

## Commercial Wheat Flour Fortification to Improve Health and Wellbeing in Earthquake Affected Districts of Pakistan

Havelian, Abbottabad (October 27, 2007)

A ceremony was held at Peoples Flour Mill Havelian on October 27, 2007 to launch the Commercial Wheat Flour Fortification Project (CWFFP) for Earthquake Affected District of NWFP-Province. This project will fortify wheat flour with Iron and Folic Acid to help prevent the impairment and disease caused by Iron Deficiency Anemia and Folic Acid deficiency. These and other micronutrient deficiencies, known as hidden hunger, negatively affect the physical and mental abilities of many people in the region, especially women of childbearing age and children who have already been impaired by poverty and malnutrition due to earthquake.

Dr Noor Ahmad Khan, National Programme Manager MI Pakistan, elaborated on the important goals of this project, saying "The project aims to reduce iron deficiency anemia to one third among children and women of childbearing age and to cut in half the occurrence of Neutral Tube Defects (NTD) among new-borns in these districts."

During the project period about 28,000 MT flour will be fortified with iron and folic acid benefiting half a million people per month. The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) is implementing the project in coordination with Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) NWFP branch, with financial assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) and core funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).



(Left to Right) Mr. Ahmad Nawaz Khan, Leading Member of PFMA; Dr. Noor Ahmad Khan, NPM, MI; and Mr. Muhammad Naeem Butt, Chairman, PFMA, NWFP- Province

Mr. Muhammad Naeem Butt, Chairman PFMA NWFP Branch, presided over the launch ceremony which was attended by leading academicians, researchers, local government representatives, representatives from WFP and local NGOs, flour millers and media. The launch was widely covered by print and electronic media. While addressing attendees at the ceremony, Mr. Butt, recognized the efforts of MI and WFP in addressing the malnutrition problems in the Earthquake Affected areas of NWFP. He lauded the MI's support to the PFMA in the implementation of this Project.

MI will support the project by providing in-kind contributions in the form of the micro feeders and premix for wheat flour fortification in the mills. In the long run the mill owners will continue flour fortification through their own resources and MI will continue to provide technical assistance to the PFMA and individual mills. This assistance will in part take the form of procuring the micronutrient premix, the cost of which will be borne by the flourmills making the project sustainable.

Explaining practical benefits of fortified wheat flour, Dr. Noor informed the audience that it would help in tackling the widespread iron deficiency anemia problem through a simple and cost-effective solution.

Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah, a renowned academician and public health physician of Pakistan and Prof. Dr. Sardar-ul-Mulk former DG Health NWFP while addressing the ceremony highlighted the importance of Iron and Folic Acid Fortification of wheat flour in controlling anemia and Neural Tube Defects. Flour Mill Owners Col (R) Sadiq Sultan, Malik Suleman and Mr. Qureshi also addressed the attendees and expressed their commitment to the project on behalf of the flour millers.



*Mill Owner, Col (Retd) M. Sadiq shows participants the bag bearing logo of fortified flour.*