



National Nutrition Month 2008

WHO partnered with other UN Agencies in assisting the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition conduct the Nutrition Month in June 2008. The main thrust of WHO activities was towards talking about the double burden of disease and civil society mobilization for nutritional well being.



National Nutrition Month was inaugurated by Dr Agostino Borra, WHO Representative to Sri Lanka on the 2nd of June 2008. Dr Prema Ramachandran Director, Nutrition Foundation of India presented the holistic picture on the double burden in nutrition stressed a valuable point that Body Mass Index (BMI) for age is a more sensitive indicator in identifying nutritional problems in children. The 2nd of June 2008 and the technical presentation on the holistic picture on the double burden in nutrition stressed a valuable point that BMI for age is a more sensitive indicator in identifying nutritional problems in children. The conclusions were that South Asians have a greater amount of fat and less amount of fat free mass as compared to their western counterparts. If over and above this, they become over weight (due to accumulation of body fat) they are at higher risk of diabetes and Coronary Vascular Diseases (CVD). Effective nutrition education on healthy eating habits and physical activity can go a long way in reducing risk of over nutrition. The current phase of dual nutrition burden should therefore be viewed as an opportunity to achieve optimum nutrition in the population.

Media Seminar

The National Nutrition Alliance was supported by WHO to have a Media Seminar on the "Role of Civil Society on improving nutrition" held on the 9th of June 2008. This was a very interesting meeting where the media highlighted a number of issues on nutrition reporting. Chief among these was the less allocation of media space and time for nutrition related issues. Possible ways in overcoming the problem was also discussed.

Civil Society Consultation

A Civil Society Consultation with government on formulating a framework for collaboration to improve nutrition was the other important event supported by WHO. This was held in the mode of a "law court" with members of the National Nutrition Alliance acting as plaintiffs and the government as defendants.

The 10 points of the Framework

- Mechanism of cooperation
- Training of health and nutrition volunteers
- Communication
- Creating an enabling environment for optimum nutrition, food security and food safety
- Evidence based programming of activities
- Advocating for optimum infant and young child feeding
- Advocating for proper nutrition for school age and adolescence
- Activism for youth and adult nutrition
- Bringing the nutritional problems of the elderly to centre stage
- Advocate for rights based approaches to nutrition

Essential Nutrition Actions

The Essential Nutrition Actions Package, known in short the world over as ENA, was introduced through a participants training held from the 1st to 5th September 2008 under the facilitation of Dr Rukhsana Haider, WHO Consultant with collaboration of Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition. The global training package was adapted to the Sri Lankan context with the addition of a module on Family Nutrition. Participants were from the relevant Units of the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition, the Plantation Human Development Trust, the National Nutrition Alliance and Colombo Medical Faculty. A follow up TOT training was held from the 17th to the 21st of November 2008.



ENA is a useful tool for creating awareness and also for nutrition counseling at the community level.

The package consists of the following elements:

- **Breast Feeding:** Counseling on how to feed properly (importance and benefits, what problems, proper positioning and attachment, how to resolve, milk expression techniques, etc).
- **Complementary Feeding:** Importance, what foods to select, how to prepare and feed in relation to frequency, density, utilization, active feeding, hygiene and sanitation, what to do if there are problems.
- **Feeding the Sick Child:** Why feeding constantly is important, how to, when to.
- **Vitamin A, Iodine, Iron:** Deficiencies, foods rich in these, how to select, how to prepare, how to resource.



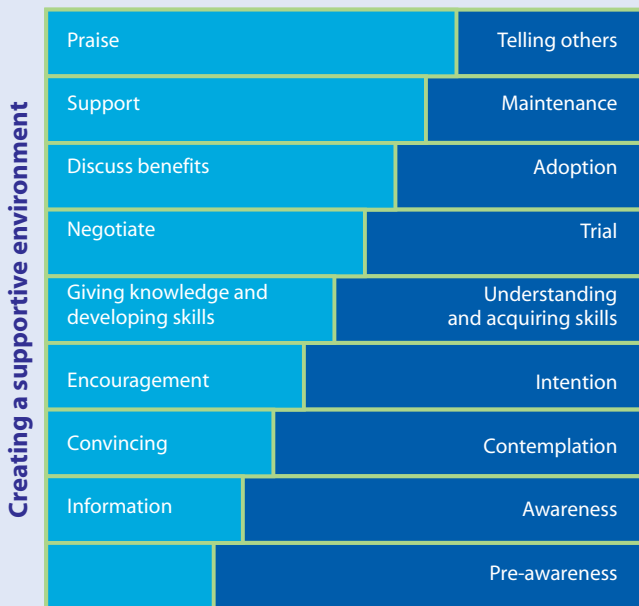
- Behaviour Change Communication: Listening and learning skills, giving simple messages.
- Pregnant, Lactating Women and Adolescent Nutrition: How to negotiate with family to resource, importance of particular nutrients, how to prepare.
- Family Nutrition and Enabling Environment: Savings and resource management, home gardening, effects of alcoholism.
- Outside of behaviour components: Talks about supplementation, vaccinations and de-worming, etc.

Behaviour Change Communication Training

A comprehensive training programme on Behaviour Change Communication was facilitated by Dr Kanthi Ariyaratne, Communication Officer, WHO Country Office from 10th to 12th June 2008. The general objective of the training was to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills on principles and concepts of behaviour change communication among the members of the National Nutrition Alliance. Training was conducted using more participatory techniques of communication, providing adequate opportunities for the participants to learn from their own experiences.

STAGES OF CHANGE MODEL

Steps a person or group takes to change their practices:



Food Safety

The consumption of safe food is a prerequisite to attaining optimum nutritional status. Therefore nutrition and food safety are but two sides of the coin.

Food Safety Week

Attention was on Food Safety, when the government declared a National Food Safety Week for the first time in Sri Lanka. The Week

was organized between 17th to the 24th of October 2008, to coincide with World Food Day which falls on the 16th of October each year.

Partners in this endeavor were the Food Control Administration Unit (FCAU) of the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition under the guidance of Dr Palitha Maheepala, Deputy Director General, Public Health Services, together with WHO Country Office and South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO). The theme very appropriately was **“Better Food Security through Improved Food Safety”**.

The week was a hive of activity with over 20,000 food outlets inspected, approximately 1,000 traders seminars and factory awareness programs, school seminars, conducted all over the island including art competitions, bottle water random sampling and testing. Advocacy was also done with the Chef’s Guild of Sri Lanka with regard to the implementation of a Clean Kitchen Concept. A seminar to build the capacity of media personnel was also among the highlights.



An expert workshop, facilitated by Mr Alexander Hildebrand, Regional Advisor Food and Chemical Safety, WHO/ SEARO was held with the aim of formulating a Food Safety Policy and Action Plan. The participants were from all stakeholder organizations in Food Safety. The programme began with three presentations on the Trends in Global Food Safety, the situation in Sri Lanka and the WHO Regional Ten point Strategy on Food Safety (RTFS). Business began in earnest thereafter to formulate 10 Policy statements, in line with the RTFS. The Policy statements have been finalized in the month of November 2008 together with the drafting of an Action Plan.

WHO Regional Ten Point Strategy on Food Safety (RTFS)

- Food Safety Policy
- Food Legislation
- Food Control and Inspection
- Analytical Capability
- Epidemiological System /Surveillance
- Relationships with the Food Industry and Trade
- Relationships with the Food Service Providers and Retailers
- Relationships with Consumers
- Education and Training in Food Safety
- Research in Food Safety