

IAEA Press Releases

Press Release 2007/06

IAEA Nobel Peace Fund Schools for Nutrition

Combating Child Malnutrition

20 April 2007 | *Dhaka, Bangladesh* -- Malnutrition remains the world's most serious health problem and the single biggest contributor to child deaths in the developing world, according to the World Bank. Now, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is using its Nobel Peace Prize earnings to promote the use of nuclear techniques to combat malnutrition during the earliest years of life.

"One out of every ten children born in developing countries will die before his or her fifth birthday," explains IAEA nutrition expert Lena Davidsson. "That's more than 10 million dead children each year. And the vast majority of these child deaths in developing countries are preventable with a combination of good care, adequate nutrition and appropriate medical treatment," explains Dr. Davidsson. "This brings us hope that unacceptably high childhood mortality can be substantially reduced with effective and well-targeted nutritional interventions."

Undernutrition is an important factor in more than half of all child deaths worldwide. The high prevalence of infants born with low birth weight and undernutrition among Asian children, especially in South Asia, emphasizes the urgent need to develop effective nutrition interventions within "the window of opportunity", i.e., to target young women before pregnancy as well as infants and young children during the first 2 years of life.

The *IAEA Nobel Peace Prize Fund School for Nutrition* for Asia will be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, April 22–26, 2007. It will focus on *Interventions to combat undernutrition during early life* and seeks to disseminate information about the usefulness of stable isotope techniques in intervention programs that reduce malnutrition, in particular in infants and children. The event is hosted by the Government of Bangladesh through the International Centre for Health and Population Research (ICDDR, B) and the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC).

The IAEA is assisting some of the world's poorest countries in their fight against malnutrition by providing technical expertise in the use of stable isotope techniques in the development and evaluation of nutritional interventions. Stable isotope techniques have been used as research tools in nutrition for many years. However, the application of these techniques in nutrition programme development and evaluation is a relatively new approach, where the IAEA has a unique opportunity to contribute.

Stable isotope techniques add value by increasing the sensitivity and specificity of measurements as compared to conventional techniques. The IAEA has supported numerous activities in infant nutrition where stable isotope techniques have been applied. These

include projects to measure human milk intake in breast-fed infants, muscle mass in lactating mothers, and bioavailability of iron in infants and young children.

IAEA Nobel Prize Fund Schools for Nutrition

The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize to the IAEA and Director General ElBaradei in equal shares. The IAEA's Board of Governors subsequently decided that the IAEA's share of the prestigious prize would be used to fund fellowships and training to improve cancer management and childhood nutrition in the developing world.

In nutrition, the IAEA Nobel Cancer and Nutrition Fund is focused on capacity building in the use of nuclear techniques to develop and evaluate interventions to contribute to improved nutrition and health for children. Fund-supported fellowship awards are targeting young professionals, especially women, from developing countries, through the IAEA's Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme.

Alongside such awards, regional events – *IAEA Nobel Peace Prize Fund Schools for Nutrition* – have been organized in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America during 2006 and 2007.

The aims of the IAEA Nobel Peace Prize Fund Schools in Nutrition are to:

1. raise awareness of the IAEA's activities in human nutrition; and
2. disseminate information about the usefulness of stable isotope techniques in the development and monitoring of nutrition programs to combat malnutrition, in particular in infants and children.

IAEA Nobel Peace Prize Fund School for Nutrition participants include policymakers and professionals with relevant background in nutrition.

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About the IAEA

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) serves as the world's foremost intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical co-operation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Established as an autonomous organization under the United Nations

(UN) in 1957, the IAEA carries out programmes to maximize the useful contribution of nuclear technology to society while verifying its peaceful use.

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