



Partnership for Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiency

Report of Board Meeting
May 8, 2002
New York

Hosted by UNICEF

Board members present:

J. Werner Schultink (UNICEF), M.G. Venkatesh Mannar (MI), Walter W. Becky (Salt Institute), Jack C.S. Ling (ICCIDD), Bruno de Benoist (WHO), L. Nettles Brown (Kiwaniis International), Dong Zhiahua (Chinasalt), Robert J. Baldwin (CDC), Glen F. Maberly (Emory University).

Secretariat:

Frits van der Haar

Absent with apology:

Jan W.F. van Ingen (ESPA), represented by Floris A. Bierman (Akzo Nobel Salt)

1. Approval of agenda

Bob Baldwin offered that he would report on progress in establishing an international lab network. The draft agenda was approved, with amendments on the sequence.

2. Approval of report from the previous Board meeting

The report of the Board meeting held in Miami, 11 March 2002, was approved.

3. Reflections on the Partnership Side Event at the Special Session on Children

Board members expressed their appreciation with the special side meeting held that morning at the United Nations. The Nutrition Section of UNICEF had led the organization of this outstanding event. Board members expressed their gratitude to the organizers and asked to convey the Board's appreciation in the letters of thanks to all who played part in its conduct. The excellent combination of Leaders pulled from UN organizations, national governments, salt industry, donor agencies and celebrities was recalled. This wide representation was seen to reflect the nature of the Network's composition: a Public-Private-Civic-Scientific global body. Board members appreciated the effort by WHO to have the Director-General deliver the opening statement, and formally launching the Network.

While delegations were still debating the final text of agreements at the Special Session, the Board was pleased that the proposed document "A World Fit for Children" made a renewed commitment to eliminate IDD by 2005,

and explicitly mentioned “Public-Private Partnership” as the way of achieving the goal. The events at UNGASS were felt to be a welcome, added stimulus to the commitment of this group, strengthening the Network’s mandate.

4. Information on ongoing efforts

- Future work planning

The Secretariat is working with UNICEF in preparing an inventory of selected countries, based on the achievements made toward sustained elimination through USI. The list will be divided in 3 categories:

Category A: USI has been achieved and evidence is available of IDD elimination. The challenge is to ensure that the elimination endures, through continued oversight by a high-level multi-sectoral National Coalition

Category B: The country is close to the goal but progress is either stalled or slipping. The challenge is to either re-invigorate the ongoing effort, or re-orient the approach and/or tactics in reaching USI

Category C: The policy obviously is not working. The challenge is to examine current patterns of approach with a view to redesign the national effort

The inventory will soon be shared with Board members for comments.

- Proceedings of Miami Salt Producers’ Meeting

The report of the meeting in Miami is being prepared at Emory University (Glen Maberly), in close collaboration with SI (Dick Hanneman). The final version is expected to be ready by end May 2002. MI has agreed to assist in its production and distribution (Ibrahim Daibes).

- Initiatives following the Miami meeting

The UNICEF regional office in Panama is reviewing the iodine nutrition situation in countries of the region. The slow progress in Haiti, Dominican Republic and Guatemala are reason for special concern. On the other hand, progress in a number of countries, including Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela is encouraging.

- Iodine Laboratory Network

A draft description has been prepared by the CDC and is circulating among the Network, to describe the roles and responsibilities of the Network Board and the Advisory Committee. An initial selection of regional laboratories that will constitute the network is circulating also. A first round of training of lab managers in regional reference labs will be held in Cape Town in November 2002, with 30-35 technicians expected to participate. CDC is working closely with ICCIDD in efforts to clarify the functions and processes of the Iodine Laboratory Network.

5. Assessments of National Progress

Members asked why they had not been included in the preparation and conduct of the assessment in Panama. Both UNICEF and ICCIDD expressed regret to the Board for the lack of systematic consultation. ICCIDD pointed out that this was a pilot and first experience for such an assessment when even the procedure had not been officially issued. UNICEF had been consulted at each stage of the process. A report in Spanish has been submitted to the Government of Panama and an English translation is being prepared. The experience of the assessment in Panama has been discussed at the ICCIDD Board meeting and improvements will be made.

In discussion, the Board recalled the procedure agreed-upon in Miami for conducting assessments. It was emphasized that the purpose was not to provide a Pass/Fail, or “diploma” for accomplished success to the country under review. Rather, the outcome of the assessment would be a considered opinion by team members of (a) the present iodine nutrition state of the population, (b) what the key factors for success were in advancing the population toward its present state, and (c) recommendations on how the national partners ensure that adequate iodine nutrition endures. WHO emphasized that it will not certify a country “IDD Free”.

It was noted that the present guideline was not clear enough on the issue of who signs off on the report of the assessment. The Board agreed that while still in country, the team leader would report on the findings during a debriefing meeting, and submit the draft report to the National Group leading the elimination effort. It was proposed that this draft report should be reviewed in the UNICEF and WHO country offices for endorsement. Since the assessments are conducted under the Network’s supervision the report should also be shared with Network Board members. The Board agreed with the Chairman’s proposal that he and Glen Maberly would review the text of the procedure to ensure proper wording and specify the process for review and endorsement of the report.

ICCIDD shared information that its Board in Ottawa had conducted an orientation of Regional Coordinators in the procedure of assessments. A short-list of countries that might be considered for assessment was being prepared by the ICCIDD Executive, and will be shared shortly. It was emphasized that for each case, an official request by the Government through the UNICEF or WHO country office was required. As requested at the previous Board meeting, ICCIDD is working on a guideline for the team for preparing the draft report.

6. New initiatives

A special session was held on Iodine Nutrition in Europe at the Board meeting in Amsterdam, hosted by ESPA. Since then, bilateral discussions have been held among Network organizations in Europe. The Kiwanis Service Center – Europe has now offered to host a meeting in Ghent on 12 July 2002 for a policy-strategy exploration among interested organizations. The focus of the discussions will be on future collaborative efforts in selected countries. Leaders of ESPA, Kiwanis, MI, WHO and UNICEF are expected to attend. An agenda will be shared from the Ghent Center.

As a consequence of discussions held at Board meetings over time, a concept has emerged of encouraging leadership in national situations where one Board Member might have a comparative advantage. Kiwanis International’s President Elect, Dr Ito Torres from The Philippines is a respected scientist with strong interest in IDD elimination in his country. Also, potential renewed interest by Network members is apparent, including UNICEF, WHO, salt producers both national and those that sell to Philippines. This gave rise the idea of a two day discussion in Manila with national leaders from “outside” the Network to try to offer new ideas, or new approaches to attempt to accelerate efforts to achieve USI. Kiwanis has offered organize this meeting in Manila on 29-30 August 2002 and will share a draft agenda soon.

7. MOU agreed-upon at Miami

On behalf of WHO, Bruno de Benoist expressed concern on the text of the MOU, which was agreed upon in his absence at the previous Board meeting in Miami. The legal department of WHO had drafted amendments to the MOU. On discussion, the essence of the concern by WHO appeared to be in the perceived binding character of the caption of the document that reads “Memorandum of Understanding”. The Board agreed to remove the caption, replace it with “Declaration”, and leave the text intact. The Secretariat was asked to circulate the document for signatures by the constituent organizations.

8. Updates of ongoing work by Network members

- In association with the UNGASS, UNICEF has prepared and distributed a set of Public Service Announcements. The report of the communications firm shows wide acceptance and frequent showing on many national and international media networks.
- At the recent ICCIDD Board meeting, a new region was created: “Pacific”. Dr. Cres Eastman is Regional Coordinator.
- A training course on IDD will be held in Iran next week under the directorship of Professor Azizi. ICCIDD, UNICEF and WHO are among the sponsors.
- Chinasalt has announced a nationwide contest on the design of a new logo, that needs to raise the impression of “Iodized salt and Brain protection”.
- Tianjin University in China has started a new study on the impact of iodized salt in brain damage protection.
- Frits van der Haar will travel to Latvia to provide advice on the design of a national IDD elimination strategy, together with the new Regional MN Advisor of the CEE/CIS/Baltics office in Geneva, Arnold Timmer.
- MI and UNICEF are considering closer collaboration in countries of South Asia to assist national IDD elimination efforts. The new collaborative effort will first be explored in Pakistan. David Haxton and Frits van der Haar have been asked to travel to Pakistan in June.
- Brian Weston, Marketing Director of Morton salt retires in a few months. He will remain available for work on IDD elimination, however. Morton Salt will bring up the design of an international “Stamp of Approval” for iodized salt with their Ad agency.

9. Next Board meeting

It was proposed to hold the next Board meeting in conjunction with the Kiwanis-hosted meeting in Manila, 29-30 August 2002. Kiwanis was requested to make arrangements.