

Background information on South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forums

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. **Eleven representatives of overseas governments** were also present. 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.

The representatives from 38 countries adopted **The Delhi Declaration** <http://www.ibfan-asiapacific.org/img/delhideclaration.pdf> - a call of ten urgent actions for optimal infant and young child feeding and a set of **Major recommendations** <http://www.ibfan-asiapacific.org/img/majorrecommendations.pdf>.

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**. Meeting every year would also help in a review of actions.

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. The Hon'ble Minister of Health **Dr. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain inaugurated** the Forum. Fifty one participants from 7 countries

representing Governments, UN agencies, NGOs, mother support groups, professional bodies and other international organizations like Plan International, Save the Children UK took part in the deliberations and unanimously adopted recommendations to contribute towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially MDG 4 to reduce Child Mortality <http://www.ibfan-asiapacific.org/img/SouthForumReport1.pdf> .

In 2005, IBFAN South Asia and UNICEF Regional Coordinating Office for South Asia (ROSA) jointly organized the '**South Asia Breastfeeding Partners Forum-2**' at Kathmandu, Nepal. Nepal Breastfeeding Promotion Forum (NEBPROF), an IBFAN Focal Point in Nepal, hosted Forum-2. Sixty-five participants represented eight countries of South Asia including 5 governments (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Maldives), UN agencies, WABA, media, professional bodies, NGOs and other international organizations attended this activity. A call for action with 10 recommendations, which evolved over 3 days, adopted by consensus at the closing session jointly chaired by the government representative of Afghanistan and Bangladesh. This was later released at a press conference [http://www.ibfan-asiapacific.org/SABPF-II%20\(Report\).pdf](http://www.ibfan-asiapacific.org/SABPF-II%20(Report).pdf). The Afghanistan participants proposed to organise 3rd Forum in Kabul.

Because of several global commitments as well as strong unprecedented scientific evidence to mainstream optimal infant and young child feeding practices in child health and nutrition programmes, it is for South Asia countries to take decision in the interest of their mothers and children and the human development of its society in the long run. The south Asia is most affected by child malnutrition and it is the region where most of the child deaths are taking place. We have to make very rapid progress to bring down our infant mortality and that would be possible as result of heightened action on early and exclusive breastfeeding.

Background Paper With the scientific evidence