pregnancy outcomes, infant mortality and morbidity and under 5 deaths, without which we cannot hope to achieve the #SDGs

Key messages

Feel free to adapt, use and share the example messages below and spread the word on **#WFA76** and do not forget to tag **IF through @ifsbh**

A minimum of 20 per 10,000 births are affected by **#NTDs** and **#SpinaBifida** worldwide, the number of affected pregnancies is even higher. These numbers can be significantly reduced with **#FoodFortification** with **#FolicAcid** **#WHA76**

Mandatory #Fortification of staple foods with **#FolicAcid** remains the most effective, economical, and equitable strategy to address nutritional deficiency in women of reproductive age resulting in higher rates of **#BirthDefects**. **#WHA76** **#SpinaBifida**

A balanced and nutritious diet benefit to growth and development of the baby and decrease the risk of many **#BirthDefects**. **#FolicAcid** **#WFA76**



Key messages

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

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

Large-scale #FoodFortification with nutrients like #FolicAcid is key to achieving a healthier, more equitable food system. When even the poorest households have access to a baseline of essential vitamins and minerals, well-being improves and societies become more resilient in times of crisis.

#WHA76

Mandating food #fortification of staple foods with essential vitamins and minerals including iron and #FolicAcid will help countries meet #SDGs targets by 2030. #WHA76

Resources

- [WHA Draft Resolution](#)
- [IF Press Release](#)
- [IF Statement: A Call for a Global Action to Reduce the Prevalence of Neural Tube Defects Worldwide](#)
- [Lancet Publication: Preventing birth defects, saving lives, and promoting health equity](#)
- [Prevention of neural tube defects in Europe: a public health failure \(EU\)](#)
- [WHO Guidelines on Food Fortification and Micronutrients](#)
- [WHO Recommendations on Maternal Health](#)
- [More information about Folic Acid by the WHO](#)
- [IF Toolkit Steps for an Advocacy Campaign](#)

**THANK YOU ALL FOR SUPPORTING AND ENGAGING WITH US FOR
THE DRAFT RESOLUTION CAMPAIGN ON SAFE AND EFFECTIVE FOOD
FORTIFICATION**

Your participation is key to support IF in raising awareness!

For further information please contact IF at:

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