

Legislation for IDD control urged

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ISLAMABAD - Recognising Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD), as a major public health problem in the country, speakers on Monday urged the health managers to strongly pursue the long awaited proposed legislation "Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD) Control Bill".

Participants expressed these views while addressing the Appreciation Awards Ceremony for Best Writing and Coverage organised by the National Alliance of Media on Promotion of Breastfeeding and Universal Salt Iodisation.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the ways and means with the media people for more and better coverage on the issues of the IDDs and BF, and give encouragement awards and certificates for the outstanding writings.

Addressing the gathering, Director Inter Media, Adnan Rehmat said media is a driving force and its increasing size offers great opportunities for creating awareness on the social issues. He proposed meetings with columnists and a plan of action to highlight the issue related to legislation on IDDs.

He also proposed the women caucus' meeting with the Speaker of National Assembly, Dr Fehmida Mirza to get

support for the issue. It was also recommended that the chairperson of the National Assembly's and Senate's Standing Committees on Health should be approached and briefed about the importance of the issue of IDDs.

Speaking on the occasion, Executive Officer TheNetwork, Dr Arif Azad said, "IDD is reported as one of the largest contributor to the world load of micronutrient deficiency and stands as approximately two billion affectees".

"Retrospectively, the National IDD Control Programme was launched in 1994 but the progress towards universal salt Iodisation remained less than required" he continued.

He said it is clearly evident that iodine deficiency is not just limited to the public health's purview but also needed active involvement of several other ministers such as agriculture, education and industry.

Azad also called for an early action for swift legislation by the Government and asked media to help in this regard. He said The Network was in the vanguard to get early notification of the rules of BF Ordinance 2002 and hoped to repeat a similar exercise for IDDs legislation with media help.

He lauded the role of Ministry of Health for notifying the long due rules of the

Breastfeeding Ordinance and anticipated that the implementation would be done effectively.

Communication officer UNICEF, Sheba Afghani in her remarks called for sustained campaign to highlight the issue in its proper perspective. She asked the media to focus on "one point agenda" to get the IDDs legislation done as soon as possible.

Pakistan is rated 6th amongst the countries, where iodine deficiency is a serious public health problem.

IDDs are preventable but due to the delayed legislation, millions of children are deprived of their inherent mental potential. As according to the National Nutrition Survey, Pakistan 2001-2002, the national prevalence of goitre among woman in Pakistan was 21 percent and amongst school-age children was 6.7 percent.

Numerous reasons have been attributed to this as reported by several evaluation surveys that amongst several others the important ones include limited government involvement.

It is quite interesting to mention that the NWFP, Balochistan already possess a legislation banning production, sale and utilization of non-iodised salt while the federal area and the two big provinces still lack legislation for banning non-iodised salt.