



Press Release



Conference on South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum – 3

November 20 to November 22
Kabul Serena Hotel, Kabul, Afghanistan

For immediate release

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in collaboration of the UNICEF will host a three day conference titled South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum – 3 in Kabul scheduled to be held from November 20 to November 22.

Regional based organizations including International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), UNICEF and local NGOs are the active participants of the conference.

Representatives from the UN agencies, mother support groups, professional bodies and activists of breastfeeding organizations from the SAARC member countries; India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka also take part in the conference.

According to Plan for Action – 2006, the participants will deliberate on the following points; formation of a national partnership on breastfeeding, endorsement of the Code by the cabinet and development of communication strategy, more work on the national Code, policy on HIV and infant feeding, way and means to protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding; specially early and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, prevention of malnutrition and young child health, survival and development.

Dr. Sadruddin Sahar, Chairperson of the forum and Deputy Afghan Public Health Minister will inaugurate the ceremony in presence of Dr. Sayed Muhammad Amin Fatami, Minister for Public Health. Dr. Arun Gupta, Regional Coordinator of the IBFAN, Mr. Martin Daes from UNICEF, Mr. Riyad Musa Ahmad, representative of the WHO, Dr. Zarmina Safi, from the Directorate of Public Nutrition Department and member of Afghanistan Breastfeeding Promotion Partners will deliver speeches during the conference.

Children from the Sitara Kodakistan will perform song on the subject.

All media outlets are cordially requested to send their reporters to cover this event

❖ **Pajhwok Afghan News has provided media advisory for organizing the conference**

For further information about the conference please contact on the address below:

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Background information on South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forums

South Asia is home about 1.2 billion people, has the 2nd highest number of under-five deaths and under-five children who are underweight. In this region, annual numbers of births are estimated to be about 37 million; under-five mortality rate (U5-MR) is 97 and 46 per cent children under-five are underweight (progress for Children – A child survival report card 2004).

That means more than 77 million children under the age of five are underdeveloped and undernourished, thus, unlikely to achieve their full growth and potential development. The forum was organized with this background. The focus of the forum was on scaling up exclusive breastfeeding rates in these countries as well as to address infant feeding in the context of HIV.

World leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 agreed among others on two critical goals for the year 2015: to reduce the maternal mortality rate by three-fourths, and to reduce under-5 child mortality by two-third. According to child health experts, the child mortality goal is unattainable without reducing newborn mortality by at least half.

Keeping in view these sensitive issues, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) Asia Pacific, Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) and the Government of India organized the Asia Pacific Conference on Breastfeeding & National Convention of BPNI from 30 November to 3 December 2003 at New Delhi, India. This was the first ever such conference in this region and it brought together over 500 participants from 38 countries and nearly every state of India, representing mothers, governments, public interest groups, professional bodies, United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

The conference was organized as a part of the Strategic Plan 2003-2007 of IBFAN-Asia Pacific, which works towards the overall goal of contributing to prevention of malnutrition; enhanced infant and young child health, survival and development.

As a follow up of the conference participants from South Asia, countries decided that each year, a South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forums should be organized and a different country should host it. The objective was to strengthen the breastfeeding movement and linkages with the governments and the UN as well as Infant and young child feeding policy and programmes in that country.

IBFAN South Asia acts as catalyst in organizing the Forums, by coordinating, networking with governments, UN agencies as well as strengthening the national groups. In 2004, Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF) an IBFAN Focal Point in Bangladesh grabbed the opportunity and successfully organized “South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum-1” in Nov 2004 at Dhaka, Bangladesh – Afghanistan was an active participant of the mentioned conferences.

On October 2005, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) Asia Pacific and UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia jointly organized South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forums -2. Afghanistan participated actively in both forums. As follow up of the conference the conference in Nepal, Afghanistan proposed to hold the third Forum in Afghanistan for the year 2006.