

WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK
(1-7 AUGUST 2021)



PROTECTING BREASTFEEDING:

Where Lies the Responsibility?

OBJECTIVES OF WBW 2021

- To raise awareness among governments, civil society organisations, and health workers to protect breastfeeding from the bad marketing of baby food/feeding- bottle industry.
- To advocate for effective implementation and enforcement of the IMS Act.



BACKGROUND

Breastfeeding is the cornerstone of infant and young child survival, nutrition, development and maternal health. It contributes to short & long-term health of the society in large[1]. Optimal infant feeding is defined as exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond along with appropriate complementary feeding beginning after six months.

To be successful, breastfeeding women need to be protected from the commercial influence of the baby food industry, supported at work places and in the hospitals where they come to deliver. While India has taken several policy steps in this direction, implementation remains a concern[2]. When we talk of protection, the 2-year report “UNDER ATTACK” 2021 [3], shows how companies continue to undermine breastfeeding.

The Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act 2003, (IMS Act) exists but widespread awareness and effective enforcement is required.



CURRENT SCENARIO OF BREASTFEEDING RATES AS PER NFHS-5

Despite the importance of breastfeeding practices for the healthy growth and development of infants and young children and health of mothers, data is not so encouraging. The NFHS-5-phase-1 (Data from 22 States/UTs) revealed that 88% women deliver in hospitals, only 51% are able to begin breastfeeding within an hour of birth, 61.9% breastfed exclusively during 0-6 months, 56% received timely complementary feeds at 6-8 months and only 16.1% received adequate diet during 6-23 months. (See Fig.1). Obviously 26.9% children are underweight, 31.9% stunted, 18.1% wasted and 5.5% obese. Even as 88% of mothers deliver in hospitals, only 51% are able to begin breastfeeding within one hour. Delivering a baby in the hospital seems to risk a baby's first health vaccine. In fact the rate of breastfeeding within one hour has come down by 2.5-percentage points from NFHS-4 (2015). There are various challenges which hinder breastfeeding practices at various levels that require correction[4].

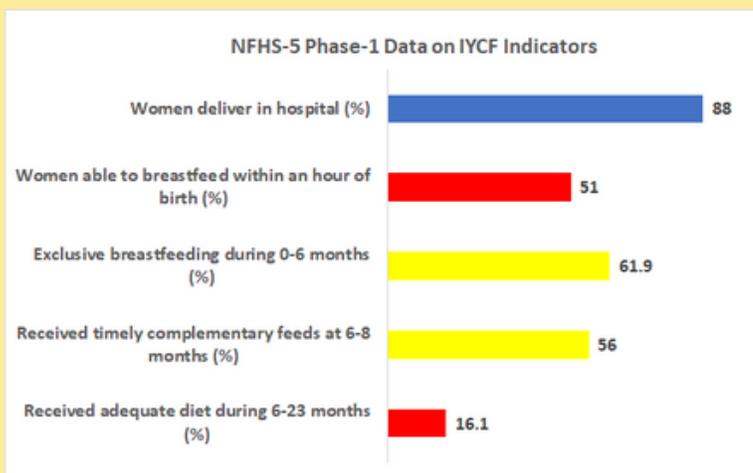


Fig.1

[For Statewise Data
Click Here](#)

REASONS OF INAPPROPRIATE PRACTICES

These are many including lack of skilled healthcare support, commercial promotion of substitutes and lack of adequate support at work places e.g. creches not available; and large numbers of women working in the unorganised sector.

Companies are using new methods to aggressively market their products and change the minds of parents and families, especially through social media influencers. Unfortunately, that contributes to decline in breastfeeding.

Separation of babies from mothers especially in caesarean section births, more so in the private sector is a matter of extreme concern. Lack of adequately trained health staff contributes to failure. Unnecessary use of infant formula in health facilities is a serious challenge to be tackled. In the absence of interventions that provide support to mothers, breastfeeding rates can decline.



THE STATE OF IMS ACT IN INDIA

The IMS Act is violated in many ways. For example marketing via YouTube channels, Instagram Vlogging and many more. This can only lead to increased purchase and consumption of infant formula.

BPNI noted 33 violations in the report Under Attack, over past 2 years, and it is just a tip of iceberg.

Though India has the strongest law in place to protect breastfeeding but its compliance at the health facility and community level is not effective.

PROVISIONS OF THE IMS ACT

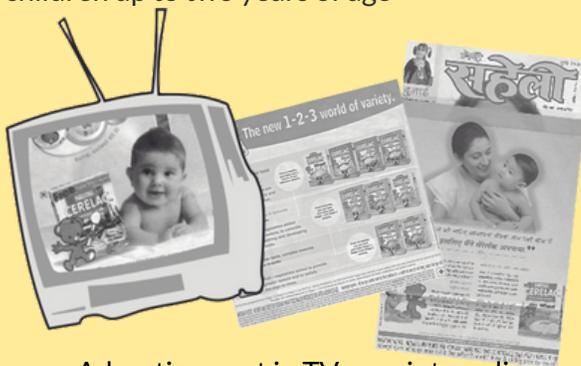
Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act 2003. (IMS Act)

IMS Act is violated

1. If any person promotes any food by whatever name it is sold for children up to two years of age



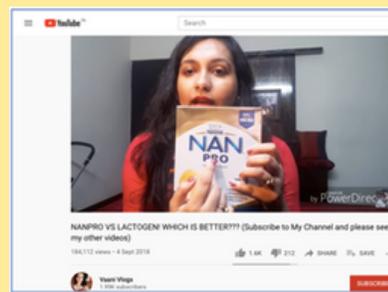
Advertisement in a journal



Advertisement in TV or print media

2. If any person advertises the products under the scope of the IMS Act, i.e. infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles or infant food by any means like television, newspapers, magazines, journals, SMS, emails, radio, pamphlets etc.

3. If the manufacture or its representative distributes the products or samples of infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles and infant foods to any person or contacts pregnant or lactating mothers directly.

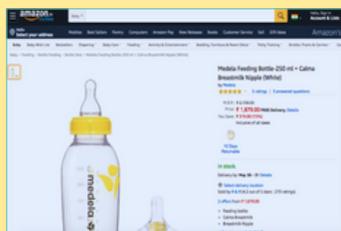


Promoting on YouTube



Free Supplies

4. If the manufacturer/distributor/supplier of the infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles or infant foods gives any kind of incentives like discounts or free gifts etc for the use or sales to anyone.



Sales on discount



PROVISIONS OF THE IMS ACT

5. If the manufacturer/distributor/supplier distributes information and educational material related to promotion of infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles and infant foods to mothers, families etc.

6. If the labels of tins, cartons, accompanied leaflets of these products carry pictures of mothers or babies, cartoons, or graphics, phrases or any other such images for increasing saleability.

7. If the hospital, nursing home, chemist shop displays placards, posters of baby food companies for promoting their products.



Labelling and distribution of materials



8. If the manufacturer/distributor/supplier makes financial inducements or gifts to health workers or to any members of his family for the purpose of promoting the use of infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles or infant foods.

9. If the manufacturer/distributor/supplier of baby foods provides sponsorships/research grants/funding of seminar, meetings, conferences, educational courses/fellowships/ sponsorship of health workers of their associations



Sponsorship of health workers



10. If the manufacturer/distributor/supplier of baby foods fixes commission of employees on the basis of volume of sales of these products.

ACTION IDEAS

WHAT CAN GOVERNMENTS DO?

- Fund an annual monitoring report on IMS Act for each State.
- The Government of India has issued letters to State governments to appoint CMOs to act as "authorised officers". The FSSAI has authorised Food Safety Officers(FSO) to monitor the compliance with this Act. **The state governments must undertake training of FSOs and CMOs and enforce IMS Act effectively.**
- Investigate and launch prosecution if needed into alleged violations through appropriate mechanisms.
- Make reporting violations mandatory for health staff. The Mobile App "Stanpan Suraksha" can be used.
- Appoint skilled lactation counsellors in each health facility, to support and protect breastfeeding.
- Organise sensitization seminars on IMS Act at every district.
- Develop and implement an IEC campaign for the general public in local languages to let them know what IMS Act means.

WHAT CAN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS DO?

- Health professionals and their associations should follow the IMS Act in letter and spirit.
- Refuse to accept any sponsorships or free gifts from the baby food companies, or their front organizations /allies.

WHAT CAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS DO?

- Write a letter to your Health Minister to implement IMS Act and Tweet/Post on Facebook/Insta
- Be a monitor, volunteer with BPNI.
- Report any promotion of infant formula or feeding bottles at any platform using "Stanpan Suraksha Mobile APP"
- Organise seminar in your local area using PPTs/Leaflets from BPNI Site

RESOURCES

Visit BPNI Website



[Indian law to Protect Breastfeeding -spoken tutorial on YouTube](#)

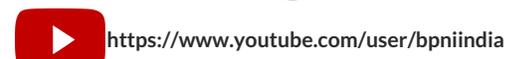
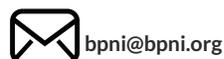
References

- [1] <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/breastfeeding-and-covid-19>
- [2] India Policy Report 2018 : <https://www.worldbreastfeedingtrends.org/uploads/country-data/country-report/WBTi-India-Report-2018.pdf>
- [3] <https://www.bpni.org/world-breastfeeding-protection-day/>
- [4] The Feeding Fiasco Phase-I - The Sunday Guardian Live by Dr Arun Gupta <https://www.sundayguardianlive.com/news/feeding-fiasco-phase>



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ABOUT BPNI

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) is a 29 years old registered, independent, non-profit, national organisation that works towards protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants and young children. BPNI works through policy analysis, advocacy, social mobilization, information sharing, education, research, training and monitoring the company compliance with the IMS Act. BPNI is the Regional Coordinating Office for International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), South Asia. BPNI also serves as the global secretariat for World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) programme, that analyses policy & programmes and galvanises action at country level in different regions of the world.

BPNI's ETHICAL POLICY

BPNI does not accept funds or any support from the companies manufacturing baby foods, feeding bottles or infant feeding related equipments. BPNI does not associate with organizations having conflicts of Interest..BPNI request everyone to follow this ethical stance while celebrating World Breastfeeding Week.

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