

World Breastfeeding Week 1-7 August, 2012

Theme: Taking Stock of Policies and Programmes

Press Release :

Opportunity to Look Back, Take Stock and Act !!

BABIES NEED MOM-MADE NOT MAN-MADE

BPNI : New Delhi 31st July 2012-07-31 World Breastfeeding Week

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) is spearheading action on 20th World Breastfeeding Week. Come 1-7 August. Communities around the world are working hard to bring back 'Breastfeeding Culture'.

India began measuring breastfeeding rates in 1992-93, when the first NFHS took place in the country, and since then several surveys have revealed that Indian rates of breastfeeding are stagnant. What does that mean? Out of 26 million babies born 20 million are not able to practice optimal feeding guidelines as recommended by the Government of India and the World Health organization.

But there is a bit of Silver lining – rates are not falling as they were during 70s and 80s – that's a gain India has made. But should India design efforts to increase the breastfeeding rates? Answer could be a 'Yes' as exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months not only highly increases the chances of survival of a baby but it also ends up giving the baby a 'head start' as the brain develops faster during the first year of life.

Baby food industry may want it otherwise by aggressively promoting the alternatives of mother's milk as well as homemade complementary foods for children for 6 months to 24 months. India has had a policy for 20 years the Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act 2003. (IMS Act)- but it needs to effectively enforced. We no longer see the bubbly- chubby babies on TV or print ads, thanks to the law. However baby food industry still needs to be checked effectively in order to increase rates of optimal feeding guidelines. That's why the WBW 2012 builds on 'Babies need Mom Made not Man Made'.

Indian Policy should go all out to support ALL women during first two years of life- the stated focus of the newly restructured ICDS programme of 1.25 lac crores, it needs to look at how mothers and babies can be together for at least first six months in all homes whether poor or rich.

India's policy needs to be coherent when it comes to Health System support to breastfeeding women. Having JSY, the Janani Suraksha Yojana should ensure that all women can begin breastfeeding within one hour. Private Hospitals routinely offer formula to new born babies and people think its 'modern'. That must stop may be by a law.

A uniform policy of building a better skilled health care work force is needed to enable them to help and support women at both at birth and later, in the health facility as well as at family level. "Government can take a call on this and universalise access to skilled counselling, the proven and tested method to increase breastfeeding rates", said Dr. MMA Faridi, Head Dept. Pediatrics UCMS & GTB Hospital Delhi. He Further said it requires investment of resources both human and financial for breastfeeding to improve social and health status if the nation.

Indian policy on maternity protection needs a careful look at what is being done. While Central Government employees get 6 month paid maternity leave and 2 years of child care leave, what about the rest 90% moms who work in non government sector?

What can the Government do? Dr Arun Gupta, member of the Prime Ministers' Council on India's Nutrition Challenges tells "Get a policy on Breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding in place, along a 'Plan of Action' and attached budget line both in NRHM and ICDS. When you begin tracking your money it works."

The World Breastfeeding Week is an opportunity that the National and State governments should capture and make the most out of it. The World Breastfeeding Conference with the tagline 'Babies Need Mom Made Not Man Made' is being held in New Delhi, India, from 6th - 9th December 2012. We invite you to participate in this Global event and we hope it will encourage you to step forward to actively support the cause. You can find the detailed information on all aspects of the conference at: <http://www.worldbreastfeedingconference.org>.

Editors notes:

1. The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992 <http://wcd.nic.in/infantmilkpact1.pdf>
 2. National Guidelines on infant and young child feeding <http://wcd.nic.in/nationalguidelines.pdf>
 3. Optimal Feeding Practices : Correct Norms for Infant and Young Child Feeding
- Initiation of breastfeeding immediately after birth, preferably within one hour.
 - Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months i.e., the infants receives only breast milk and nothing else, no other milk. Food, drink or water.
 - Appropriate and adequate complementary feeding from six months of age while continuing breastfeeding.
 - Continued breastfeeding up to the age of two years or beyond.

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