



IBFAN International Baby Food Action Network
Red internacional de grupos pro alimentación infantil
Réseau international des groupes d'action pour l'alimentation infantile

ASIA

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MANAGING COMMITTEE

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Ines Fernandez (*Southeast Asia*)
Arun Gupta (*South Asia*)

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of India
South Block
New Delhi.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh Ji,

I am honoured to be a member of this very important Council for India's Nutrition Challenges and welcome this meeting to be a significant step towards elimination of undernutrition of women and children. I wish to submit this note for your kind attention and that of the members of this Council to take forward the agenda for improving the Nutrition status of India.

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Having the experience of more than 3 decades in dealing with the health and nutrition of women and children, and then involved in the analysis of policy and programmes as one of the members of the "Working Group for Children Under Six", I fully endorse the recommendations of the two -day national consultation on nutrition organized by the PMO and the Planning Commission and the call for action as in the agenda note circulated by the PMO for this meeting today.

Indian situation warrants urgent and widespread action. India is home to highest burden of child malnutrition and it's a matter of "national shame". First year of life is critical. Most of brain development ~70% - happens during the first year and ~ 90% during the second year. This is the time when under nutrition is at its peak, hampering potential development. At the same time, more than 1.4 million babies die before they complete first year of life. Another about 0.6 million children die in next four years. According to WHO poor infant feeding practices are responsible for 2/3rd of deaths.

In this note I am highlighting some of the key areas of action for you to take a final view and set in motion the beginning of the rise of good nutrition in India. There had been enough discussions over the past six to seven years, this is the time for action. Three areas of action in fact correspond to Your Vision that you had given on 15th August 2007 to eliminate malnutrition, i.e. to have widespread action on breastfeeding of infants, safe water and health care in addition to what we are doing through ICDS and MDM.

Global studies (including Indian children) have shown that all children can achieve a remarkably similar growth if they are brought up in an environment that provides

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