

Breastfeeding in the agenda of child survival and development programmes of Uttarakhand

Study Report on Status of Infant and Young Children Feeding, Uttarakhand released



BPNI NEWS DESK: In a major step to improve the conditions of the state infants and children, the government of Uttarakhand will introduce “breastfeeding” in its core agenda of child survival and development. Such initiative will help to reduce infant mortality in the state and address the problems of malnutrition in which thousands of infants and young children die every year.

A state action plan will be shortly developed incorporating early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding for six months and complementary feeding after two years. Emphasizing its genuine needs and importance, Mr. S. K. Das, chief secretary of Uttarakhand, articulated that “breastfeeding” as core of child health programme should

be given top priority keeping in view the high rate of IMR and the fertility rate in the



state. The IMR rate has gone up and the fertility rate has become stagnant in the state.

Pointing out the needs of “breastfeeding promotion”, he further said that the information on “NHFS-3” and “breastfeeding initiation within one hour” as well as “exclusive breastfeeding”

should be widely disseminated in the state referring its high urgency and importance to deal with the current trends of IMR and fertility rates. He, however, has also emphasized to involve PRIs and other public utility services for this purpose.

Smt. Vibha Puri Das, principal secretary of Forest and Rural Development of Uttarakhand while inaugurating this consultative meet held at Dehradun on 18 January had urged to double the rate of early initiation of breastfeeding from its current rate, within a year.



Speaking at the consultative meet she said that the indicators measured by BPNI should be closely monitored, assuring a comprehensive action programme and mechanisms drawn for monitoring and evaluation. Capacity building for women would also directly contribute to proper health care of the infants and young children, she informed adding the needs to create a network of mother support groups at family level and spreading of breastfeeding education among the women.

Before this, Dr. Arun Gupta of BPNI made a presentation highlighting the needs of universalization of timely initiation of breastfeeding. He presented the findings of the survey conducted in 13 districts of Uttarakhand, the first of its kind research programme on infants initiated in the state. A sharp focus on infant nutrition inputs, action plans for universalization of early initiation, ORS and breastfeeding would rapidly bring down infant mortality and improve infant nutrition status in the state, suggested Dr. Gupta.



Smt Radha Raturi, secretary of Women and Child Development of Uttarakhand, appreciated the findings of the study conducted by BPNI and suggested a suitable action plan to showcase improvements in the status of infants and young children and the impact of the work should reflect in the evaluation in another 3/4 years down the line.

Mrs. Hemlata Dhaundiya, director of WCD shared the status of health and nutrition of children of Uttarakhand with the participants and gave her valuable insights for an appropriate action plan.

Dr J. P. Dadhich of BPNI in his presentation suggested three major areas of intervention, which include actions at policy, health service and community level.



Health secretary of Uttarakhand government in his remarks said that health programmes run in the state are responsible to implement the intervention of “breastfeeding” but it remains a distant priority. A suitable plan should be formulated to universalize this intervention, he observed.

(By: Subrata Dutta)