



UNITED NATIONS  NATIONS UNIES

WHA Resolution on Safe and Effective Food Fortification

A Social Media Toolkit

Introduction

The **seventy-sixth World Health Assembly**, adopted the resolution "Accelerating efforts for preventing micronutrient deficiencies and their consequences, including spina bifida and other neural tube defects, through safe and effective food fortification" which marks a wondrous achievement in the global advocacy to reduce the prevalence of Spina Bifida and other Neural Tube Defects paving the way for significant progress in advancing large scale food fortification with folic acid globally.

The International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) celebrates this important milestone towards reducing the prevalence of Spina Bifida and other Neural Tube Defects (NTDs) worldwide. IF has been at the forefront of the advocacy for large scale food fortification of staple foods with folic acid since evidence emerged regarding the important role folic acid (Vitamin B9) can have in reducing risks of NTDs.

This WHO resolution transforms the way the world tackles the global challenges of malnutrition and prevention. Now is the time that we, as a society, take the burden and responsibility for reducing the risks of NTDs in pregnancy away from women and the shame and stigma that this approach results in. The adoption of this resolution is only the beginning, continued advocacy is essential in order to achieve its objectives.

In this toolkit you will find a variety of resources that will help you to understand of what can you do to support the effective implementation of this important milestone.

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

Celebrate and Raise Awareness on the 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'



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New WHA resolution to accelerate efforts on food micronutrient fortification

29 May 2023 | Departmental news | Geneva, Switzerland | Reading time: 2 min (512 words)

The delegates at the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly adopted the resolution on accelerating efforts to prevent micronutrient deficiencies through safe and effective food fortification. The resolution urges Member States to make decisions on food fortification with micronutrients and/or supplementation and to consider ways of strengthening financing and monitoring mechanisms.

Deficiencies in vitamin and mineral status, particularly of folate, iron, vitamin A, and zinc, affect 50% of all preschool aged children and 67% of all women of reproductive age (WRA) worldwide. Micronutrient deficiencies can have serious consequences, including spina bifida and other neural tube defects. These preventable deficiencies are also associated with a higher risk of blindness, fragile immune systems, diminished exercise and physical capacity. Mothers with low micronutrient can have babies prematurely or with low birth weight. Iodine deficiency, still prevalent in many countries, impairs brain development in children, undermining their ability to learn and their eventual productivity.

Large scale food fortification (LSFF) is part of the solution. By adding essential vitamins and minerals to staple foods and condiments, such as wheat and maize flours, rice, cooking oil, and salt in accordance with national consumption patterns and deficiencies, countries can correct and further prevent a demonstrated micronutrient deficiency.

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)*

Show Your Support For Continued Advocacy For Effective Implementation of the WHA Resolution

Join the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) to transform the way the world tackles the global challenges of malnutrition and prevention.

Share with your network the IF press release, key messages and the resources that you will find in this toolkit. Let this global momentum continue.....



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

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Hashtags:
#WHA76
#FoodFortification
#SpinaBifida

For the effective implementation of the resolution on safe and effective food fortification, follow our social media channels. IF will continue to publish key messages to promote and strengthen primary prevention of NTDs through food fortification and seeks to cross-promote activities through our different channels.

Other hashtags to use:

#NTDs #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



The WHO recommends taking a daily folic acid supplementation of 400 mcg for at least 12 weeks before conception.

NTDs occur when the brain and spine fail to form properly during the first 28 days of pregnancy, before many women even realise that they are pregnant.

Folic acid is key in the prevention of NTDs.

IF SBH INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS



Most NTDs are preventable.

Parents-to-be can take actions by keeping a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet of foods containing the natural form of folic acid and supplements as well as other micronutrients.

IF SBH INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS



Key messages



Helping flour #fortification realize its full potential-the ability to eliminate vitamin and mineral deficiencies--requires active involvement of public-private-civic partnerships. #Fortification with #FolicAcid is the most effective policy to reduce the risks of #NTDs

#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 implementation of the resolution on safe and effective food fortification @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 implementation of the resolution on safe and effective food fortification

#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 to ensure effective implementation **of the resolution on safe and effective food fortification** 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

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. #SpinaBifida #Nutrition

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



Key messages

Research and evidence show that fortifying food with #FolicAcid—the synthetic form of folate—is a successful intervention that improves folate levels for women of reproductive age before they get pregnant to a level that provides the maximum preventive protection against #NTDs

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

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

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](#)

Resources

- [IF Information Package on Global Advocacy for Prevention through Food Fortification](#)
- [Advocacy Brief by GAIN and MNF](#)
- [Food Fortification Global Progress](#)
- [Global Fortification Data Exchange | GFDx – Providing actionable food fortification data all in one place](#)
- [IF Toolkit Steps for an Advocacy Campaign](#)

**LOOKING FORWARD TO JOINT ACTIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHA RESOLUTION 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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