



Newsletter

ISSUE 1, 2003

From the desk of Regional Coordinator

Governments in the Asia Pacific, Get set, On your marks, And Go!

On 18th May 2002, the 55th World Health Assembly adopted a Resolution on Infant and Young Child Nutrition ([WHA 55.25](#)) and the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Geneva. This resolution reiterated the WHA resolution 54.2 of May 2001 that defined period of optimal duration of exclusive breastfeeding to be first six months. The strategy was unanimously endorsed by all member States of WHO in May 2002 and the UNICEF Executive Board in September 2002 bringing a unique global consensus.

The strategy defines 'Optimal infant and young child feeding' as *exclusive breastfeeding for first six months and continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond along with adequate and appropriate complementary feeding started after six months*. Since then, many countries the world over, have adopted this policy. The strategy is a guide for country specific approaches to improve infant and young child feeding practices to reduce the burden of malnutrition and strongly reaffirms the *Innocenti Declaration*, the *International Code for Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* (The Code) and the *Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative* (BFHI).

We know that malnutrition in the Asia Pacific region is the highest in the world; in the interest of our people, urgent attention by the governments and the civil society is warranted. The strategy states that member Governments should carry out the primary obligation to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate national policy and plan of action on infant and young child feeding. Not to end here, it also asks for committing adequate resources.

According to the strategy, all concerned parties like health professional bodies, employees, educational authorities, international organizations, the mass media, NGOs including community based support groups have to play a positive contribution to this. The strategy spells out the role of international organizations; they should facilitate the work of national governments to ensure "that the international code and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions are respected in trade policies and negotiations" and not to allow WTO agreements to prevail over the WHO recommendations.

At the same time, the strategy recognizes the role to be played by the baby food manufacturers. Para 44 in the strategy clearly defines the role of commercial sector. They have two obligations; firstly, the foods they produce should meet international quality standards and secondly, they should fully conform to the Code and the subsequent relevant WHA resolutions. Delegate of the Government of India made a statement while participating in the debate "Commercial enterprises by definition are profit driven entities. It is neither appropriate nor realistic for the WHO to expect that commercial groups will work along with governments and other groups to protect, promote and support breastfeeding." Similarly, the delegate from Palau appealed to W.H.O. to "protect Member States from undue and unwanted influence by industries and manipulation by them". It is in this sense that action taken by the governments and others concerned should keep the business involvement clearly limited to two areas mentioned above.

While a favorable environment has been created globally, it is an opportunity for the member governments to show their commitments to act NOW. I know it will not be easy to mobilize both human and financial resources for this type of action. What may be easy is to re-look at the allocation of the currently applied and planned child survival strategies in view of the current scientific evidence that out of all preventive interventions identified, breastfeeding (*exclusive for first six months and continued for 6-11 months*)¹ can prevent 13% under five deaths, which places it on top of the table. This is possible only if exclusive breastfeeding for first six months is universal. Several studies have shown this to be feasible.

IBFAN is with you to assist in what ever manner to protect the interests of mothers and children from the vested interests.

Governments in the Asia Pacific. Get set. On your marks. And Go!!

Arun Gupta MD FIAP
Regional Coordinator IBFAN Asia Pacific

¹ Jones et al. Lancet 362, July 5, 2003. How many child deaths can we prevent this year?

IBFAN Asia Pacific Council (IAPC)

How did we reach here?

International Code Documentation Centre (ICDC), Penang has been functioning as Regional Coordinating Office, IBFAN Asia Pacific for several years. In October 2001, at an IBFAN network meeting in Penang, participants decided to take action towards a new structure and led to the development of an **Interim Council**.

After a series of meetings and consultations finally in the month of November 2002 in Hanoi, the IBFAN Asia Pacific Council (IAPC) was established through a democratic process. The Regional Coordinating Office (RCO) of IBFAN Asia Pacific moved from Penang to Delhi in 2003.

Structure

The IAPC has a Managing Committee which is the decision making body. It is managed by a group of four Subregional representatives (Arun Gupta-South Asia, Ines Fernandez-Southeast Asia, Kim Jai Ok-East Asia and Marcia Annandale-Pacific). The IBFAN Asia Pacific is coordinated by the Regional Coordinator. The Council has elected a chairperson who will be elected by rotation every 2 years and the Regional Coordinator (RC) every five years.

IBFAN Asia Pacific has Special advisers, Issue leaders, IBFAN Focal Points (IFPs) and works on the principles of **transparency, accountability, effectiveness and participation**. It works with a set of 'Working Principles' (copy of which is available on the website www.ibfan-asiapacific.org).

Strategic Plan of IBFAN Asia Pacific 2003 –07

The final draft of the IBFAN Asia Pacific Strategic Plan 2003-2007 was approved by the Regional Coordinator, Chairperson and other members of the Managing Committee with inputs from several key members.

IBFAN Asia Pacific works through national advocacy and capacity development, and countering commercial pressures on breastfeeding.

Objectives of our plan

- 1 To advocate to policy makers, health workers and other partners for implementation of the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding and initiate discussions at regional, sub-regional and national level.
- 2 To develop and launch 'AP- PAR Tool Kit' for assessment of status and monitoring the progress of the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding.
- 3 To increase effectiveness of the IBFAN groups in Asia Pacific Region
- 4 To organize 'Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding' in 2003.
- 5 To stimulate and build capacity of field groups to be effective for action in South Asian countries at district/Taluka/province level.
- 6 To stimulate national actions for Code Monitoring and campaigns and push for its implementation along with subsequent WHA resolutions.
- 7 To promote use of indigenous foods for complementary feeding in the Asia Pacific region, at national and community level.
- 8 To examine policies on infant feeding and HIV, and place it in larger context of optimal IYCF for optimal infant health, development and survival and to organize 'Infant Feeding & HIV - A Regional Colloquium' for the Asia Pacific.
- 9 To prepare and disseminate accurate information materials on exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

The Strategic plan clearly defines the role and responsibilities for the Operational Plan 2003-2004. The focus is on strengthening the Asia Pacific network, developing national framework on Global Strategy, identifying groups/individuals/NGOs for breastfeeding actions in Asia Pacific region and organising training on code.

Report from the RCO: Jan. - Oct. 2003



Asia Pacific Newsletter

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The RCO has the responsibility of implementing the operational plans under supervision of the regional coordinator and the managing committee of IAPC. Following is brief summary of activities from Jan to Oct. 2003.

- ☞ **January** - Working Principles and Terms of References (TORs) for several positions and support secretariat developed and finalized, Strategic Plan of IAPC for 2003-2007 developed and finalized, Ines visited the RCO, organising committee and advisory committee for the Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding (APCON) constituted, developed 'first announcement' for APCON and 'Infant Feeding and HIV: a Regional Colloquium for Asia Pacific' and shared with all through IBFAN, WABA and UNICEF channels, and developed a tentative program of the APCON.
 - ☞ **February**- Shared the IAPC strategic plan 2003-7 with all RRs, met the Regional Director of UNICEF ROSA and developed strong partnership, developed partnership with Government of India to co-host the APCON, invited participation of all concerned, a technical advisory committee, and organizing committee of APCON constituted.
 - ☞ **March**- Working Principles of and Seed Grant Application forms circulated all RRs and IFPs, Dr Arun Gupta, Regional Coordinator (RC) attended Meeting of the Steering Committee on Nutrition (SCN), Susan Siew of WABA visited the RCO for her inputs into organization of the APCON, and secured space for holding it.
 - ☞ **April**- Developed an IAPC operational plan for 2003 and shared with RRs, constituted a working group to provide inputs to the advocacy document for Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, an advisory committee of APCON was invited.
 - ☞ **May** - Established IBFAN Asia Pacific, Regional Coordinating Office (RCO) support secretariat, coordinator programs and assistant coordinator appointed, inaugurated on May 1, organised meeting of the advisory and organising committee of APCON, hired a conference management professional service for APCON, prepared for the 'Review and Planning Meeting', RRs and South Asia IFPs contacted, agenda of the meeting prepared, draft copy of the advocacy document of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding shared with the working group, draft of the Asia Pacific-Participatory Action Research (APPAR) tool kit prepared, inputs into the program of the APCON sought, and resource persons identified & contacted.
 - ☞ **June**- 'Review and planning meeting of IBFAN Asia Pacific and IBFAN South Asia organised and held on 1-3rd June, 03 and adopted the operational plan 2003, policies on seed grants as well as networking were agreed, reviewed the progress of APCON, inputs into the advocacy document and flyer gathered and analysed, finalized the draft layout of the Asia Pacific Newsletter, IAPC flyer discussed and finalized, secured funds for accommodation and meals for the delegates of APCON.
 - ☞ **July**- Received inputs on the Global Strategy advocacy document which is now renamed as 'Nurturing the Infant and Young Child-a simple guide to the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding', analysed and shared with the working group, program for the Infant Feeding and HIV: A Regional Colloquium discussed, plan funds disbursed to the respective RRs.
 - ☞ **August**- Database of contact points of IBFAN AP strengthened at RCO, IBFAN Flyer, Flyer for the Global Strategy finalized, working group for the APPAR Tool Kit invited, invited the IBFAN participation at APCON, 2nd meeting of advisory committee held and comments received, Anwar visited the RCO and practical and logistic arrangements for APCON made.
 - ☞ **September**-Revised the program of APCON, 2nd announcement developed printed and shared, participation of young students invited, and advocacy document finalized with foreword from Anwar, and country profiles were updated.
 - ☞ **October**- 3rd and final meeting of advisory committee organized and comments received, funds for IAPC strategic plans approved by DGIS and Sida, operational plans 2004-2008 developed and shared with RRs, Gunilla Essner from Sida visited the RCO and BPNI, and IAPC website launched and reviewed.
- ### Visitors
- Jan- Ines Fernandez, March-Susan Siew, June-Ines, Kim Jai ok, Marcia Annandale, Prof MQK Talukder, Dr. Prakash Shrestha, Amara Peeris, August-Anwar Fazal, October-Gunilla Essner (Sida).



IBFAN Asia Pacific

How to join as IBFANer?

Any individual or group or organization who has accepted the **working principles** of IBFAN Asia Pacific Council (IAPC) and signed the **Application for Affiliation** to IAPC would be eligible to work with IBFAN and its RCOs. The forms are provided by the Regional Coordinating Office (RCO) and regional representatives (RRs). For further information log on to www.ibfan-asiapacific.org or email to info@ibfan-asiapacific.org

Guidelines for IBFAN Focal Points (IFPs)

Must be a local national group in each country/or will be elected as IBFAN Focal Point (IFP) from the several groups / individuals in that country. IFPs will:

- ✓ Have structures and mechanisms existing in a group and a decision-making process at the national level.
- ✓ Participate in their regional and national action and campaigns on IYCF.
- ✓ Participate in the issue based working groups
- ✓ Provide feedback on national actions to RC/RRs.
- ✓ Contribute to monitoring, campaign and analysis, documentation and data collection for IBFAN nationally, regionally.
- ✓ Participate in networking and exchange programmes.
- ✓ Involve other sectors and partners at national level
- ✓ Encourage new leadership and organisations

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Global IBFAN Regional Coordinating Offices

Region	Place	Country
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IBFAN Arab World Email: mmmibfan@hotmail.com	Cairo	Egypt
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To,

Bangladesh

- Bangladesh has succeeded in extending the maternity leave from 12 weeks to four months.
- Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF) sued three multinational companies for violation of National Breast-Milk Substitute (BMS) Legislation and WON all the three.
- Recently, the Director General Health Service has approved six months of exclusive breastfeeding in the country.

Cambodia

- National Integrated workshop was held in September 2002 at Phnom Penh in Cambodia to consider the implementation of the Global Strategy for IYCF in the country.

India

- The Government of India recently strengthened the existing *Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992 (IMS Act)* to harmonize it with the WHA resolutions of 2001 & 2002 and the Global Strategy. The Act has been enacted in June and will be effective January 2004. Under the newly amended Act, all forms of promotion of infant formula and foods have been prohibited and the baby food manufacturers will not be able to 'advertise' or promote any foods for children under the age of two years.
- The legal battle against Nestle started in 1994, when a complaint was filed. The cognizance of offence was taken by the Hon'ble Court in 1995. Since then, the Nestle has been unnecessarily delaying the proceedings including challenging the validity and provisions of the IMS Act in the High Court. Recently, the Nestle tried to cause another delay and filed a revision petition in a Sessions Court to stop proceedings going on, however in the interest of justice it was set aside and the complaint case will hopefully proceed now, next hearing on 23rd December.
- Government of India has recently established a National Nutrition Mission headed by the Prime Minister. The National Coordinator of BPNI Dr. Arun Gupta has been nominated as one of the eight expert members.

Lao PDR

National policies in Lao PDR have been strengthened to favour breastfeeding in many areas of child and maternal health.

Nepal

- The National committee on Promotion and Protection of breastfeeding has established a cell under Nutrition Section to look after its implementation of the Code.
- Pro-Public, a NGO group filed public interest litigation cases in Supreme Court on for better Maternity Protection in Nepal and against Infant Food Advertisements.

New Zealand

Following national actions have been initiated

- Submission to the Ministry of Health regarding its Code review.
- Involved in developing guidelines for "Breastfeeding Friendly practices at Workplace".
- Establishment of a National Breastfeeding Committee.
- Development of informational booklets.



Participants at the Review and Planning meeting of IBFAN Asia Pacific and IBFAN South Asia



Pakistan

- As a follow up to the Code, the President of Pakistan recently signed an ordinance to provide protection on breastfeeding and nutrition for infants and young children.

Sri Lanka

- The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is engaged in the development and empowerment of women through a large network of Mother's group and has taken leadership in promoting breastfeeding at community level and family level.

Thailand

- An exciting breastfeeding movement has taken shape in Thailand this August during the World Breastfeeding Week 2003, by creating and launching a campaign through the Thai Breastfeeding Alliance of Breastfeeding advocates, Government, UNICEF, Pediatric Society, Thai Health, Nom Mae, TBFA with Medical and Nursing Schools. The focus is on breastfeeding knowledge, strengthening support from fathers and grandmothers and public at large. Case stories of experience of breastfeeding mothers were shared at a press meeting.

Vietnam

- The International Conference on Infant and Young Child Feeding was organized in November 2002 in Hanoi, Vietnam. It was supported by the government and international agencies such as IBFAN, UNICEF, WABA, SIDA and WHO etc. Following this national plan of action is underway.
- Following this in 2003, the Government of Vietnam conducted a Situational Analysis in July 2003 to develop National Plan of Action on IYCF with the help of IBFAN Asia Pacific.



Participants at the International Conference on Infant and Young Child Feeding at Hanoi, Vietnam

Countries in IBFAN Asia Pacific Region

Countries in IBFAN South Asia

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka.

Countries in IBFAN Southeast Asia

Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.

Countries in IBFAN Pacific

Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kingdom of Tonga, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa.

Countries in IBFAN East Asia

China, Hong Kong China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan China.

Countries in other IBFAN sub-regions

Iran