

# SOUTH ASIA BREASTFEEDING PARTNERS FORUM-3

Theme - "Breastmilk Saves Lives, Saves Money"

Kabul, Afghanistan, November 20-22, 2006

## Introduction

Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) Asia Pacific jointly organized South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum-3, from November 20-22, 2006 hosted by Afghanistan Breastfeeding Promotion Partners (ABPP) at Kabul, Afghanistan. Seventy participants represented five South Asia countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. There were representatives included from governments, public interest groups, United Nations agencies, media, Kabul University, professional bodies and other international organizations. The theme of the Forum was *Breastmilk Saves Lives, Saves Money*. The Forum sought to identify ways and means to scale up the coverage of early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months in South Asia, and to protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding practices.



*Inaugural session being Chaired by Minister of Public Health*

## Objectives of the Forum

Key objectives of the Forum included strengthening the network; review of actions in South Asian countries to bridge the gaps found in assessment; sharing country experiences; developing country specific action plans for 2007; updating on several issues like Double Burden of Malnutrition, Economics of Breastfeeding, etc.

*This document provides a brief report of the Forum.*

## Proceedings

The programme started with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by opening remarks by Dr. Sadrudin Sahar, Administrative Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Dr. Ahman Shah Salhi, Director of International Relation Department of Afghanistan introduced all the participants, following which, the scientific session started.

The Honorable Minister of Public Health, Dr. Said Mohammad Amin Fatimi, was the Chief Guest of the Inaugural

### The State of the World's Breastfeeding, South Asia Report Card Released

Dr. Said Mohammad Amin Fatimi, Hon'ble Minister of Public Health, Afghanistan, released "The State of the World's Breastfeeding - South Asia Report Card", addresses the issues of infant and young child feeding. This is the result of an assessment of the implementation of the *Global Strategy* in eight countries of South Asia.

This report card shows the level of achievement at a quick glance and serves as a guide for effective resource allocation.

## Hosts



Ministry of Public Health

## Sponsors

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS)

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

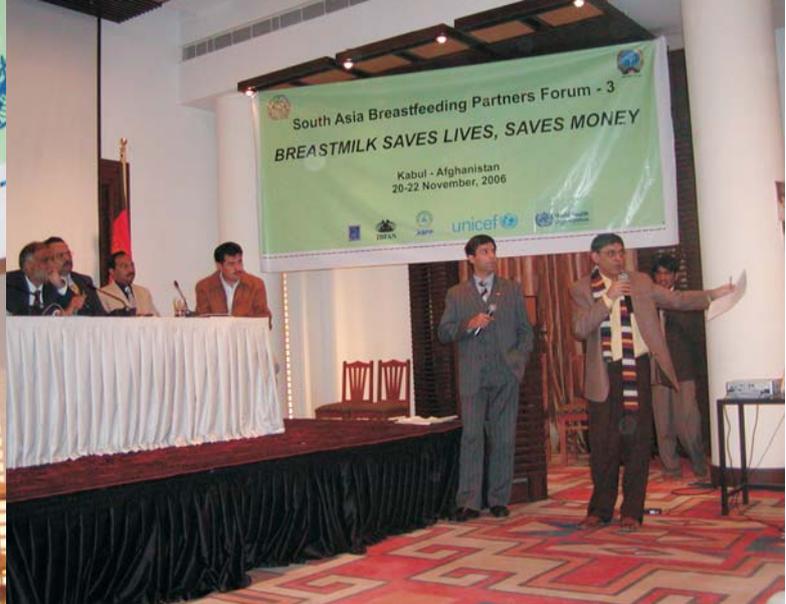
UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)

UNICEF Afghanistan

WHO Afghanistan



*Recitation of the Holy Quran*



*Session in Progress*

Ceremony. The other guests of honour included Martien Daies, representative of UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA); Sharma and Henery Mdebwe from UNICEF, Afghanistan; Dr. Riyad M.F. Musa Ahmad from WHO, Afghanistan; Dr. Arun Gupta, who represented both IBFAN & WABA; Dr. Zarmina Safi from Public Nutrition Department & Afghanistan Breastfeeding Promotion Partners. Dr. Abdullah Fahim, Advisor to the Minister of Public Health, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, chaired the inaugural ceremony.

*H.E. the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, sent his message to the participants of the Forum, he emphasized importance of breastfeeding. The message was read by Dr. Said Mohammad Amin Fatimi, H.E. President said: We urgently need to save lives, especially the lives of our mothers and our children. This also will help us save our money to be used in development and to secure a better future to our people, particularly our children. . . .*

Dr. Said Mohammad Amin Fatimi, Hon'ble Minister of Public Health, Afghanistan, assured support for the protection, promotion and support of optimal infant and young child feeding by supporting exclusive breastfeeding from 0-6 months through behaviour change strategies, at all levels of health facilities as well as nutrition related programming. In his speech, he said, *the strategy of MoPH is to support and promote optimal practices for infant and young child feeding, including appropriate caring practices.*

Dr. Arun Gupta stressed how the Forum-3 is important in the light of a new international process and called to bring down infant mortality rate URGENTLY and RAPIDLY. Further he emphasised for rapid reduction of infant mortality, *...neonatal mortality is the one which all of us need to focus.* He requested the Honorable Minister to consider breastfeeding as a vital national asset and set an example by creating 'Afghanistan National Fund on infant and young child survival'.

Dr. Zarmina Safi from Public Nutrition Department of MoPH, Afghanistan and Afghanistan Breastfeeding Promotion Partners, updated on the status of IYCF in Afghanistan. A 'Tarana Song' on advantages of breastmilk was presented by the school children. The song also pleaded with infant milk manufacturers not to ruin the health of infants by pushing their products on innocent mothers.

During three days of work, 11 sessions provided prolific discussion on wide ranging issues. The first session was on infant survival in South Asia, in which role of early and exclusive breastfeeding for infant survival, role of health care system in promoting early and exclusive breastfeeding and related economic gain were discussed. It was followed by several sessions including capacity building programs for developing national trainers, a participatory workshop on Campaign for Infant Survival in South Asia and Applying 'Logic' to Actions, and a presentation of MoPH on results of study in Kabul Therapeutic Feeding Units (TFUs). Besides a variety of topics covered, the discussion and information exchanged during 'Panel discussion - Making Infant Survival a Reality in South Asia', with ten eminent media persons from Afghanistan and India, strengthened the partnership.

The Forum provided all partners a platform for discussion, sharing, networking and planning together. Each country developed and presented their plan of action for 2007.

Ten recommendations, evolved over 3 days, were developed and discussed before adopting the 'Kabul Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding'. During the closing ceremony, Dr. Faizulla Kakar, Technical Deputy Minister of MoH, Afghanistan, Dr. Arun Gupta, Regional Coordinator of IBFAN Asia Pacific and Dr. Zarmina Safi, Director of Afghanistan Breastfeeding Promotion Partners signed on the 'Kabul Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding', which was adopted by consensus. Dr. Faizulla Kakar, in his closing remarks, assured that *..I will promise you that breastfeeding will be put on high priority...that you can check after one year.* All participants pledged to support and act on the 10 actions listed in the Kabul Declarations by standing ovation.

### Vision and Mission of the Forum

**Vision:** Mainstream infant and young child feeding in the child health programmes by 2007.

**Mission:** Ensure protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding through budgeting, declaring it as a core issue, capacity building initiative to build skills of health care providers and provision of IYCF counseling including HIV and infant feeding as a service delivery.

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# Kabul Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding

*22nd November 2006*

The South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum 3, held in Kabul, Afghanistan, from November 20-22, 2006, brought together over 70 participants from South Asia countries representing governments, public interest groups, professional bodies, media, United Nations agencies and other international organizations. The Forum 3 was organized with the theme "Breastmilk Save Lives, Saves Money" to find ways and means to scale up the coverage of early breastfeeding within one hour and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months in South Asia and also to protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding.

## **Recalling the global commitments enshrined in the:**

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Millennium Development Goal 4 to reduce child mortality;
- International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions;
- Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, 2002;
- Innocenti Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding 2005.

## **Recognizing that:**

- Artificial feeding of infants is dangerous to the health of infants and young children;
- Artificial feeding perpetuates poverty;
- Lack of optimal breastfeeding leads to malnutrition early in life, limits the survival, growth and development of infants and young children, leads to chronic diseases later in life, and is detrimental to sustainable human development and socio-economic development;
- If all mothers begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth, 22% of all newborn deaths can be prevented;
- Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months can save 13-15% of under-five child deaths; and that a further 6% can be prevented through timely introduction of adequate and appropriate complementary feeding;
- Women need gender-sensitive support and enabling environments at the time of birth to begin breastfeeding within one hour and later to maintain exclusive breastfeeding, and optimal feeding for their infants and young children;
- Capacity building from national level to family level is essential for providing such support;
- Irresponsible marketing of baby foods interferes with optimal infant and young child feeding practices;

*Media Discussions*



*Participants*



The participants endorsed the Call for Action in the Innocenti Declaration on Infant and Young Child Feeding 2005, and reaffirmed that breastfeeding is a life saving measure in whole of South Asia, and is the best investment for human development. The Forum Participants are convinced that early (within one hour) and exclusive breastfeeding (for the first six months) must be among the major outcomes of any development process, and call upon all concerned for the following 10 actions:

1. Recognize optimal infant and young child feeding with a focus on early and exclusive breastfeeding as the most critical intervention to save infant lives.
2. Establish a SAARC regional fund for infant nutrition and survival with a focus on early and exclusive breastfeeding.
3. All governments should commit to the Call for Action contained in the Innocenti Declaration 2005 and World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution 2006.
4. All governments should develop plans of action and commit clear budgets to implement such plans.
5. Revitalize and link the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) with community initiatives, including strengthening the pre-service curriculum at all levels, with an objective to implement the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding".
6. Strengthen national legislations or enact new ones to stop all kinds of commercial promotional practices including contacts of baby food industry with health providers.
7. Ensure that maternity entitlements to facilitate early breastfeeding within one hour and exclusive breastfeeding for six months are legalized.
8. Ensure that women receive skilled counseling and support to practice optimal infant and young child feeding, including in situations of HIV and disaster management.
9. Create national coordination and review processes to monitor these practices and programs on a regular basis.
10. Ensure that all policies and programs at national level do not violate the infants' right to survival through optimal infant and young child feeding.

#### All Participants Pledge to Support and Act on the 10 Actions

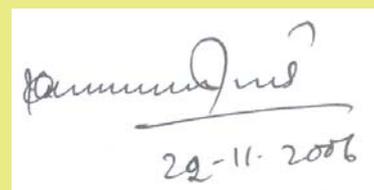
The South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum was organized by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Government of Afghanistan, Afghanistan Breastfeeding Promotion Partners (ABPP), and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) Asia Pacific, with financial support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Netherlands Ministry of Development Cooperation (DGIS), UNICEF, and WHO. The Forum also received technical and logistic support from Tech-Serve/USAID, ACF, WHO, UNICEF, World Food Program, IBFAN, and WABA.



Dr. Zarmina Safi  
Director, ABPP



Dr. Faizulla Kakar  
Tech. Dy. Minister, MOPH



Dr. Arun Gupta  
Regional Coordinator, IBFAN Asia Pacific

*Exhibition of South Asian Countries*



*Signing the Declaration*



## Action Plans for 2007

All country groups together developed their action plans for 2007, which are briefly presented here. These are generally reviewed at the next Forum.

### **Afghanistan:**

- Submission of draft Code to Ministry of Justice for endorsement and further follow up;
- Monitoring Code;
- Establishment of national and provisional breastfeeding promotion committee;
- Development and wide dissemination of breastfeeding IEC materials;
- Conducting sensitisation sessions with central and provincial authorities;
- Baseline surveys.

### **Bangladesh:**

- Curriculum revision in light of IYCF;
- Formation of training committee for establishing Breastfeeding Management Centres;
- Revitalisation of BFHI;
- Implementation of existing legislation;
- Conduct training – TOT;
- Code monitoring - identify violations;
- Identify research agenda, develop grant proposals;
- Monitoring 2nd Child Survival Revolution Targets;
- Initiation within one hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding for six months, complementary feeding at 6-9 months and continued breastfeeding till 20-23 months;
- HIV and Breastfeeding Policy approval - produce booklets for advocacy.

### **Bhutan:**

- Advocate for maternity leave for 14 weeks and worksite accommodation for breastfeeding;
- Survey on IYCF practices;



*Working Group in Progress*

- Advocacy for approval of BMS Code by National Assembly;
- Reactivation of National Committee on promotion and protection of breastfeeding as National IYCF Committee.

### **India:**

- Taking breastfeeding to high level political attention;
- Conducting IYCF Counselling training courses;
- Calling for ensuring a budget head for IYCF in 11<sup>th</sup> plan;
- Campaign on 1<sup>st</sup> hour breastfeeding to save lives.

### **Nepal:**

- Promote early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months through following actions - activate mother groups, develop IEC materials, orientation to pregnant women;
- Reactivation of legislation on BMS Code;
- Reactivation of National Committee on promotion and protection of breastfeeding as National Committee on IYCF;
- Rectification of maternity leave;

*Radha Holla Addressing Campaign Issues*



*Working Group in Progress*



- Reactivate BFHI concept;
- Training in integrated IYCF counselling to all level of health manpower.

**Sri Lanka:**

- Community mobilisation through participatory approaches;
- TOT to safeguard credibility of community leaders as peoples' representatives in interpersonal, organizational and political communication process;
- Formal introduction on the violation of the Sri Lanka Code to the local level leaders through non-formal education programmes;
- Advocacy on identifying issues relating to Code

monitoring in rural communities whenever meeting persons of authority;

- Encouraging communities to identify interventions which could be the possible solutions to the problems relating to infant and child well-being;
- Encouraging use of local resources in the process of development;
- Developing a cell in SWM local level centres for data collection and documentation to facilitate the process in relation to infant and maternal health, and nutrition;
- Methods of rapport building with the personnel at macro level to disseminate information / research findings through a participatory process.



*Some Participants with the Minister of Public Health*

**FORUM-4**

**2007**

**Bhutan/  
India**

**FORUM-5**

**2008**

**Sri Lanka**

**FORUM-6**

**2009**

**Pakistan**



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