



Secretary:
Dr. Frances R. Davidson
U.S. Agency for International Development

Steering Committee Chair:
Dr. Alfred Sommer
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School
of Public Health

Micronutrient Forum Secretariat
ILSI Research Foundation
One Thomas Circle, NW
Ninth Floor
Washington, DC 20005-5802 USA
Phone: 202-659-9024
Fax: 202-659-3617
Email: mnforum@ilsis.org
Internet: www.micronutrientforum.org

Micronutrient Forum
16–18 April 2007
Istanbul, Turkey

For Immediate Release
Contact: Micronutrient Forum Secretariat
202-659-9024

Washington, DC – The first Micronutrient Forum was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 16–18 April 2007. The Micronutrient Forum was established in 2006, merging the International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG) and the International Nutritional Anemia Consultative Group (INACG), with an expanded mandate to address all micronutrient deficiencies of public health significance. For the first time a single meeting addressed several micronutrients—vitamin A, iron, zinc, iodine and folate—summarizing the available evidence and evaluating specific programmatic approaches to controlling deficiencies of these micronutrients.

The theme of the meeting was “Consequences and Control of Micronutrient Deficiencies: Science, Policy, and Programs—Defining the Issues.” Dr. Alfred Sommer, Chair of the Micronutrient Forum Steering Committee, said that the meeting was designed to allow scientists and policy makers to take stock of the current scientific evidence and determine if “tipping points” had been reached for various questions. Reaching such a tipping point would mean that public health policy should be developed based on the evidence to guide programs in the field. An example of a potential tipping point that was highlighted at the meeting is newborn dosing with high dose vitamin A in Asia.

The meeting also highlighted successful national level micronutrient programs that are achieving impact, such as the presentation by Dr. Dora Akunyili, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control in Nigeria, on Nigeria’s successful salt iodization program that has maintained >97% household level consumption of iodized salt since 1998, resulting in a significant decline in the total goiter rate and improvements in urinary iodine concentration.

Dr. Necdet Unuvar, Undersecretary for Health in Turkey, opened the meeting on behalf of the Minister of Health of Turkey. Turkey has been very successful in reducing iron, zinc and iodine deficiencies using fortification and supplementation strategies. Dr. Unuvar re-committed his government to achieving the objective of reducing micronutrient malnutrition in the next few years.

In her closing address, Dr. Meera Shekar, World Bank, congratulated the Forum participants for bringing all the micronutrients under one roof, making it more feasible to develop well-coordinated and effective programs. Dr. Shekar focused attention on micronutrient interventions for which evidence of impact is strong enough to warrant investment of limited resources. These data are so strong that failure to take action is an ethical dilemma. She urged a redoubling of efforts to attain universal salt iodization and vitamin A supplementation to children under 5 years of age, including newborns in South Asia. Iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women is essential, but additional work is needed to sort out appropriate approaches to reducing

iron deficiency in children in malarious regions. Zinc is a cost effective treatment for diarrhea, but the data for the preventive use of zinc is unclear.

Food fortification is making good progress in developing countries and the recently released FAO/WHO Guidelines on food fortification with micronutrients will serve national policymakers well. She urged the development of program platforms that would combine the most effective approaches for maternal and child health. Such program platforms will aid the nutrition community in selling its messages by delivering clear, coherent, agreed upon policies with known cost-benefit ratios.

The Micronutrient Forum was co-hosted by the Micronutrient Forum Program Committee and the Local Organizing Committee of the Ministry of Health of Turkey. The Micronutrient Forum Program Committee and the Micronutrient Forum Secretariat planned and organized by the meeting with support from A2Z, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Micronutrient and Child Blindness Project, with funds from USAID. Other major financial contributions were made by the Ministry of Health of Turkey, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, SIGHT AND LIFE, UNICEF, and Unilever Food and Health Research Institute. Other sponsors included Danone, GAIN, Kraft, BASF, The Coca-Cola Company, H.J. Heinz Company, Mars, Inc., The Micronutrient Initiative, Monsanto Company, and The Procter & Gamble Company.

A2Z is managed by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) through a cooperative agreement with the Health, Infectious Disease and Nutrition Office of the Bureau of Global Health, USAID. The ILSI Research Foundation serves as the Micronutrient Forum Secretariat.

The proceedings of the first Micronutrient Forum will be published in the SIGHT AND LIFE Magazine. Additional information about the meeting is available on the Micronutrient Forum website: <http://www.micronutrientforum.org>.

###