

Joint Statement on Infant and Young Child Feeding

ensuring

Optimal Infant Nutrition, Survival and Development



**Right to
Food
Campaign**

We, a group of health professional organizations and citizens' movements on health

Aware that optimal infant nutrition is critical for rapidly bringing down infant mortality, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is the evidence based, number one (the best) intervention for 3 major causes of infant deaths i.e. diarrhea, pneumonia, and newborn infections, and its universal coverage can save 13-15% of all under-five child deaths i.e. about more than 3.5 lakh children, additional 6% can be saved with universal and adequate complementary feeding ; and the new evidence that if all women began to breastfeed within one hour of birth, it can save 22% or about 2.5 lakh newborn deaths in a year,

Note that the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2002, recognises “....*inappropriate feeding practices and their consequences are major obstacle to sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. Governments will be unsuccessful in the efforts to accelerate economic development in any significant long-term sense until optimal child growth and development, especially through appropriate feeding practices, are ensured...*”.

Recall the actions contained in the *National Nutrition Mission, National Plan of Action on Children 2005*, the “*National Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding*” the “*Infant Milk Substitutes, Infant Foods and Feeding Bottles (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, as Amended in 2003(IMS Act)*”; the “*Delhi Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding*” adopted on 3rd December 2003 at the Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding, several *World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions* on Infant and Young Child Nutrition from 1980 to 2006, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* and *Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*.

Concerned with the continued deaths of infants in India, about 16 lakhs die each year and infant mortality rate is not rapidly coming down, another 8 lakh children die during 2nd to 5th year of their lives , that infants die mostly of preventable sickness, like newborn infections, diarrhea and pneumonia, that only 15.8% mothers practice initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth; and only 20% of babies are exclusively breastfed upto 6 months, and just about 1/3rd babies receive adequate complementary feeding. The glaring gaps are found in policy and programmes on infant and young child feeding and yet no coordinated mechanism is in place, and that ad-hoc actions like Order of MOHFW No. Z.28020/53/2001-CH, to promote breastfeeding have not yet seen the light of the day.

Recognise that other than its major role in ensuring child survival, breastfeeding contributes significantly to, protection of environment, reduction in transmission of HIV via breastfeeding (it is three times higher among mixed-fed babies as compared to the exclusively breastfed babies during first six months), better brain development and preparing children for better learning, protection from obesity, diabetes and heart disease, and if we allow to perpetuate artificial feeding of infants as a norm, and continued promotion of artificial foods for children, it will affect generations to come with obesity and related problems.

Believe that this misery must end, as infant deaths are mostly preventable and are also related to poorer maternal and infant nutrition, that fulfillment of infants' right to food and survival depends on how we support and enable the mother for optimal breastfeeding practice and enhance her own nutrition, and these steps are in accordance with the spirit of Hon'ble Supreme Court's order on Right to Food.


Strongly believe that only a logical budget allocation and coordinated action will allow action and accountability that can make a difference, core issues need to be re-defined in the RCH, ICDS and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to include addressing “infant nutrition as a key to infant health, survival and development”.

Call upon the Prime Minister of India, Chairman of the Planning Commission Government of India,

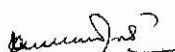
- To recognise 'breastfeeding' as **food security** for infants, and include it in the national food security plans, and make it a part of annual reporting of the Government of India;
- To recognise optimal infant and young child feeding as a **poverty reduction** strategy in the country's PRSPs;
- To **recognise 0-6 months infants as entities** in the programmes and support the mothers' needs to fulfill infants' right to food (beginning within the first hour of birth, and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months) as a national priority for rapidly bringing down infant mortality;
- To declare "**breastfeeding education**" as a **service** equal to immunization in both health and nutrition sector, and
- To recognise breastfeeding as a **core intervention**, central to both health and nutrition sectors, through the following 5 actions.
 1. Ensure that adequate budgets are earmarked for the national and state plans for protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child feeding in the 11th and subsequent plan, with clear goals both in health and nutrition sectors.
 2. Create specific coordination for optimizing infant nutrition e.g. an authority on infant nutrition, under the National Nutrition Mission, rejuvenated National Breastfeeding Committee (Order No. 12-6/97-NT of WCD/HRD) may report to the National Nutrition Mission.
 3. Establish accountability and coordination mechanisms on infant nutrition in the MOH and MWCD and direct them to make plans of action, as a part of National Plan of Action on Children, to enhance optimal breastfeeding rates including breastfeeding within one hour, and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and review these on an yearly basis; and similar mechanisms be reflected in district and state planning.
 4. Provide legislative support to all women to ensure health care support particularly to enable them to begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth, and consider it a health worker's obligation.
 5. Provide six months maternity leave with the context to ensure breastfeeding as a means to attain optimal child health and survival, as mandatory for all women working in government, private and unorganized sectors, and ensure maternity entitlements for at least BPL women in the un-organised sectors by giving cash benefits of a minimum of Rs. 1000 per month for six months post delivery (Tamil Nadu model)



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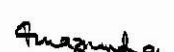
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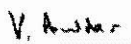
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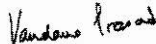
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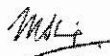
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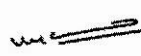
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Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP)

IAP is the sole organisation of Pediatricians with 16000 members, 300 branches and 30 speciality chapters founded in 1963 and committed to working for betterment of child health.

**Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI)**

Federation of Obstetrics & Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) is a professional organization of 20,000 gynecologists working for women's health.

**Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)**

BPNI is a non-profit organization with international collaboration and works towards protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants and young children since 1991. BPNI has a network of 3500 members all over India.



The Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI)-CMAI is a national health NGO committed to promote a just and healthy society for all, irrespective of religion, caste, economic status, gender or language. It is an association, with a membership of over 6500 Christian healthcare professionals and over 330 mission healthcare institutions across the country. CMAI is the official health agency of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI).

**Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS)**

CWDS is a Research Institute under the Indian Council of Social Science Research which deals with women and children's issues.

**Indian Medical Association (IMA)**

IMA was established in the year 1928 in the interest of general public. It has a membership of over 1.64 lakhs doctors practicing modern system of medicine spread over 33 States and Union Territories.

**Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM)**

IAPSM, an organisation in pursuit of excellence in epidemiology, health management, health promotion and family medicine, is dedicated to public health development through education, research, policy, advocacy and consultancy.

**Jan Swasthya Abhiyan**

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan is a people's health movement, India. It is a coalition of networks that is working towards the right to health for all.

**Indian Public Health Association (IPHA)**

Indian Public Health Association is an organization of different categories of Public Health Professionals, working for the interest of Public Health in the country for last 50 years.



Association for Consumer's Action on Safety and Health (ACASH): "ACASH is an independent, non-profit voluntary organisation formed to probe into study research, assist and deal with health-related consumer issues and to protect the rights of the consumer and the general public".



Navdanya - Navdanya means nine crops that represent India's collective source of food security. The main aim of Navdanya bio-diversity conservation programme is to support local farmers, rescue and conserve crops and plants that are being pushed to extinction and make them available through direct marketing.

**National Neonatology Forum (NNF)**

NNF is a body of Pediatricians, Neonatologists, Nurses and Professionals focused to safeguard the interests of the neonate in India. It has been the custodian of Neonatal health in India for the past 26 years.

**Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI)**

TNAI established in 1908, is a professional organization of nurse practitioners in the country. Its objective is to uphold dignity and honour of nursing profession, promote the standards of nursing and health care. It has a membership of more than 2,00,000 nurses and 30 branches all over the country.

**All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN)**

AIDAN is a network of health consumers, science groups organising peoples science movements and social conscious health professionals and concerned individuals. It believes in social justice, health care and has been involved in making efforts towards a rational drug policy and rational drug use.

**Samyak Foundation**

Samyak Foundation, an organization founded by most prominent media journalists, works for capacity building and awareness generation for vulnerable groups especially women and the society suffering from HIV/AIDS and other problems.

**Right to Food Campaign**

The right to food campaign is an informal network of organisations and individuals committed to the realisation of the right to food in India. The organization considers that everyone has a fundamental right to be free from hunger and under nutrition. We are therefore committed to fostering this process through all democratic means.