

Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)

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PRESS RELEASE

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Prime Minister assures to take action on infant nutrition

NEW DELHI, MAY 3, 2007: India is rather taking more serious stand this time on the issues of child deaths and their survival. This reflection came when Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh was taking special interests to discuss the matter with the representatives of the civil society, professional health organizations and institutions who could give better solutions to the child health problems, especially matters pertaining to child malnutrition, high rate of neonatal deaths, appropriate infant and young child feeding practices and promotion of exclusive breastfeeding in the country.

On Wednesday evening, Prime Minister called an urgent meeting at his official residence to discuss the ways of tackling high rate of child deaths and malnutrition in the country. The visiting delegates explained the needs of young babies and asked the Prime Minister to establish a high level "Authority to coordinate the action on infant nutrition and survival"

Following the ***Joint Statement on Infant and Young Child Feeding ensuring Optimal Infant Nutrition, Survival and Development*** (<http://www.bpni.org/advocacy-2007.html>) which was submitted to Prime Minister by sixteen national organizations of health professionals and citizen movement groups, the PM office invited Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) and its allied partners to discuss with Dr. Manmohan Singh on the recommendations of Joint Statement.

While discussing with the members of the group, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said that concerned ministries would take appropriate measures to tackle the problems of child malnutrition and child deaths in the country. He, however, assured the representatives of the group that he would call a meeting to discuss the issues with Planning Commission, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Women and Child Development.

Prime Minister was highly concerned about the importance of breastfeeding particularly in prevention and control of diseases, brain development and ensuring high level of child survival. The group explained to the Prime Minister how both ICDS and NRHM could play vital role in much needed 'family' level interventions in addition to ongoing interventions of ICDS and NRHM programmes. The group asked the Prime Minister to give equal priority to breastfeeding issues along with other child issues and in allocation of resources. The important issues like ASHA's involvement in infant feeding counseling, care and support to the needy young babies, maternity protection – including maternity

entitlements— and crèches for mothers to stay closer to babies were also discussed with the Prime Minister.

Dr. Arun Gupta (National Coordinator, BPNI) and six other members—Dr. Vinod Paul (Prof. Pediatrics, AIIMS), Dr. Dharam Prakash (Hony. Joint Secretary, IMA), Dr. Vandana Prasad (Joint Convener, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan), Mr. Rahul Dev (Samyak Communication), Dr. J P Dadhich (Project Coordinator, HIV & Infant Feeding, BPNI) and Dr. Tarsem Jindal, (Pediatrician, Jaipur Golden Hospital) submitted a statement to Prime Minister to take appropriate measures and actions on this matter.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The Joint Statement on Infant and Young Child Feeding ensuring Optimal Infant Nutrition, Survival and Development was adopted and presented to the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh by the following 16 organizations:

1. Association for Consumer's Action on Safety & Health (ACASH)
2. Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP)
3. All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN)
4. Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA)
5. Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI)
6. Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI)
7. Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM)
8. Indian Public Health Association (IPHA)
9. The Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecological Sciences of India (FOGSI)
10. Samyak Foundation
11. Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS)
12. National Neonatology Forum (NNF)
13. Indian Medical Association (IMA)
14. Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)
15. Right to Food Campaign
16. Navdanya

To access the copy of the Joint Statement visit:

http://www.bpni.org/advocacy/Joint_Statement_IYCF.pdf

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