

## News from the National Department of Health, Directorate Nutrition

### Introduction

Malnutrition, particularly in early childhood, has both short-term and long-term effects impacting adversely on educability, productivity, morbidity and mortality. Since the democratisation of South Africa, the Government has remained consistently committed to reducing malnutrition among children and women.

### Background

Although there has been an improvement in some nutritional status indicators, other conditions seem to have worsened over the past decade. South Africa is an example of a country experiencing the nutrition transition as there is a duality of existence of both under- and over-nutrition in the country. The nutritional status of children varies considerably among the nine provinces and possibly within each province.

- Despite the implementation of various interventions, some child survival strategies are still not implemented at scale resulting in low coverage of key indicators. Results from the 2005 National Food Consumption Survey (NFCS) and the Lancet series on maternal and child under nutrition in January 2008 provided the Directorate:

Nutrition with an opportunity to relook at current priorities and interventions. The evidence presented through the Lancet Series demonstrated effective interventions to reduce stunting and micronutrient deficiencies if implemented at scale. The following interventions were found to have more benefits:

- Breastfeeding promotion,
- Complementary feeding
- Micronutrient interventions
- Treatment of severe acute malnutrition
- Supportive strategies to improve family and community nutrition interventions

Implementing of these key nutrition strategies will contribute to the achievement of MDG 4 and 5 and also improve the quality of life of children less than five years old.

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### Reference

1. Administrative Committee on Coordination/Standing Committee on Nutrition. 4th Report on the world nutrition situation. Geneva: ACC/SCN in collaboration with IFPRI; 2000. URL: <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/books/4thrpt/4threport.pdf>

## Capacity building in health & welfare

The Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol Use (ARA) has committed increased funding to the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) to help reach and educate more communities. The funds will be used to ensure that more people are trained in the field of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in South Africa.

ARA stepped in to work with FARR to establish training workshops along with the necessary training material that was developed from their years of research and intervention programmes with children.

173 participants have completed the Substance Abuse and FASD training workshops throughout South Africa including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, dieticians, social workers, speech therapists, professional nurses, NGO staff and Departments of Health and Social Development. The training is in line with SAQA and the Health and Welfare Seta requirements with Continued Professional Development (CPD) accreditation allocated to some of the courses.

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## South Africa's mobile breast check (MBCU) and educational unit launched

Cause Marketing Fundraisers (CMF) –the successful grantees for the donation of funds from the Pfizer Foundation and Pfizer South Africa - announced in June the launch of the Mobile Breast Check and Educational Unit programme. CMF will be working together with a coalition of breast cancer NGOs namely Pink Link, Reach for Recovery and Look Good Feel Better. The Mobile Breast Check Unit (MBCU) will provide access for South African women to a mobile mammography screening facility as well as providing education on the topic of breast cancer and breast self-examination as well as patient rights.

The MBCU will initially be dispatched to the corporate and peri-urban areas around Gauteng. The unit will work in collaboration with community clinics to educate women on breast cancer, associated cultural stigma issues and the benefits of early detection. This will be done through easy- to-understand visual materials in vernacular, teaching correct breast self-examination techniques. The MBCU will work at provincial and regional hospitals where referral can be made to a tertiary institution with surgical and oncology services. There is also an aspect to this programme which will focus on the development of a statistical database to improve notification for breast cancer.

The mobile mammography unit is an eight meter, six ton, truck. The Computed Radiography (CR) unit is capable of precise 50 micron imaging for fast mammography examinations. The Information and Communication



Technology (ICT) equipment on board the mammography truck includes two desktops and a server which will enable proper statistics to be taken on patients and recorded for future medical use. There will initially be three staff members manning this unit. These include a qualified and certified mammographer, an administration person and a driver. The Educational Truck will travel the country providing educational sessions on self-examination and breast health awareness. It carries full AV equipment to run visual aid in all vernacular languages.

Cancer accounts for one in eight deaths globally– more than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. An estimated 80 percent of these deaths will occur in developing countries, which are least prepared to address their growing cancer burdens. Breast cancer alone is a national disease in South Africa affecting one in every 26 women.

**For more information and images:** Visit [www.mbcu.co.za](http://www.mbcu.co.za), or contact Mr Solly Mabothe, Pfizer Public Relations Manager, [www.pfizer.com](http://www.pfizer.com).