

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To:

---

---

---

## **“BRING SUPPORT CLOSE TO MOTHER” World Breastfeeding Week 2013**

According to WHO and UNICEF exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is one of the most effective single interventions for child health and development and it contributes immensely to nutrition and survival. After six months timely and appropriate complementary feeding along with continued breastfeeding for two years is associated with more gains. To achieve this, the WHO and UNICEF launched the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* in 2001, which led to development of the *National Guidelines on infant and young child feeding* in India.

However, our country’s breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) rates are low. To facilitate improvement in the IYCF indicators the 12<sup>th</sup> Five- year plan of Government of India focuses on the critical age group of under 3, Pregnant, Breastfeeding mothers. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has also launched the “*Enhancing Optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding Practice* in 2013 for improving breastfeeding practices. ICDS has recently been restructured and it focuses on IYCF practices.

Since we want to increase the breastfeeding rates, Pregnant and Lactating women need correct information and support to practice optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), which includes initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth, breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months and continue to breastfeeding for two years or more, together with nutritionally adequate, safe, age appropriate, responsive complementary feeding starting at six months.



We basically need to take care of three key things for ensuring improved IYCF indicators i.e promotion, protection from commercial exploitation and support of breastfeeding and work in health care facilities.

We are happy to share with you an example of promotion in the district of Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh. It is home to one million people. This is a success story of community support for protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding through “**Baby Friendly Community Health Initiative**” The project demonstrates positive impact on IYCF practices. It was possible through village level “Mother Support Groups” (MSG) comprising of AWW, ASHA, and traditional birth attendant/an active mother from the village. A group of about 50 mentors were trained in a medical college Gorakhpur of UP, who led the project. **About 3000 women are trained in the district for helping women in breastfeeding process.** Over five years, Lalitpur has shown tremendous increase in rates of infant and young child feeding practices. See below:

- The percentage increase in **Initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth** has gone up from **10.6% (2006) to 62 % (2011)**.
- **Exclusive breastfeeding** for the first six months has gone up from **6.6 % (2006) to 60 % (2011)**.
- **Timely and appropriate complementary feeding** during 6-8 months has gone up from **53.8% (2006) to 95% (2011)** .These are much above the average rates of IYCF practices in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

We are sharing this with you to request you to explore possibilities in your district/state/country to BRING SUPPORT CLOSE TO MOTHER.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_