

Meeting Minutes  
Coalition for Sustainable Nutrition Security in India  
From Analysis to Action Meeting  
Constitution Club, New Delhi  
March 9, 2010

**Some Salient Points/Overview**

- The representative of the Planning Commission supported the recommendations of the *Leadership Agenda for Action* as a "given." She reiterated that there had been sufficient consensus building for the recommendations. (A number of participants noted that there are still a few issues that may need further work and review, hence there is considerable consensus on the major points of what needs to be done, so that we should not delay action).
- The representative of the Planning Commission invited the Coalition to present the recommendations of the *Leadership Agenda for Action* to the Planning Commission members, advisors and secretaries of related ministries to examine the next steps.
- Most members did not specifically discuss the proposed Coalition structure for the action phase or the composition of the working groups. Many members expressed their opinions regarding the working groups, and that focus should be placed on higher level advocacy

Professor M. S. Swaminathan, the Chairperson of the Coalition was unavoidably detained in the Rajya Sabha due to the Women's Bill voting and thus Dr. Rajiv Tandon, Coalition Coordinator started the meeting in his stead. In the absence of Professor Swaminathan, Ms. Veena Rao was requested to chair the meeting.

Ms. Rao stated that since she was not part of initial discussions with Professor Swaminathan for drafting the agenda of this meeting, she was not in a position to explain his exact intention. She therefore requested Dr. Tandon and the secretariat staff to provide further details regarding the proposal on the table.

Dr. Tandon gave a brief description of the history and progress of the Coalition, and enumerated the four components of the *Leadership Agenda for Action*, which document has been approved by the Steering Committees of the Coalition.

In the Third Steering Committee meeting held on December 9, 2009, Professor Swaminathan had put the question to the participants as to how the recommendations of the *Leadership Agenda* could be operationalised, thereby working towards fulfilling the goals of Operation 2015. He felt that the analysis and awareness stages were over and now the action stage needs focus.

In order for the Coalition's activities to move to the action stage, two things needed to be worked upon:

- The organisational structure of the Coalition to make it more action oriented
- Operational strategy to implement the recommendations of the *Leadership Agenda*

Professor Swaminathan felt that for successful operationalisation of the Leadership Agenda's recommendations, the people in Government would have to take a leading role. He had drawn up a diagrammatic description of the type of structure he saw as the most effective to achieve the task and requested the participants at this meeting to discuss this and offer their views on the composition of the five working groups that would spearhead the implementation effort. The proposed structure and role of the working groups were shared with the participants.

In order to clarify the agenda of the working groups, Mr. Laxmikant Palo added that the recommendations of the Leadership Agenda had been grouped for relativity and distributed between the five working groups.

After this introduction, Ms. Veena Rao opened the floor for comments and remarks as stated below:

Mr. Basanta Kar, Care/India: He said that he sees the work of the Coalition as being a national level activity and wondered whether it would also be discussed at the state levels. He also said that gender inequity and exclusion were critical issues and warrant more focused attention.

Ms. Indu Capoor, Director, Chetna: Because of the lack of convergence between the ministries, things do not happen at the grassroots level, and this constitutes the biggest challenge. She questioned the efficacy and usefulness of the five working groups and their ability to bring about convergence.

Ms. Purnima Menon, IFPRI: Felt that the Coalition has come a considerable way in the process of making an impact as a Delhi-based organisation and as an advocacy initiative. There is still much work to be done in the advocacy arena and the Coalition would lose focus if it now switched to action oriented activities through the working

groups. Her opinion was that coalitions are more effective as an informal body and with increasing organisation/formalisation of the structure could dissipate the energy and lead towards ossification.

Ms. Veena Rao (IAS), former secretary to the GOI: Professor Swaminathan has rightly said that there has to be a growing association of Government with the Leadership Agenda. There has to be deep involvement and coordinated action by the four or five Ministries ( Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Water and Sanitation and Ministry of Education, Ministry of Food and Agriculture) which are most relevant to the nutrition aspect of the population. She also suggested advocating with Prime Minister's Office and the Planning Commission to integrate the Leadership Agenda for Action as a national development priority.

Dr. Mahtab Bamji, INSA Honorary Scientist: She felt that the Coalition should try and make nutrition a developmental priority by the concerned ministries including the Ministry of Agriculture. She wanted to know where the funding would come from for the actions to be taken by the Coalition. She also wanted an evidence based approach from activities in India as well as abroad, as some foreign practices and methodologies do not suit the Indian conditions.

Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, Planning Commission: She said that the Planning Commission is very concerned about the state of malnutrition in the country, and Government is grappling with the question of "how" to deal with it rather than the "what" to do. Thus the meeting had a proper focus as the agenda was to detail "how" to operationalise the recommendations of the Leadership Agenda. The purpose of the meeting was not to examine the recommendations themselves, which had been crafted with care and consensus by experts, and should now be treated as a given.

She questioned the rationale for dividing the membership into the five working groups which should ideally have a common representation, such as the Planning Commission, which has connections to all the five working groups detailed in the organisational diagram. Similarly, each ministry cannot be a member of each group. Thus she suggested that it is better to have working groups ministry wise or department wise.

Mr. Sunil Mehra, MAMTA: We no longer need to provide evidence of certain established best practices, such as exclusive breast feeding. What is required now is to build the demand for such practices. People have to be made aware of the need for adhering to such practices. We need to get into a mission mode with benchmarks and show results. Convergence between ministries is not the answer but one nodal ministry has to

be made responsible for achieving the results. He said that genuine convergence has occurred in the VHNDs through NRHM and this example can be replicated if necessary.

Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, Planning Commission: Remarked that high level advocacy seems like a good idea but sometimes involvement of top level leaders with busy schedules can cause delays in further progress.

Dr. Shashi Gupta, Ex-technical Adviser FNB: Wanted to know how the working groups would help as the concrete action resides with the ministries. She said that Government policies have to be examined in their entirety so that the mandate of one ministry does not clash with another, to the detriment of the task at hand. An example cited was the sugar shortage in the country when sugar was being exported. However, the mandate of the Commerce Ministry is to maximize exports, which it is doing at the cost of shortage of a food item in the country. Thus the policies must be properly aligned to deliver the desired results. It was suggested that the country should have a national nutrition information system instead of different organisations collecting data which then lies in a disparate manner.

Ms. Meera Priyadarshi, Consultant: Requested that the discussion be brought back to the original intention of the meeting and stated that the participants were there to discuss the next organizational stage of the Coalition, and the next three or four critical actions that the Coalition would facilitate or take. That should be the focus of the discussion.

Mr. Anil Mishra, Save the Children: Said it was important to understand the purpose of the Coalition. It is to influence policy and thus it has to advocate for high impact interventions with policy makers. He said that the Coalition should not be expected to take on implementation actions. He felt that the Coalition should think of building the capacity of the ICDS staff and sensitising every Member of Parliament on the nutritional needs of the country.

Dr. Rajiv Tandon, Coordinator of Coalition: Professor Swaminathan wants the meeting participants to decide what the next steps should be for the Coalition's action. He was concerned that some task force members might still want to continue to review and have discussion of specific topics within nutrition (e.g., specifics of food fortification etc), but conveyed that the LAA recommendations did not go into detail in areas where the task forces could not reach consensus. However, the LAA offered many useful recommendations where there was considerable consensus and the Coalition needed to move into the action phase, rather than continue the assessment and analysis phase. He felt that there was overall agreement on the key 16 essential interventions.

He noted that the Coalition is an informal and voluntary network (not incorporated or registered). He said that Professor Swaminathan felt that the Secretariat should move to an Indian institution as the Vistaar Project will end in about 18 months, and there would be advantages if it resides in an Indian institution rather than with a donor project. Besides, it is government which has to come in and lead the actions which are recommended and provide necessary budgetary support for these actions.

Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, Planning Commission: Said that the Coalition should approach the Planning Commission and make a presentation to all its concerned members, advisors, secretary Planning Commission, in which the Planning Commission would also invite secretaries of MWCD, MHFW, MRD, Min of Education and present the Leadership Agenda for Action recommendations. She also mentioned that ICDS consumes 96% of the budget of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and thus is a crucial programme. Currently a revamping of ICDS is being planned in the Planning Commission and development partners like DFID, WB, UNICEF, state representatives, AWWs, mothers and other NGOs are being included in the brainstorming session. This would be a good time for the Coalition to present its case to influence the future direction of ICDS.

Dr. Amarjeet Singh (IAS), Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh: Said that nutrition should be stated as a development priority backed by substantial resources. In the context of Coalition, he said that the focus should be on advocacy for more allocation of funds and piloting the LAA recommendations in five districts in different parts of the country.

Ms. Indu Capoor, Chetna: Asked whether the Coalition could divide the LAA recommendations for the individual ministries as appropriate. She also suggested restoring the National Nutrition Mission referred to by Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, with appropriate funding. Government could also consider having a separate Ministry for Nutrition.

Dr. Victor Aguayo, UNICEF: Was appreciative of the Coalition's efforts. He said that the main point of the Coalition is advocacy and we need to capitalise on the work already done by the Coalition. He said that an effort should be made to pinpoint opportunities, including at the state and district levels, towards which the Coalition's efforts can be directed. He said that it would be good if some kind of annual reporting system could be set up whereby each state had to report to the Prime Minister on different aspects of the health of their children, i.e. the figures for stunting, wasting and underweight. He also felt that more people should be drawn into the Coalition and that the Coalition should build itself as an attractive forum. He suggested identifying those areas in existing policies and programmes where the essential interventions can be slotted as priority.

needs during the next two years. This would necessitate certain shifts in those policies and programmes in order to accommodate these specific interventions i.e shifts in Budgets/priorities/M&E/HR, Growth monitoring and HMIS. This, he added can be done through the Planning Commission.

Ms. Anne Philpott, DFID: She said that the Coalition has done a great job in producing consensus documents. The way to go forward for the Coalition is to focus on its strengths, advocate with media, Planning Commission, Right to Food Act and new maternity benefit service launched by MWCD.

Dr. Purnima Menon, IFPRI: She too wanted to build on the strengths of the Coalition and suggested looking within the Coalition for those organisations which are good at advocacy globally, such as UNICEF and Save the Children and research and evidence building such as IFPRI.

All the participants having spoken, the Chairperson thanked them for their valuable contributions and suggestions, and concluded the meeting by saying that the proceedings of the entire meeting would be placed before Professor Swaminathan, after which they would be circulated among the members present.

Annex I:

#### List of Participants (March 9, 2010)

S.No.	Name and Title	Organization and Contact Details
1.	<b>Firoza Mehtrotra (Ms)</b>	Planning Commission Yojna Bhawan, Sansad Marg, Parliament Street, New Delhi: 1
2.	<b>Dr. Amarjit Singh (IAS)</b>	Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh ( National Population

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	Executive Director	Stabilisation Fund), 283 August Kranti Bhawan, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi: 110066
3.	<b>Latha Pillai ( Prof)</b> Pro-Chancellor	IGNOU, Maidan Garhi-110068, New Delhi
4.	<b>G.N.V. Brahmam (Dr)</b> Scientist F and Head of Department- Community Studies	National Institute of Nutrition Jamia Osmania, P.O Hyderabad - 500007
5.	<b>T. Sundararaman (Dr)</b> Executive Director	National Health System Resource Centre National Institute of Health & Family Welfare Complex Baba Gang Nath Marg, Munirka New Delhi -110067
6.	<b>Veena S. Rao (Ms)</b> Former Secretary	Ministry of Dev. of Northern Eastern Region Vigyan Bhavan Annex, Maulana Azad Road New Delhi -110011
7.	<b>Mahtab S. Bamji (Dr)</b> INSA Honorary Scientist	Dangoria Charitable Trust, Hyderabad 211, Sri Duttasai Apartments, RTC Cross Roads Hyderabad - 500 020
8.	<b>Shashi Prabha Gupta (Dr)</b> Consultant (Ex-Technical Adviser, FNB, MWCD)	Ministry of Women and Child Development 54, New Campus, IIT, Hauz Khas New Delhi -110016
17	<b>Victor M. Aguayo (Dr)</b> Chief, Child Nutrition and Development, UNICEF-India	UNICEF 73 Lodi Estate New Delhi - 110003
18	<b>Anne Philpott (Ms)</b> Health Advisor	DFID India B 28, Tara Crescent Qutub Institutional Area New Delhi - 110016
9.	<b>Basanta Kar (Mr)</b>	CARE India 27, Hauz Khas Village New Delhi -110016
10.	<b>S B Shah (Mr)</b>	CARE India 27, Hauz Khas Village New Delhi -110016
11.	<b>Meera Priyadarshi (Ms)</b>	AMALTAS Consultancy Pvt. Ltd.

	Consultant	C-20, Hauz Khas New Delhi -110016
12.	<b>Shariqua Yunus (Ms)</b>	World Food Programme, India 2, Poorvi Marg, Vasant Vihar New Delhi-110057
13.	<b>Purnima Menon (Dr)</b> Research Fellow	International Food Policy Research Institute CG Block NASC Complex PUSA New Delhi - 110012
14.	<b>Rajan Sankar (Dr)</b> Senior Manager, South Asia	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) YWCA, Delhi Complex Ashoka Road New Delhi -110001
15.	<b>Indu Capoor ( Ms)</b> Director	CHETNA B-Block 3rd Floor SUPATH-II, Opp. Vadaj Bus Terminus Ashram Road, Vadaj Ahmedabad-380013, Gujarat
16.	<b>Sunil Mehra (Dr)</b> Executive Director	MAMTA Health Institute of Mother & Child 33 A, Saidulajaib, M.B. Road New Delhi-110030
17.	<b>Anil Mishra (Mr)</b> National Manager-Health & Nutrition	Save the Children 4th Floor, 14-15 Farm Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi -110 019
18.	<b>Rajiv Tandon ( Dr)</b> Chief, MCH, Nutrition and Urban Health Division /Coalition Coordinator	Office of Population, Health & Nutrition USAID/India, American Embassy, Shantipath, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021, India

Annex II:

## From Analysis to Action

### Agenda

Chaired by Prof. MS Swaminathan

**Date:** March 9, 2010

**Timing:** 3:00 p.m onwards followed by tea

**Venue :** Constitution Club

Deputy Chairman Hall, (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)

Vithal Bhai Patel House, Rafi

**Marg**

New Delhi – 110 001

**Objectives of the meeting:**

- To discuss the proposed structure for the action phase of the Coalition
- To discuss the mandate and roles of the working groups
- To identify critical areas of action (operation 2015)

- Opening and discussion of the proposed structure for the action phase of the Coalition's work
- Review proposed working groups for operationisation of the LAA recommendations (focusing on work areas):
  - Science and Strategy
  - Governance and Coordination
  - Operationalising Programmes ("Operation 2015")
  - Monitoring and Evaluation
  - Media and Nutrition Education
- Identify areas for immediate action, designed to achieve UN MDG-1 by 2015 (operation 2015)
- Closing remarks and next steps

**For more information contact:**

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