

Valid Nutrition Supporter Newsletter

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A major collaboration between **Valid Nutrition**, **Concern Worldwide** and **Irish Aid** was named winner of the Organisational Systems/Process Category at the Inaugural Irish Times All-Island Innovation Awards in association with InterTrade Ireland. The awards held at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin earlier this year, were attended by Minister for Science, Technology, Innovation and Natural Resources, Conor Lenihan TD. Designed to recognise the best innovations in businesses across the island of Ireland, the awards were open to indigenous and international companies of all sizes operating throughout the island. Entries were based on operational, service or product innovations implemented during 2008/2009, provided the innovations were business and/or customer-focused and had a proven and quantifiable positive impact.

Welcome to the fifth edition of the VN newsletter aimed at providing our supporters and funders with an update on the continued progress and further developments within VN during the past six months and our future plans to address the challenges ahead.

IRISH AID

On 1st August, 2010, the Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power, T.D., announced a grant of €300,000 to support Valid Nutrition in implementing its Business Plan aimed at significantly extending its innovative model to combat malnutrition and improve agriculture in some of the poorest countries in Africa and beyond. A further Irish Aid grant of €150,000 was also announced, this time in support of Valid Nutrition's Research & Development Program which is designed to develop more affordable, acceptable and, efficacious ready-to-use foods for the treatment and prevention of a broad range of malnutrition – the single most important cause of world poverty today.



Minister for State for Overseas Development, Peter Power TD, flanked by Steve Collins (Left) and Derek Staveley (Right).

This announcement (which is available in full on our VN website at www.validnutrition.org) represents continued strong support from Irish Aid to Valid Nutrition. Announcing the funding, Minister Power said:

"The scale of malnutrition is staggering with an estimated 280 million children suffering from chronic malnutrition worldwide. The most fatal form of child malnutrition – severe acute malnutrition – affects over 20 million children and is associated with up to two million deaths annually. I believe that the work of Valid Nutrition has the potential to reduce these numbers significantly."

ASHOKA AWARD RECOGNISES NEW WAYS TO TREAT OLD PROBLEMS

On 30th March 2010, Dr Steve Collins was presented with the prestigious Global Ashoka Senior Fellowship Award at a ceremony attended by the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson.

This, the first appointment of a Senior Fellow in Ireland, was given in recognition of the system-changing impact that has been brought about by the development of Community-based Therapeutic Care (CTC) and Valid Nutrition's unique social enterprise business model.

The position of Senior Fellow is reserved for those whose work has already achieved considerable social impact on several continents.

Other global figures who are also Ashoka Senior Fellowship award winners include Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia and Yunus Muhammad, Nobel Prizewinner and founder of the Grameen Bank, which provides loans to the poor in Bangladesh.

APPOINTMENTS

VN would like to welcome Andrew Chinguwo, who has recently joined the business in the important role of Quality Assurance Manager at the factory in Malawi. Welcome also to Leo Connolly who has replaced Theresa Newman as VN's Systems and Financial Analyst, and who together with David Scott now runs VN's back office operations from Dublin.

Finally, VN would like to extend a warm welcome to Paul Murphy who joins VN on a temporary basis as Chief Operating Officer effective 1st April, 2010. Paul is supporting the day-to-day activities of VN which will provide Derek with more scope to plan and strategise for the businesses.



Malawi

With the major capacity increase and upgrade of the VN factory now complete, and whilst the factory is already a major supplier to UNICEF locally following UNICEF local supplier approval during 2009, the focus locally is now on the completion of international supplier status which remains outstanding. It is hoped however to achieve this status in the coming months, providing VN with access to export markets for existing product and our new products in due course. It is planned to formally open the factory in Malawi in the months following UNICEF international certification.

VN have recently secured funding from Gorta, Irish Aid (Malawi) and USAID (Malawi) for the establishment of its own food chemistry, microbiology and physical testing laboratory at the VN factory in Malawi. There is currently no product testing facility within the Malawi factory and it has been necessary in the past, to use expensive independent external laboratories, to ensure confidence in the reliability of local laboratories. Quality Assurance testing is particularly critical given the manufacture of RUTF which is used in the treatment of vulnerable children. This project is due to commence in October 2010 and be completed by April 2011. The laboratory will initially concentrate on meeting VN requirements, but in due course it is intended to review the potential to provide quality laboratory services to third parties.



Kenya

The collaboration between Insta Products EPZ and Valid Nutrition in Kenya saw the commencement of local RUTF production in an impressive new plant based in Nairobi in July 2009. The factory subsequently received UNICEF international supplier status later that year and is now supplying RUTF to UNICEF locally for the East African Region and has also produced product for export to surrounding countries. It is planned to formally open the factory towards the end of this year or early next year.



Steve Collins and Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyongo at the launch of RUTF Standard Kenya

In February, the Ministry for Medical Services in Kenya launched a National Reference Manual of Clinical Nutrition, Dietetics and RUTF. The launch provided an excellent platform to raise awareness of CTC, RUTF and the Insta/VN collaboration, together with the Valid vision creating 'farm to mouth' longer term sustainable operations. The Conference was attended by 150 people, including Professor Peter Anyang' Nyongo, the Minister for Medical Services, representatives from the Permanent Secretary and Director of Medical Services and the US Deputy Chief of Mission. Steve represented both Valid International and Valid Nutrition at the event and took the opportunity to compare notes with the Minister.

Ethiopia

The collaboration between Valid Nutrition, Insta and Valsek - a local food manufacturer - is progressing well and despite a delay in the opening of the new factory, it is now rescheduled to be operational and producing RUTF for the local market in September 2010.

This progress is particularly welcome in the context of regular droughts and famine in Ethiopia and the growing conflict-related humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa. UNICEF, the major customer in Ethiopia for RUTFs, is expected to visit the plant and provide certification later this year.

Other Territories

Valid Nutrition is continuing discussions with a number of other potential collaborators.

If these discussions progress as envisaged a further RUTF manufacturing facility should be in place in 2011.



Research & Development

VN have established a research project in collaboration with University College, Cork into sustainable small farmer holdings aimed at improving crop management and yield, providing guaranteed crop prices to farmers upfront, and sourcing quality peanuts to the required standard. The first phase of the project in Malawi involving a research project to establish a baseline against which to judge the benefits of training farmers to produce high quality groundnuts for an assured fair market price has been completed, mainly funded by VN Malawi, and the results from this phase of the project will be available by early October. Ultimately, it is intended that the project will be multi-country.



Congratulations to Dr. Victor Owino, VN's R&D Manager, who has recently been awarded a Nevin Scrimshaw International Nutrition Foundation/ Ellison Medical Foundation (INF/EMF) Fellowship Award to attend and present his PhD research work at the Second World Congress of Public Health Nutrition in Porto, Portugal on September 23-25, 2010.

Solid progress continues to be made in relation to VN's Research & Development programme funded by Irish Aid, with the latest RUTF trials in Zambia providing very positive results and final results due from these trials in September. In keeping with VN's evidence-based approach to research, all trials are being conducted in collaboration with international and local research institutions and involve large numbers of children.

Funding

We are extremely grateful for the funding that we have so far received from donors. Many of the exciting developments referred to above would not have been possible without their support. VN's unique approach is not only achieving spectacular and unprecedented results in treating malnutrition, but is also enabling sustainable local enterprise that harnesses the expertise, skills and knowledge of the respective communities. Additional funding is now urgently required for the following:

- To expand manufacturing capacity to meet demand and improve delivery techniques – so that our products are more easily and readily available wherever and whenever they are required.
- Further research and development to produce cheaper RUTF formulations and recipes suitable to treat different forms of malnutrition.
- To cover some exceptional and future "once off" costs related to set up of new production facilities.
- To cover the core central costs related to driving the whole vision of VN forward.

VN remain at a critical stage of development. With CTC and RUTFs, we have a proven breakthrough in the treatment of malnutrition – and by expanding the sourcing and production of these innovative foods locally, we are building a sustainable model with powerful associated benefits to the local economies. We are very confident that with additional funding, we will realise our vision. Details of how to make credit card or cheque donations are available on VN's website - www.validnutrition.org – donations can also be made directly through the website.

Contact Us

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Or why not check us out on Facebook and become our friend!



New Website

VN has recently launched and taken a new style, 'social business model' approach to the design of our website. It is hoped that this new approach will provide our supporters and the public at large with a more interesting and interactive experience and generally to provide more user-friendly/accessible information on our website.

Why not visit us on www.validnutrition.org and see what you think.