

Child Survival and Development Report Card

Meghalaya

Children are young saplings in the garden of life. To love them is to turn our minds to the bountiful creator. Ideally an infant thrives best on exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond along with adequate and appropriate complementary feeding starting after six months. This is critical for their health, development and survival.

Though there has been a significant improvement in the survival and development of children over the decades, however, lot more needs to be done. Let's see the situation in the state of Meghalaya! . The crude birth rate (CBR) is 28.5, infant mortality rate (IMR) is 58 and the percentage of under weight children under the age 3 is 37.9.

Extrapolating this information in numbers; of 65,721 live births each year, 3,811 **children die before they reach their first birthday**. After taking into account the infant mortality each year, number of survivors at one year will be 61,909. To arrive at the number of survivors under the age 3, we have used this figure and multiplied by 3. This leads to the figure of 185,727 survivors. (This figure does not take into consideration some deaths occurring during the second and the third year). Now calculating the number of **underweight children under the age 3, that is 37.9 percent of the survivors, it comes to about 70,390**. Thus, more than 70 thousand children under the age 3 in Meghalaya are underdeveloped and malnourished and are not likely to achieve their full growth and development potential. Table 1 also provides this data.

Table 1: Status of Child Health and Development in Meghalaya

Population (Source- MOHFW, 2001)	2,306,000
Crude Birth Rate (Source- MOHFW, 2001)	28.5
Infant Mortality Rate (Source- MOHFW, 2001)	58
Percentage of Under Weight Children (-2SD) (Source- NFHS-1998-1999)	37.9
Calculations in Numbers¹	
Approx. No. of Children Born per Year	65,721
Approx. No. of Children who Die Before They are 1	3,811
Approx. No of Survivors Each Year	61,909
Approx. No of Survivors Under the Age 3	185,727
Approx. No. of Underweight Children Under the Age 3	70,390

¹ Calculations done by Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India

Link of Malnutrition and Inappropriate Infant Feeding Practices

Undernutrition during first two years impairs cognitive development, intelligence, strength, energy and productivity. Child malnutrition occurs entirely during the first two years and is virtually irreversible after that. Optimal feeding practices during first year of life are critical to prevent malnutrition and to ensure optimal health and development of infants and young children.

According to the W.H.O., 60 percent of all deaths under the age of 5 are related to malnutrition. **Inappropriate feeding practices are related to 2/3rd of all under five deaths.** According to the most recent estimates published in the *Lancet* 2003, 13-16 percent of all child deaths can be avoided if exclusive breastfeeding was 90 percent during first six months and continued breastfeeding was practiced. Another 6 % deaths can be avoided if adequate and appropriate complementary feeding after six months for two years of beyond was provided. Table 2, depicts the status of infant feeding practices in the state of Meghalaya, which needs serious efforts to improve for achieving the GOI's Tenth Five Year Plan Goals.

Table 2: Infant Feeding Practices in Meghalaya

	NFHS-1 1992-93	NFHS-2 1998-99	GOI's 10 th Five year Plan goals for 2007
% Initiation of Breastfeeding within 1 hour	8.3	26.7	84.5
% of Exclusive Breastfeeding 0-3 months	18.0	16.1	23.3
% of Exclusive Breastfeeding 0-6 months			
% of Complementary Feeding (6-9 months)	56.3	77.1	100.0

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