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NITI Aayog organises convention on obesity

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The convention was held under the chairmanship of Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog and Co-chairmanship of Dr R Hemalatha, Director, Nutrition Institute of India



NITI Aayog convened the National Convention on Prevention of Maternal, Adolescent and Childhood Obesity under the chairmanship of Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog and Co-chairmanship of Dr R Hemalatha, Director, Nutrition Institute of India.

Dr Rakesh Sarwal, Additional Secretary (Health and Nutrition), NITI Aayog described obesity as a 'silent epidemic.' In the National Consultation global experts, representatives from UN bodies, central ministries and national research institutions presented their evidence regarding the increasing prevalence of obesity and presented best practices for obesity reduction.

Arjan de Wagt, Chief Nutrition, UNICEF presented evidence on the increasing burden of overnutrition in India. Professor William Joe, IEG shared valuable data on the current and emerging trends of obesity in certain geographies of India.

Shariqua Yunus, Head of Unit and Programme Officer (Health and Nutrition), WFP emphasised the need to diversify food-based social safety nets to prevent obesity. Monika Arora, Director of Health Promotion Division, PHFI along with Rachita Gupta, National Professional Officer (Nutrition) WHO deliberated on obesogenic marketing strategies on Indian Television. Global experts Kathryn Backholer, Professor at Deakin University and Tim Lobstein, Policy Director, World Obesity Federation conveyed how the obese population is an unhealthy population and the cost of treating obesity is the cost of junk food marketing.

In the convention, Secretaries of the Ministry of AYUSH and the Department of Youth Affairs placed their suggestions on promoting healthy behaviour. Senior officers of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Information & Broadcasting echoed the need for introducing behavioural change and a favourable policy landscape. UNICEF Country representative, YasmineHaque also endorsed the same.

All panellists expressed the unanimous need to address this issue on a priority basis, with a resounding emphasis on better mass communication around encouraging physical activity, healthy eating and lifestyle. A need for a whole of government and a whole of society approach was emphasised in tackling the twin challenge of obesity and under. An urgent need for adopting strategies related to fiscal measures, regulating front-of-package labelling, promoting a healthy diet, physical activity and lifestyle options emerged as key themes for future deliberations and actions.

In conclusion, Dr VK Paul, Member (Health and Nutrition), NITI Aayog called for a multi-sectoral approach targeting the adolescents to promote activity and a healthy lifestyle.