

# **THE DELHI DECLARATION ON INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING**

**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2003**

The Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding, held in New Delhi, India, from 30 November to 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2003, brought together over 500 participants from 38 countries and from nearly every state of India, representing mothers, governments, public interest groups, professional bodies, United Nations agencies and other international organisations. The objective was to find ways to protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding; especially early and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, continued breastfeeding for up to two years or beyond, along with appropriate complementary feeding starting after six months.

**Recalling the global commitments enshrined in the:**

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Millennium Development Goals and the World Fit for Children Resolution;
- International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions, Innocenti Declaration and the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding;
- ILO Maternity Protection Convention 183 and Recommendation 191, and ILO Health and Safety in Agriculture Convention 184 and Recommendation 192;
- UN Framework for Priority Action on HIV and Infant Feeding.

**Recognising that:**

- Inappropriate feeding practices and inadequate care lead to malnutrition and limit the survival, growth and development of young children. These are major obstacles to sustainable human development, socio-economic development and poverty reduction.
- Irresponsible marketing of baby foods interferes with optimal infant and young child feeding practices.
- Mothers and families need supportive, gender sensitive and enabling environments across the life cycle, to practice optimal feeding for their infants and young children.

The participants reaffirmed that breastfeeding is a human right, is healthy for babies, empowers women and is the best investment for human development. It is nature's way - the foundation for fulfilling children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

The conference calls for optimal infant feeding - especially exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months - to be the global societal norm ensuring children the best possible start to life.

**This conference calls for the following urgent action:**

1. Promoting **exclusive breastfeeding** through comprehensive interventions at three levels family/community, services and policy - supported by training and capacity development.
2. Promoting optimal complementary feeding practices, along with sustained breastfeeding including the use of **indigenous foods**.
3. Creating **baby friendly communities** supportive of mothers, fostered by family/community support groups and trained counselors.
4. Revitalising the **Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI)** including strengthening the pre-service curriculum at all levels.
5. Reviewing and **updating national guidelines** on infant and young child feeding, including infant feeding and HIV, and during emergency situations.
6. **Developing clear national and local plans of action** for optimal infant and young child feeding, integrated into the broader policy and programme framework, with exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months as a key health and development indicator. There should be clear and sufficient government financial allocations.
7. **Enacting or strengthening national legislation** to stop all commercial promotional practices, which undermine optimal feeding practices.
8. **Monitoring and organised campaigns to raise awareness** of irresponsible marketing practices of the infant feeding industry.
9. Ensuring adequate **maternity protection** for all women through appropriate legislation to ensure optimal feeding practices.
10. Campaigning for **toxic free environments** through linking with environment and other groups.