

PRESS RELEASE

Global Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Community Committed to Support WHO Member States in The Implementation of Safe and Effective Food Fortification

Brussels, May 29 2023 - The International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) welcomes and celebrates the adoption of the WHA Resolution "[Accelerating efforts for preventing micronutrient deficiencies and their consequences, including spina bifida and other neural tube defects, through safe and effective food fortification](#)"; a tremendous milestone in making micronutrient deficiency and its impact on public health a high priority policy concern and to bring evidence based policies on *health, disability rights, and nutrition* to every community.

With this new WHA Resolution, WHO Member States across the world, acknowledge a long-standing concern expressed by IF, our members and partners, that isolated national actions to reduce the risk of Neural Tube Defects including Spina Bifida developing during pregnancy are woefully inadequate, resulting in an avoidably high prevalence worldwide.

For over 45 years, IF as the international representative organisation, has been a leading advocate for the fortification of staple foods with folic acid (vitamin B9). Working together with IF members and partners from the public, civil and private sectors to advance actions on safe and effective food fortification. Because fortification is the safest, most inclusive, effective and egalitarian policy to reduce the prevalence of Spina Bifida and other Neural Tube Defects ([IF Statement: A Call for a Global Action to Reduce the Prevalence of Neural Tube Defects Worldwide](#)).

The resolution demonstrates the impact of cross-sectoral collaborations and how involving representative organisations of persons with disabilities in advocacy for public health policies is not just an obligation, it is an advantage.

The adoption of the resolution is a tremendous occasion for the global Spina Bifida community and all those stakeholders and policy makers who have worked with IF to make this action a reality. However, it is also just the beginning, the resolution must have a meaningful impact and for that it needs strong implementation and for that to become a reality there needs to be effective and meaningful involvement of all relevant stakeholders, especially persons with Spina Bifida and their families.

IF will be at the forefront of the advocacy for the resolutions implementation and for that action to be taken with a rights based perspective by actively consulting persons with Spina Bifida and to avoid stigmatising narratives in the name of prevention. Through its extensive experience with public-private-civil partnerships, facilitating an integrated approach to achieving effective policy change to reducing the prevalence of Spina Bifida and other Neural Tube Defects. Raising awareness and guiding the international community in navigating and overcoming the obstacles to progress. As well as strengthening members to advance activities on the local and national level through training, information materials, twinning and one-on-one support.

We invite everyone to join the global Spina Bifida community in celebrating this tremendous milestone. A milestone that comes after decades of advocacy from IF and its Member Associations worldwide.

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ABOUT IF

The International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) is the international organisation representing people with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (SBH) and their families worldwide. IF has country members in Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe with unique and expert knowledge on SBH. The mission of IF is to improve the quality of life of people with SBH and their families, and to reduce the prevalence of Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) through improving maternal health literacy, raising awareness, political advocacy, research, community building, and human rights education.

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International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus

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