

World Breastfeeding Week 2004



Exclusive Breastfeeding: the Gold Standard **SAFE, SOUND, SUSTAINABLE**



Letter to State Government Officials

Sir,

Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI), the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and the advocates and activists working on the promotion of breastfeeding, believe that exclusive breastfeeding is the safe, sound and sustainable way to feed an infant for the first six months of life.

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is celebrated every year from 1st to 7th August to renew our commitment to the promotion of breastfeeding. We have been celebrating WBW since 1992. The theme for WBW 2004 is:

Exclusive Breastfeeding: the Gold Standard Safe, Sound, Sustainable.

The theme provides us an opportunity to work on optimal infant feeding practices, especially on exclusive breastfeeding which is the safe, sound and sustainable way to feed an infant for the first six months of life. This is also recommended by the WHO and UNICEF.

You would like to know that 2.4 million children in India die each year and about 1.6 million deaths are in the first year related to inappropriate infant feeding practices. If we could ensure 90% of exclusive breastfeeding for first six months around 315000 to 360000 deaths could be avoided. We are pleased to enclose the support information recently published in the Lancet, a renowned journal, for your reference and use.

For the first time Government of India has included State specific goals in its 10th five year plan to improve infant and young child feeding practices to reduce Infant Mortality Rates (IMR) and malnutrition. This five year plan aims to improve to increase exclusive breastfeeding rate to 80% during first 6 months from the current level of around 41% and increase rate of initiation of breastfeeding within one hour to 50% from the current level of about 15.8% and increase rate of complementary feeding from 33.5% to 75%.

You have a significant role to play in the promotion of breastfeeding with the required resources and manpower to reach out to the masses. Your motives are public and the people have faith in your honesty and integrity. Your support to our movement will really strengthen the cause of breastfeeding promotion.

What action can be taken....

1. Include exclusive breastfeeding 0-6 months as a monitoring indicator for infant feeding practices.
2. Advocacy for maternity benefits to help mothers for exclusive breastfeeding.
3. Set up of State Breastfeeding Committees along the lines of the National Breastfeeding Committee.
4. Monitor breastfeeding indicators during months and quarterly reporting

You can visit also www.bpni.org for more information.

Please feel free to contact us if you need any assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Encl: WBW materials



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