



**“Second International Meeting of the Micronutrient Forum in Beijing Reveals Urgent Need to Take Life-saving Interventions to Scale in the Fight to Eradicate “Hidden Hunger””**

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - The second international meeting of the Micronutrient Forum was held in Beijing, China, 12-15 May 2009. The focus of this year’s forum was the implementation of micronutrient programs in real world settings. Over 650 delegates from more than 70 countries participated in the meeting; featuring global experts, recognized speakers, scientists, researchers, private sector and government representatives working in nutrition and micronutrients. The high number of participants that traveled to Beijing despite heightened alerts on a potential outbreak of the H1N1 Influenza virus demonstrated the interest in this year’s meeting. More than 15 global updates on the current status of micronutrient programs, as well as selected scientific presentations, 45 oral case studies and 250 poster presentations, commercial, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations exhibits, and 16 satellite sessions, gave participants the opportunity to engage in discussions on the latest findings in micronutrient interventions, program implementation strategies, partnerships, and commercial initiatives around the world.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Alfred Sommer, Chairman of the Micronutrient Forum Steering Committee, noted how both the high attendance and interest in the meeting illustrates the value of the Micronutrient Forum in sharing scientific and programmatic ideas on how to reach the poorest of the poor with effective and low cost micronutrient interventions.

Dr. Sommer’s opening comments were followed by Mr. Yin Li, Vice Minister of Health, who noted that China has made significant progress in controlling micronutrient deficiencies and shared examples of these best practices particularly in the areas of salt iodization and food fortification. At the same time, Mr. Li highlighted that much work remains in controlling micronutrient deficiencies to promote economic development, not only in China but around the world. Mr. Li sees the Micronutrient Forum as a key opportunity to share information and experiences which will hopefully lead to the elimination of these deficiencies.

Delegates to the Micronutrient Forum were then welcomed by Counselor Brent Christensen, US Embassy in China, Dr. Francesco Branca, World Health Organization, Dr. Werner Schultink, UNICEF, and Dr. Martin Bloem, World Food Program. The inaugural ceremony highlighted the importance of continuing to focus on effective and low-cost delivery of micronutrient programs, ensuring sustainability and integration with other nutrition, health, and development goals.

The plenary sessions highlighted the latest micronutrient programmatic and scientific information on:

- Status of Micronutrient Programs in China
- Vitamin A Supplementation Programs for Children 6-59 Months
- Universal Salt Iodization
- Maternal Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation
- Food Fortification
- Long Term Effects of Early Micronutrient Exposure
- Micronutrient Powders and Spreads
- Zinc Treatment for Diarrhea Management and Control
- Agricultural-based Programs: Biofortification
- Micronutrients and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: New Research Findings
- Micronutrient Program Management and Sustainability
- Micronutrient Metabolism
- Poverty Alleviation Programs: Maximizing Nutritional Benefits

The meeting also included:

- A synopsis of the findings of the ground-breaking 2008 Innocenti Micronutrient Program Meeting, on translating scientific evidence into effective micronutrient programs convened in Florence, Italy, in September 2008.
- The launch of the 2009 Global Report on Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies, “Investing in the Future: A United Call to Action on Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies” by seven of the world’s leading development agencies calling on governments and other partners around the globe to demonstrate their commitment to children and families in developing countries by increasing investments in life-saving vitamins and minerals. For more information, go to: <http://www.unitedcalltoaction.org>
- A Young Investigators Award program sponsored by SIGHT AND LIFE to recognize young researchers for undertaking micronutrient research that has scientific, policy and/or programmatic relevance.
- A declaration by commercial sector representatives that calls for a united effort to raise the profile of “hidden hunger” and reiterates the vital role of the private sector as a key partner in solving micronutrient malnutrition. The declaration was titled, “Private Sector Strategies for Reducing Micronutrient Malnutrition: Opportunities and Challenges in Reaching the Bottom of the Pyramid”, and included representatives from DSM Nutritional Products, Pepsico, Interflour Group, Amway China, and Unilever. For more information, go to: <http://www.sightandlife.org/images/stories/pageimages/content/News/beijing%20joint%20declaration.pdf>

In his closing remarks Dr. Sommer focused on the incredible progress that the micronutrient community has achieved since the initial meetings of IVACG (International Vitamin A Consultative Group). Dr. Sommer said “...I was struck, at this meeting, by how far we’ve come from that original orthodoxy; by the range of innovative approaches to micronutrient deficiencies now being vigorously pursued. These include everything from centralized fortification schemes using multiple micronutrients, to “point of consumption” fortification with micronutrient powders in the home. Science is easy – implementation is tough! But... enlightened leadership and political commitment can move mountains.”

The Micronutrient Forum Program Committee and Secretariat planned and organized the Beijing Meeting of the Micronutrient Forum through A2Z, the USAID Micronutrient and Child Blindness Project at the Academy for Educational Development (AED), with funds from USAID. The Local Organizing Committee led by the Chinese Center for Disease Control was the key advisory body to the Micronutrient Forum Secretariat, providing operational and financial assistance in the preparation and execution of the meeting. Other major financial contributors included the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Food Fortification Office, International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Focal Point in China, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, SIGHT AND LIFE, and Amway China. Other sponsors included The Coca-Cola Company, Pepsico, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Unilever, Fortitech's World Initiative for Nutrition (WIN), Kraft, and BASF.

### **About the Micronutrient Forum**

The Micronutrient Forum plays an international role as a catalyst and convener for sharing expertise, insights, and experience relevant to the control of micronutrient deficiencies and their consequences around the globe. The Micronutrient Forum is the successor to two scientific organizations aimed at advancing the control of vitamin A and iron deficiencies: the International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG) and the International Nutritional Anemia Group (INACG). The Forum focuses primarily on micronutrient deficiencies of public health significance, particularly vitamin A, iron, folate, iodine, and zinc. As with international IVACG and INACG meetings in the past, the Forum encourages innovation, recognizes important research findings, increases awareness of the latest survey data, and promotes consensus and recognition of important policy implications and programs.

The Forum invites leading scientists, policy makers, and programmers to present their latest research and operational findings, and facilitates dialogue among these groups on the ways in which available evidence can be used to reduce vitamin and mineral deficiency. Participants come from academic and research institutions, international agencies, food and ingredient industries, national ministries, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and clinical and community nutrition organizations. Over the 35-year history of the Forum, the attendance has grown in size and diversity as has the Forum's reputation as being the preeminent global meeting for scientists and public health professionals addressing micronutrient malnutrition.

A2Z, the USAID Micronutrient and Child Blindness Project, which is managed by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), serves as the Secretariat for the Micronutrient Forum, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The proceedings of the second Micronutrient Forum will be published in SIGHT AND LIFE Magazine. Additional information about the meeting is available on the Micronutrient Forum website: <http://www.micronutrientforum.org>.