



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

ASIA

CHAIRPERSON

Kim Jaiook, *South Korea*

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Dr. Arun Gupta, MD, FIAP, *India*

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November 24, 2010

MANAGING COMMITTEE

Kim Jaiook (*East Asia*)
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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breastfeeding as a norm, good feeding practices during first two years, good healthcare and free of smoke. It surprises me, why can't each child in our country have a legal right to grow according to an achievable standard?

Market led solutions may not be the best answers for this problem Sir, therefore we need to plan in a manner to reach out to all women and children effectively through public programmes. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi's saying holds good... "*Growth by itself does not end poverty, it is the manner in which we plan to grow that matters*". It is with the same spirit that in 1981 she called upon World Health Assembly to stay clear of commercial interference on feeding of infants and children.

With this background I suggest seven key actions you could consider to provide policy direction and or funding. (Attached Note).

With my best regards,

Sincerely,

Dr Arun Gupta MD FIAP,
Regional Coordinator, IBFAN Asia
Chair-global Breastfeeding Initiative for Child Survival (gBICS)
Member Steering Committee, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action
Member, Prime Minister's National Council of India's Nutrition Challenges

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