

## **Speakers term consumption of iodised salt a national issue**

Wednesday, June 11, 2014 - Islamabad—Consumption of iodine has a direct impact on children's mental growth and its deficiency costs 10 to 15 point loss in IQ level, resulting in retarded growth, low school performance and higher school dropouts.

An advocacy seminar here on Tuesday discussed how to ensure Universal Salt Iodization (USI) that can result in children having better intelligence and women staying away from different health complications that are associated with iodine deficiency.

The consultation meeting organized by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection was attended by representatives of salt processors, Utility Stores Corporation (USC), Edhi homes, Aga Khan Health Service managed salt processor, Pakistan Hotels Association, SOS, Edhi Homes, bakeries, Canteen Stores Department (CSD), Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, IDD-USI partners and others. In his introductory remarks, Executive Coordinator TheNetwork for Consumer Protection Nadeem Iqbal said iodization of salt was the most inexpensive way of preventing iodine deficiency disorders. "Previously, goiter was believed to be caused by iodine deficiency but now iodine deficiency is also being linked with mental impairment," said Mr Iqbal. He asked the participants of the consultation to individually as well as collectively contribute towards universal salt iodisation.

Addressing the participants, he said being large consumers of salt they could play a vital role in creating demand for iodized salt among people. TN has carried out a number of activities in rural areas of Islamabad and sensitized women, children and local population of the area.

In a presentation, Nutrition Officer at UNICEF Dr Saeed Qadir said iodine deficiency was the single most common yet preventable cause of mental handicap worldwide. Iodized salt usage is the easy and sustainable solution to such disorders. Iodine is either available in the sea food or in iodised salt, he said. He added that many countries have already achieved the goal of universal iodization but we are lagging behind.

A representative of Pakistan Hotels Association Mian Attique sought legislators support saying it is a national cause and each one of our lawmakers should be aware of it. GM Motels Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Sheikh Fayyaz Ahmed said that all the motels are using iodized salt. The event was organized with the generous support of UNICEF and other partners in the campaign including Micronutrient Initiative, World Food Program, GAIN and WHO participated in the interactive session.