

ICCIDD Board Meeting
&
Launch of
National Coalition
for Sustained Iodine Intake

- A report

(April 2006)

ICCIDD 21st Board Meeting at New Delhi (April 20-22, 2006)

National Coalition for Sustained Iodine Intake (NCSII) launched to ensure adequate iodine consumption by the Indian Population

Iodine deficiency is a public health problem in India, as in several other countries worldwide. The serious negative consequences of iodine deficiency affect all population groups. Physical and health consequences include goiter, cretinism, and still birth. It is also the largest preventable cause of brain damage. Even in its milder form it has an impact on brain development of the foetus, and learning capability of children, leading to an average loss of 10-15 IQ points.

Many countries tackle this deficiency through the iodization of salt. India has re-instated a law on the mandatory iodization of salt, and has become one of the many countries across the Americas (eg Argentine, Peru), Africa (eg Nigeria, Kenya), Europe (eg Italy, The Netherlands), and Asia (eg China, Indonesia) where similar laws are in place. Experience has shown that voluntary iodization and free-consumer choice leaves especially those most vulnerable (eg un-born children, lower socio-economic classes) unprotected against possible brain damage. Mandatory iodization is therefore the only option, but this requires effective implementation of rules and regulations.

The 21st International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders' (ICCIDD) Board Meeting became an occasion to launch the National Coalition for Sustained Iodine Intake The coalition has representation from the Government of India, judicial bodies, civil society organizations and salt producers from across the country. It is being supported by International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders and UNICEF. It aims to ensure sustained iodine intake by monitoring iodine status of the population, monitoring of the implementation of rules and regulations, information provision and advising involved institutions and sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Reva Nayyar, Secretary, Department for Women & Child Welfare said: "With the re-imposition of the ban on the sale, purchase and distribution of non iodised salt on May 17, the Government of India on its part will ensure that there is no production and movement of non iodised salt for edible purpose whatsoever." She added she will take strict action against people who violate the law.

"We at ICCIDD recommend that there is a national coalition in every country to ensure complete iodisation. Some of the most successful countries in terms of their iodisation programmes have a strong coalition in place," said Prof. Jack Ling, Chairman, International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders.

Mr. Cecilio Adorna, UNICEF representative in India said there has been a 20 percentage point increase in the intake of iodine in the past 3 years. The survey conducted by UNICEF showed that households using iodised salt in India have increased from 37 per cent to 57 per cent resulting in protection against brain damage to an additional six million children.

Mr. PK Hota, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare said we have already lost 5 precious years. However, there will be no delay now and the consumption of iodised salt will be increased at a very fast rate, he added.

The Indian Salt Manufacturers Association also made a commitment at the launch that salt iodisation will become a part of their corporate governance

Mr. Bejon Mishra, President, Consumer Voice thanked all the participants and speakers and wished them good luck for this noble task of complete elimination of iodine deficiency disorders in India.

Following the announcement of the coalition, school children including Scouts and Guides did the salt testing to demonstrate the importance and need for iodine in the salt.

One of the important roles of the coalition would be giving advice to the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Industry because of their primary official roles. If, for example, the iodine content would need to be increased from 15 ppm to 20 ppm, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare would need to make this official. In a similar fashion, the same ministry could act on advice for improved survey information on population iodine status and awareness raising campaigns among policy makers and general population. Other members of the coalition would be responsible for sharing information among their constituencies, and assure optimal required action by that constituency to assure sustained adequate iodine status. Salt producers could organize themselves to assure optimal quality assurance. Since the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has a prime official role, it should be the Ministry to officially form the National Coalition and to give it its mandate described above.

Specific tasks of the National Coalition include:

- Review available information (surveys, studies, etc) on iodine status of the population, salt use, production figures of iodized salt, sales trends, price trends, market availability and transportation etc.
- Identify gaps in available information and advice on the need to rectify

- Advice on the action required with respect to salt iodization, communication and information, monitoring, rules & regulations, roles of institutions and sectors.

A continued and sustained communication is also required so that nobody forgets why iodization of salt is important. Ignorance of the magnitude of the iodine deficiency problem and, more importantly, the implications of the problem, is the greatest obstacle to reaching and sustaining success. Major examples of ignorance are:

- Among the political leadership (uninformed of the damage to the national economy: a loss of 2-3% of GDP)
- In civil society and civic leadership (not knowing of the damage to their children's brains caused by iodine deficiency: a 10-15% IQ loss) and
- Among salt suppliers (unaware that the industry can stand out by their positive and powerful role in national nutrition: producers own the solution).

ICCIDD Board Meeting

As part of the 21st ICCIDD Board Meeting, the board members got together at New Delhi to formulate the road map for achieving universal salt iodisation. Members got to know about the status of various countries and success stories were discussed at length. It also gave an opportunity to learn from the experiences of the countries that have achieved significant progress in the last few years. The Board members came from 20 different countries raising a host of issues on IDD.

Exhibition

Several organizations/salt manufactures used the ICCIDD Board Meeting as an occasion to display their products and the range of services they provide. Ankur, Chemfood, Caliber Chemicals, Micronutrient Initiative, Prince International and Hindustan Liver Limited participated and put up their stalls at the meeting. ICCIDD displayed a working model of salt iodisation plant. The exhibition lasted for 3 days.

The events were well attended by media persons. The stories that appeared in various newspapers are also attached with the report.

Media Coverage

Executive Summary

Public relations activities for ICCIDD Board Meeting – 2006 and the launch of National Coalition for Sustained Iodine Intake

Communicators India targeted national, regional and vernacular media in the capital. The activities for ICCIDD – Board Meeting were planned well in advance in order to achieve appropriate and timely coverage in the print and electronic media. Invitations along with a curtain raiser press release were sent to senior journalists/ health reporters. Regular follow ups with the media persons resulted in a decent attendance. Two interviews with Dr David Haxton were also planned as part of the ICCIDD meeting. All these activities resulted in good coverage in the end.

The following publications have covered ICCIDD - launch of the National Coalition for Sustained Iodine Intake

S.No	Publications	Date	Title
1.	The Hindu	21 -04- 2006	Rise in use of iodised salt in India
2.	Dainik Hindustan	21-04-2006	In Hindi
3.	Dainik Bhaskar	21-04-2006	In Hindi
4.	Amar Ujala	21-04-2006	In Hindi
5.	Jansatta	21-04-2006	In Hindi
6	Punjab Kesari	21-04-2006	In Hindi
7.	Rashtriya Sahara	21-04-2006	In Hindi

- **Interviews of Dr David Haxton are awaited in the following publications**

1. Indian Express - Healthcare
2. The Pioneer