



Newsletter

ISSUE 3, SEPTEMBER 2004

From the desk of Regional Coordinator

Why ensure exclusive breastfeeding for all babies?

In February 2003, researchers from several institutions met in Italy to define the strategy to save approximately 6 million out of the 10.9 million children under the age five who die annually. The expert group concluded that at least one proven and practical intervention is available for preventing or treating each main cause of death. If all these interventions are made universally available (meaning, a 90 per cent coverage), about 63 per cent child deaths could be prevented.

This, in effect, means that the interventions needed to achieve the UN mandated Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing child mortality by two-thirds by 2015 are available, but are not being delivered to the mothers and children who need them.

Breastfeeding - defined as exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding for 6-12 months - was identified as the single most effective intervention that could prevent 13-15 per cent of all child deaths. This coupled with adequate complementary feeding could prevent 19 per cent of all child deaths.

Currently, only 35 per cent babies the world over are exclusively breastfed during the first four months. Malnutrition is highest in South Asia, where only about 45 per cent of 0-3 months babies are exclusively breastfed. In India, only about 20 per cent babies at six months are exclusively breastfed.

It is critical to understand that inappropriate feeding practices are intimately related to malnutrition, which fuels child deaths. Take the case of India, where 26 million children are born every year and about 60 million below the age five years are undernourished. In India, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is 65 and Under-five Mortality Rate (U-5MR) is 95 per thousand born. Some 2.42 million children under the age five die each year; about 1.6 million children die during their first year itself. Most of these deaths - caused by diarrhoea, pneumonia and neonatal infections - are preventable.

Promoting breastfeeding vs. checking HIV transmission

The major source of HIV infection in young children is mother-to-child transmission. The virus may be transmitted during pregnancy, labour and delivery, or through breastfeeding. Recent evidence suggests that 5-20 per cent of infants born to HIV-positive women get infected through breastfeeding.

Among women recently infected with HIV, the risk of transmission through breastfeeding is two times higher than for women infected before or during pregnancy, because of the high viral load shortly after initial infection. Other factors that significantly increase transmission rates include "mixed feeding" of infants (meaning, both breastfeeding and artificial feeding) and preventable breast conditions like sore nipples and mastitis.

In 2003, nine UN Agencies endorsed the HIV and Infant Feeding: Framework for Priority Action to guide nations about key actions pertaining to infant and young child feeding with regards to special circumstances like HIV. Its aim is to create and sustain an environment that encourages optimal feeding practices for all infants while scaling up interventions to reduce HIV transmission.

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The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding - developed jointly by UNICEF and the WHO, and approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2002 - provides a strong basis for policy and action on the issue of appropriate feeding practices for infants and young children. In balancing the need for reducing the risk of HIV transmission to infants with the necessity of minimizing the risk of other causes of morbidity and mortality, the UN guidelines state: "when replacement feeding is acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable and safe, avoidance of all breastfeeding by HIV-infected mothers is recommended. Otherwise, exclusive breastfeeding is recommended during the first months of life."

To help them make the best choice, the HIV-positive mothers should receive counseling and information about the risks and benefits of various infant feeding options based on local assessments, and guidance in selecting the option most suitable for their situation. They should also have access to follow-up care and support, including family planning and nutritional support.

Why recommend exclusive breastfeeding for all babies?

More than 99 per cent mothers in South Asia are HIV-negative. Of the remaining 1 per cent, only a minority gets tested for HIV. The unnecessary use of breast milk substitutes by mothers who are unaware of their HIV status or are HIV-negative needs to be avoided. Further, the risk of HIV transmission increases in case of "mixed feeding".

In formulating a global strategy, UN's "HIV and Infant Feeding: Framework for Priority Action" proposes certain key actions for consideration by governments. It puts the following as the first priority action: "Develop or revise (as the case may be) a comprehensive national policy on infant and young child feeding, which includes HIV and infant feeding."

As such, all mothers should be encouraged and supported to breastfeed exclusively for six months. As a best practice, breastfeeding should continue alongside complementary feeding till 24 months. The

importance of appropriate feeding practice is obvious as more than 90 per cent of the brain develops during this critical period.

Exclusive breastfeeding is best maintained when mother and baby have a skin to skin contact and breastfeeding starts within one hour of the baby's birth; when a baby is properly attached to the breast (this prevents sore nipples and mastitis); and when baby practices demand feeding and suckles without any interference or pacifiers (this ensures effective and adequate milk supply). The support and counselling by skilled personnel can go a long way in ensuring this. Since these inputs require the skill development of grassroots workers, and are time intensive, they often remain ignored.

It would be a critical mistake if we fail to attend to such direct and cost saving actions to improve infant wellbeing and health. Benefits of such direct interventions during the first two years of life are proven, affordable and sustainable.

According to the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, "Inappropriate feeding practices and their consequences are major obstacle to sustainable socio-economic 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, is ensured."

The strategy calls on the member states to act urgently. It urges all national policymakers, public health authorities, professional bodies, UN agencies, technical programme managers and NGOs to promote breastfeeding for the survival, growth and development of their children and societies.

Dr. Arun Gupta

Regional Coordinator, IBFAN Asia Pacific

Sources:

Ministry of Health, Government of India

UNICEF's The State of the World's Children reports

Project Development and Planning Workshop- Nepal

The Project Development and Planning Workshop was organised by Regional Representative IBFAN South Asia with NEBPROF (Nepal Breastfeeding Promotion Forum) in Nagarkot Nepal from August 30 to September 3 2004. Sixteen participants from 6 South Asian countries participated. This 5-day comprehensive workshop helped the participants to develop result-oriented projects for their countries. It also helped them to learn the core management concepts and skills, skills for problem analysis and how to establish learning-based monitoring and

information systems that improve performance during implementation.



International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding- Thailand

The “International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding” was held in Bangkok, Thailand on June 17-18, 2004. Ines Fernandez, Regional Representative Southeast Asia organized this workshop in partnership with the Thai Breastfeeding Alliance, and Department of Health, Government of Thailand. Fifty-two participants from 10 countries of Southeast Asia participated in this workshop. The main outcome of the workshop was that the framework guideline for indigenous foods for complementary

feeding was developed and the participants developed the plan of action based on that framework.



Infant and Young Child Feeding: A Training Course (The 3 in 1 course)

The WHO and UNICEF have provided following 3 training courses related to infant and young child feeding:

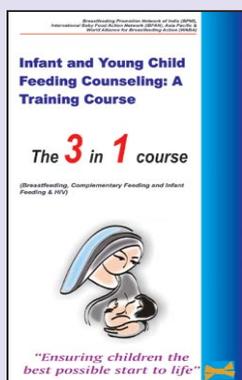
1. “Breastfeeding Counselling – A Training Course”(5days)
2. “HIV and Infant Feeding counseling –A Training Course” (3days)
3. “Complementary Feeding Counselling: A Training Course” (3 days)

BPNI / IBFAN Asia Pacific in collaboration with World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) took the initiative of putting these 3 courses into 1 course, the 3 in

1 training course “**Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling: A Training Course**”. It saves time and resources as rather than calling people three times we can do it in one course. For further details please, contact Regional Coordinating Office (RCO) IBFAN Asia Pacific.

Infant Feeding & HIV Counselling: A Training Course

BPNI/IBFAN Asia Pacific developed Infant feeding and HIV Counselling: A Training Course” a 2 in 1 course. This course is a combination of two separate training modules of WHO and UNICEF, 1. Breastfeeding Counselling and 2. HIV and Infant Feeding Counseling. This course has been field tested twice and 54 PPTCT/PMTCT counselors have been trained in Delhi, India.



Resources

The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding – Flyer

This flyer provides a general understanding of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding.



Nurturing the Infant and Young Child – A Simple Guide to the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding

It is a simple and comprehensive version to the main document of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding endorsed by WHO/UNICEF.



This document is also available in CD format

US\$ 3

APPAR Software 'Tool Kit'

This tool kit provides a unique color coded software to measure the progress and to monitor the status of the Global Strategy by the countries. (Interested persons should contact the RCO)



Compilation of Presentation in CD format

- a. Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding
- b. Infant Feeding and HIV: A Regional Colloquium for the Asia Pacific

US\$ 5

IBFAN Asia Pacific Newsletters

It is published twice a year. It shares the activities of the region, scientific updates, news from the regional coordinating office, contact points and resources of IBFAN Asia Pacific.



Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding - The Indian Experience

This book is more than a documentation of the growth of the Indian movement to centrestage breastfeeding in national and international health policies, and restrain the infant food industry's unethical marketing practices. It also helps in understanding why breastfeeding is central to child survival, what undermines breastfeeding, and what can be done to prevent it.

US\$ 12

Report on Infant Feeding and HIV - A Regional Colloquium for the Asia Pacific



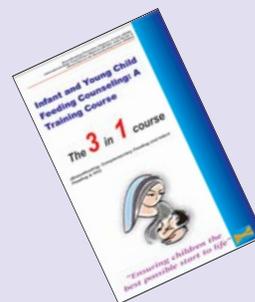
Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding and National Convention of BPNI - Summary Report



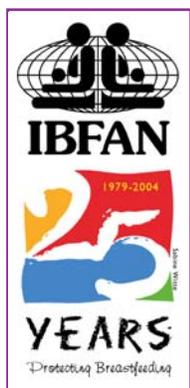
Infant Feeding & HIV Counselling - A Training Course



Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling: A Training Course The 3 in 1 course (Breastfeeding, Complementary Feeding and Infant Feeding & HIV)



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The IBFAN Asia Pacific Newsletter will be published twice a year. For more copies, you can request the IBFAN Regional Coordinating Office, Asia Pacific. Also, for sharing information of your region, send it to the RCO on the above address.

Action News from Countries of Asia Pacific



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Indonesia



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in India



Blue Veins organized a seminar in Peshawar



Infant and Young Child Feeding training for Anganwadi Workers in India



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Sri Lanka



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Hong Kong



Announcing the winners of the International Breastfeeding Photography Competition, New Zealand



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Indonesia



Astapukur Breastfeeding Seminar, Bangladesh



A seminar to launch the Pilot Implementation of 'Protection of Breastfeeding & Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002', at Islamabad



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Thailand



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Bangladesh



Project Development and Planning Workshop, Nepal



World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Indonesia

Action News from Countries of Asia Pacific

- **Australia:** IBFAN contact is effectively applying her skills for monitoring the Code and objecting to sponsorships of professional bodies by the companies.
- **Bangladesh:** BBF made a strong protest against the activities of Nutricia in China, a member of BBF attended the Infant feeding and HIV Counseling; A Training Course for VCCTC/PPTCT counselors, another member of BBF attended the Project Development and Planning Workshop in Nepal, celebrated World Breastfeeding Week.
- **Cambodia:** Reviewed national plan of action on breastfeeding, participated in the International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding held in Thailand in partnership with Government of Health personnel.
- **East Timor:** Participated in the International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding held in Thailand, the National Breastfeeding Committee headed by the President's wife is active in developing programme for promotion of breastfeeding.
- **Fiji:** The government of Fiji working on Code and asked for support from the RCO.
- **Hong Kong:** National workshop organized during World Breastfeeding Week in partnership with UNICEF and Government.
- **India:** Developed National Guidelines on Infant and Young Child feeding which are being translated into state specific languages to assist better implementation at state levels, the national coordinator of BPNI is assisting four state governments to develop their plan of actions and BPNI is supporting them for training, two Training Courses on Infant feeding and HIV Counseling were organized and 54 VCCTC/PPTCT counselors VCCTC/PPTCT counselors were trained.
- **Indonesia:** Participated in Workshop on Codex in Kuala Lumpur, celebrated World Breastfeeding Week.
- **Lao PDR:** Participated in International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding held in Thailand, organized a workshop on maternity protection.
- **Malaysia:** PPIM celebrated World Breastfeeding Week, Organized an international seminar on BFHI in partnership with government and UNICEF.
- **Maldives:** A workshop was organised on Infant and Young Child Feeding, one person participated in the South Asia Project Development and Planning Workshop held in Nepal.
- **Mongolia:** A draft Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes has been presented to the Parliament, IBFAN contact in Mongolia also prepared a CRC report and shared with CRC Committee and Mongolian Child Rights Center, celebrated World Breastfeeding Week.
- **Nepal:** A new network evolved, named as Nepal Breastfeeding Promotion Forum (NEBPROF) to take the agenda of IYCF forward, the IFP participated at WHA as a government delegate and effectively made a statement on IYCF, NEBPROF organized the South Asia Project Development and Planning Workshop for IBFAN South Asia, World Breastfeeding Week was observed by NEBPROF calling national NGOs meeting.
- **New Zealand:** The government extended paid parental leave from 12 weeks to 14 weeks, an IBFAN person appointed as a member in National Breastfeeding Committee, the Health Minister appreciated IBFAN Asia Pacific's role after receiving relevant documents, health and food safety officials issue strong warnings about using powdered infant formula in relation to E sakazakii.
- **Palau:** A strong IBFAN contact and adviser of the IAPC participated at the WHA as a government delegate and introduced a Resolution on Infant and Young Child Nutrition, focusing on health claims, and sponsorships.
- **Pakistan:** Government of Pakistan drafting rules for implementing the newly enacted law, Protection of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002, World Breastfeeding Week celebrated by all groups, one person from SPARC participated in Project Development and Planning Workshop held in Nepal.
- **Philippines:** RR SEA organised International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding in June 2004 at Thailand, formed Lawyers working group for Code enquiry by both the congress and the senate, arranged 5 days Life Skills Training in the islands, formed mother support groups for breastfeeding advocacy and sustainability, A new group 'Children for Breastfeeding' started to create a new path for breastfeeding advocacy by promoting to school children.
- **Samoa:** Ministry of Health reviewing all health legislation and updating them, drafting the food legislation, campaign during the World Breastfeeding Week has made significant impact on knowledge of mothers regarding exclusive breastfeeding, the Ministry of Health has disseminated information about exclusive breastfeeding to the general public through Media, booths, Notice Boards, Information Packages etc.
- **Sri Lanka:** BMS legislation revised and printed for dissemination, IFP organized a workshop on reproductive health and advocacy, launched a national media campaign during the World Breastfeeding Week with Delhi Declaration on IYCF as central, a member of SWM participated at the South Asia Project Development and Planning Workshop in Nepal.
- **Thailand:** The IBFAN groups shared scientific information forwarded by the Regional Coordinating Office with the President of the Thai Royal College of Obs and Gyn, shared Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding and Colloquium documents with them, Organized 1st Breastfeeding training for Thai obstetricians, celebrated World Breastfeeding Week by designing and arranging for the manufacturing of breastmilk storage bags for working mothers and a new breastfeeding T-shirt was manufactured "Anywhere, Anytime" to offer mothers a choice to discretely breastfeed when breastfeeding in public.
- **Tuvalu:** The Minister of Health appreciated the IBFAN Asia Pacific work after receiving relevant documents and asked for International Code on Breastmilk Substitutes and WHA resolutions.
- **Vietnam:** A plan of action on infant and young child feeding 2005-2010 is being presented to the Minister for approval, The Director, National Institute on Nutrition intervened to include exclusive breastfeeding reference at the regional conference on maternal and child nutrition in September Delhi 2004.



International Workshop on Indigenous Foods for Complementary Feeding in Bangkok



Breastfeeding Counselling Room in East Timor



World Breastfeeding Week celebrations - East Timor