

**SESSION I: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

October 13, 2005 - 8:45 a.m. - Noon

**Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition**

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We have already heard that some two billion people are affected by micronutrient deficiencies, otherwise known as "hidden hunger." But for all these debilitating conditions of iron deficiency, vitamin A, selenium, you name it, there are solutions and those solutions precisely lie in the arena of fortification. Fortifying commonly consumed staples has proven to be effective in addressing micronutrient deficiencies worldwide.

There is a long history of fortification in North America as well as in Latin America, and these approaches have proven to be effective in addressing the common problems of hidden hunger or micronutrient deficiencies.

Now, in order to achieve fortification, I did say earlier that partnerships have to be built, and this is why GAIN has come up with a model that incorporates different entities and different agencies in order to deal with the problems at hand.

For example, if you look at a miller and a baker working together, the miller fortifying the flour, and the baker using the fortified flour, as little as 200 grams of bread a day can actually ensure that a third to half of a women's iron requirements are met. And this will make a crucial difference in the way she goes about her life, as well as make a difference in her longevity and that of her offspring and future generations. So what if that bread can also be fortified and can provide enough folic acid to prevent neural tube defects, as we just heard from the last speaker?

Now, to strengthen this model or approach, GAIN was formed to accelerate fortification globally. GAIN does this by mobilizing the private sector to deliver health benefits to the poor. GAIN, as you heard Dr. Bertini say, GAIN was formed in 2002 at the UN General Assembly, for children.

By 2008-2009, GAIN aims to reach some one billion people, at risk of vitamin and mineral deficiencies. And needless to say, most of these people actually live in developing countries. We all saw the statistics again this morning, so no need to repeat them, but the statistics are not looking good. But that is no reason to despair.

I noted earlier that GAIN works through a partnership model of bringing together different stakeholders. This includes the UN family, WHO, UNICEF, WFP, the World Bank and others. And then on the non UN side, there is ICCIDD and other fortification initiatives. But also GAIN found it necessary to work with the government as well as inter-government organizations,

directly with Non-government organizations but also with agencies such as the CDC in Atlanta and the New Partnership for Africa's Development -NEPAD.

GAIN also works with international NGOs including Helen Keller, CARE, amongst others. At the crux of the work that GAIN does is the food industry, because the commodities that are being fortified are produced at the national level by the food industry. And finally, the funding bodies that support GAIN include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID as well as CIDA to name a few.

To this end, GAIN provides partial funding and technical support for national fortification programs. And GAIN operates through a, shall I say a lean, but not necessarily a 'mean', but a lean structure that is governed by a board of directors which is led by the chair, Mr. Jay Naidoo from South Africa, as well as ten other board members. The GAIN Secretariat is located in Geneva, Switzerland where it is headed by the CEO, Mr. Marc van Ameringen. GAIN awards grants of up to a maximum of \$3 million dollars per country. These grants are awarded to the governments through the National Fortification Alliances (NFA).

Now, in order to adequately support countries, GAIN encourages the formation and strengthening of the National Fortification Alliances. These Alliances comprise government departments, food industry, scientific agencies, universities, as well as civil society. It was found and believed that through a really comprehensive mix of individuals and organizations, the NFAs were about the only mechanism through which micronutrient problems can be addressed. The National Fortification Alliances are an effective implementation approach.

Now as the NFA works to ensure fortification and to ensure that there's monetary and appropriate implementation of the program nationally, there's need for the government to commit. There was an issue earlier mentioned by the previous speakers as to the level of government commitment. Of course the NFA cannot do it in a vacuum. The NFA has to work with the utmost commitment from government, particularly to ensure sustainability of the fortification program within the country once the GAIN grant runs out.

GAIN's work covers many countries in different regions globally. And these are some of the countries that GAIN has already given grants to and is already operating on the ground. I mean, as you can see, there's the Africa region, Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia and the rest of Asia.

Fortifying sugar and condiments as consumed within the different regions is a way to ensure that micronutrient deficiencies are taken care of. For example, in China the fortification of soy delivers the micronutrients, as soy sauce is really big in that part of the world. Fish sauce fortification in Vietnam is a mechanism through which micronutrient deficiencies are being addressed. Edible oils in various African as well as Latin American countries are also a platform through which micronutrient deficiencies are addressed. And sugar fortification in Nigeria, Dominican Republic, as well as Zambia and other countries that are coming on board with the support of GAIN, are also benefiting towards eradicating micronutrient deficiencies.

GAIN also works with businesses and consumers in operational as well as strategic alliances. In the business and consumer section, GAIN is scaling up to consolidate existing fortification projects initiated by companies for the benefit of deficient and poor populations. But also to

advance consumer groups' activities aiming at promotion of fortified commodities. Furthermore, GAIN works to increase coverage in countries where they are not yet operating and increases coverage of targeted population groups such as children.

Since its inception, GAIN has moved the fortification agenda considerably. It has catalyzed 15 national fortification alliances globally, requiring public, private and civil society participation. And it has awarded grants up to a total of \$38 million US dollars and leveraged some \$250 million for private sector investments to deliver fortified foods to the poor. By the year 2006 to 2007, existing programs will have reached over 450 million people. That's a lot of people considering that the program with GAIN only started as far back as only some three years ago. Fortunately, as we all know by now, fortification is not such an expensive venture, at a cost of only 27¢ per person vitamin and mineral malnutrition can be reduced. So this is truly an investment bargain of the century. Fortification is something that I think, if taken on board and implemented appropriately, can ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are achieved by all countries.

And finally - this is the last slide - just to say that through collaboration and partnerships, these fortified products are already on the markets. Let me reiterate that GAIN is committed to ensuring that many more countries fortify commonly consumed staples as well as condiments and that these products actually reach the poor, and the people who need them most.

I was two weeks ago invited to Nigeria where His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo was launching the school feeding program. GAIN is supporting the fortification aspect of the program. Mind you Nigeria is a big country with more than 140 million people. And to indeed think that this school-feeding program through the supply of a fortified commodity is going to be eventually reaching 30 million children put a smile on my face.