International Atomic Energy Agency
IAEA Statement

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Agenda item 18.1 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition

Chair,

Good nutrition is fundamental to human health at all ages. Nearly every country in the world is affected by malnutrition and many experience multiple burdens of malnutrition.

The IAEA is supporting its Member States in combatting malnutrition in all its forms. Nuclear and stable isotope techniques generate accurate data that provide evidence for improving nutrition interventions and programmes. Through these techniques, many Member States have the capacity to assess body composition, breastfeeding practices, micronutrient absorption from foods, the link between acute malnutrition early in life and later diseases, and to understand the evolution of childhood obesity. One of the priorities of the IAEA is early life nutrition.

The IAEA is collaborating with the WHO on a research project to provide knowledge on the link between early life nutrition and later childhood health, the effectiveness of early life interventions to reduce later childhood obesity and the impact of different nutrition interventions on lean tissue accretion in moderately malnourished children.

In cognizance the central role diet quality plays in ensuring good nutrition, the IAEA has continued to support national programmes in Botswana, Malawi, Benin, Central African Republic and Ivory Coast to understand how specific interventions contribute to the reduction of iron deficiency – anemia – as it is associated with poor cognitive and motor development in children. For example, the IAEA supports

Malawi to assess the impact of a multiple micronutrient supplementation on anaemia, markers of iron status, anthropometry and body composition amongst children aged 6-23 months. Results showed that supplementing children with a mix of micronutrients resulted in increased haemoglobin concentration in blood, and that the children had greater muscle tissue (fat-free mass) compared to those not receiving supplementation.

Protein quality, defined as the quantity and balance of essential amino acids, is a major determinant of nutrition status especially in the early years of life. Measuring protein quality is not easy. Through an IAEA-supported research project, a new isotopic technique to measure protein digestion from foods was developed and can be used for example to evaluate the protein quality of complementary foods.

We look forward to continuing and further expanding our collaboration with the WHO and other partners in combating malnutrition in early life.

Thank you Chair.