

# Chennai Declaration

## From the National Nutrition Conclave

### August 14, 2007

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We, a group of people who are passionate about achieving a nutrition-secure India, representing Central and State Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, corporate leaders, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, nutrition experts, activists and academia, met for the National Nutrition Conclave from August 12 – 14, 2007 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, sponsored by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Indian Council of Medical Research and USAID/India.

We met on the eve of the 60th anniversary of India's Independence to continue the work to achieve Mahatma Gandhi's vision:

#### ***The first task of an independent India must be to eliminate hunger***

Sixty years after independence, national survey data (such as National Family Health Survey III) show that the nutrition situation has not improved as desired in some areas in India, with almost 50 per cent of our children underweight and more than 70 per cent of our women and children with serious nutritional deficiencies such as anemia. Although there are success stories and parts of India which show what we can achieve, the level of malnutrition in India today is morally unacceptable and has enormous costs in terms of social and economic development.

We have deliberated and come to the following recommendations. In addition, we commit ourselves to work for the realization of these recommendations to achieve Gandhiji's vision and to make our nation nutrition-secure.

- We call for nutrition to be a priority on the national agenda. This includes creating a "home" for nutrition such as a National Nutrition Authority. This group could lead and coordinate nutrition programming. Create a parliamentary committee including a group of concerned Ministries working in the area of nutrition, as the coalition for sustainable nutrition security in India.
- Further, we call for a Citizen's Charter on Nutrition endorsed by policy makers and leaders to ensure that nutrition is a national priority.
- We call for preparation of a white paper by a multi-sectoral expert group to present the compelling case for nutrition as a national priority, including the costs of the problem, and to propose a coherent framework and sustainable action plan.
- We call for a national strategy for nutrition of children under two that would focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups. This strategy should foster policy convergence and program integration as well as focus on infant and young child feeding.
- We call for a nutrition security focus on the urban poor. This must increase the identification and mapping of unlisted slum clusters, promote a network of agencies working in urban health and nutrition, which should identify lead programs that can serve as prototypes and learning sites and work to activate the media as advocates for improving urban health and nutrition.
- We call for improved monitoring and evaluation of nutrition programming, including Integrated Child Development Scheme increasing its focus on measuring nutrition outcomes. States should set up specific systems for monitoring nutrition outcomes.

- We call for more focus on nutrition education, communication and awareness. An appropriate core committee led by Government, to arrive at nationally accepted key nutrition messages, to establish a public –private partnership for a national nutrition education campaign, and to establish a set of monitoring indicators to monitor the campaign.

We have all pledged our personal commitment toward these objectives and ourselves to work together in this effort.

***“If people have to starve I shall blame none but ourselves...  
we now have our own government.... Can’t we do something?”***

***It is not just big conferences that we want. What is required is understanding,  
hard work and purity. In the absence of these qualities, the poor must die.”***

- Letter of Mahatma Gandhi, dated 15th August 1946

## Summary of National Nutrition Conclave Recommendations

Organized by priority areas from the Chennai Declaration

Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Articulate Nutrition as a National Priority	Advocate for a Citizens' Charter	Produce White Paper on Nutrition	Develop a Comprehensive Nutrition Strategy for Children Under Two	Launch a Nutrition Education and Communication Campaign	Develop Nutrition Strategy for the Urban Poor	Link Nutrition with Household Food Security	Improve Nutrition Indicators and Monitoring of Outcomes	Take NNC Recommendations to Action
Main components from declaration*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Creating a home for nutrition</li> <li>*Advocacy and sensitization of parliamentarians and policymakers</li> <li>*A group of ministries under PM to focus on nutrition</li> <li>*Revive nutrition mission/holistic approach for policy reform</li> <li>*Formation of nutrition council/authority</li> <li>*Improve resource mobilization and convergence</li> <li>*Establish structures and committees- centre to village</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Advocacy for having the charter at the national level</li> <li>*Involve the four pillars of democracy- legislature, judiciary, executive, media</li> <li>*Form nutrition charter at the national and state level</li> <li>*Form a core task group by multiple stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Prepare white paper as an advocacy tool</li> <li>*Summarize major facts to make a case for nutrition as a priority (including costs)</li> <li>*Propose a framework and action plan with phased operationalization</li> <li>*Support a study to determine economic costs of malnutrition (e-g. lost productivity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Expert agreement on guidance so that different messages are not given</li> <li>*Advocate for more focus on children &lt;two</li> <li>*Form and advocate for sustainable model and an essential package of services</li> <li>*Develop a communication strategy</li> <li>*Develop guidelines for capacity building of service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Task Force of experts to agree on key messages</li> <li>*Public-Private partnership for a major media campaign with the key messages</li> <li>*Develop training guidelines</li> <li>*Focus on life cycle approach, equity and gender</li> <li>*Develop a set of NHE-BCC monitoring indicators for impact assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Partnership with media for advocacy</li> <li>*Enhance reach and utilization of ongoing schemes</li> <li>*Identify lead programs to serve as prototypes and learning sites</li> <li>*Initiate intersectoral converge mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Strengthen nutrition sensitization for agriculture sector leaders</li> <li>*Promote nutritionally relevant but under utilized foods</li> <li>*Promote diversification and consumption of home grown foods</li> <li>*Counseling/ education of community on nutrition and intra house-hold food distribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*More focus on measuring nutrition outcomes (not just food distribution)</li> <li>*Set guidelines on state level monitoring system on nutritional outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Establish a coalition and secretariat for NNC follow up</li> <li>*Identify financial resources</li> <li>*Share the proceedings of NNC widely</li> <li>*Organize a follow up to conclave and/or state conclaves</li> <li>*Form task forces to prepare action plans</li> <li>*Advocate Govt. and other leaders</li> </ul>

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Persons volunteering to work on this topic	Dr.Sashi Prabha Gupta, Dr.Shieela Vir	Dr. Sehba Hussain, Ms. Neera Mishra	Dr.G.S.Toteja	Dr. Mina Swaminathan, Dr.R.Shankar, Dr. Sarla Gopalan, Dr. Shashi Prabha Gupta, Ms. Nirmala Selvam	FNB, NIN, NIHEW, UNICEF, PSM department, nutrition departments of universities	Dr.S.Agarwal, Mr. P. K. Jha, Mr.Subodh Kumar, Dr. Usha Ravi	Dr. Mahatab Bamji	NNMB, NIN, MSSRF, MI, CFTRI	
Other related recommendations from small group work (August 13, 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Linking nutrition to productivity and economic development</li> <li>*Compilation of best practices in nutrition</li> <li>*Involve PRI and village committees</li> <li>*Improve MIS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Dissemination charter to the state planning commissions</li> <li>*Encourage meetings of <i>gram sabha</i> on nutrition</li> <li>*Form task force on media and nutrition security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Promote the use of evidence in decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Advocate for maternity entitlements to promote early breastfeeding</li> <li>*Advocate for crèches to promote BF and &lt; two nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Integrate and strengthen NHE-BCC curriculum in home science, nursing, social work and agriculture schools and colleges</li> <li>*Improve strategic communications efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Identification and mapping of unlisted slum clusters</li> <li>*Form a network of agencies working on urban nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Gather data on environmentally friendly farming practices</li> <li>*Increase post harvesting technology to minimize wastage</li> <li>*Promote micro enterprise and microfinance to increase household assets and income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Advocate for formative and action research</li> <li>*Promote the use of data</li> <li>*Increase use of IT</li> <li>*Promote collection of cost data and cost effectiveness analysis</li> </ul>	

This summary was prepared by the Vistaar Project on September 12, 2007

\* Note that the eight priority recommendations resulted from the final recommendations and action planning session on August 14, 2007.