

Child Survival and Development Report Card

Pondicherry

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 Pondicherry! . From the available sources we have the data on the crude birth rate (CBR) , which is 17.8 and infant mortality rate (IMR) is 23.

Extrapolating this information in numbers; of 17,337 live births each year, 398 **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 16,938. However, the data of undernourished children is not available from NFHS-2. Considering the prevalence of child malnutrition in the neighboring states and the country, it is worth taking actions to prevent it.

Table 1: Status of Child Health and Development in Pondicherry

Population (Source- MOHFW, 2001)	974,000
Crude Birth Rate (Source- MOHFW, 2001)	17.8
Infant Mortality Rate (Source- MOHFW, 2001)	23
Percentage of Under Weight Children (-2SD) (Source- NFHS-1998-1999)	NA
Calculations in Numbers¹	
Approx. No. of Children Born per Year	17,337
Approx. No. of Children who Die Before They are 1	398
Approx. No of Survivors Each Year	16,938
Approx. No of Survivors Under the Age 3	50,815
Approx. No. of Underweight Children Under the Age 3	NA

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 the GOI's Tenth Five Year Plan Goals which calls for serious efforts to improve infant feeding practices.

Table 2: Infant Feeding Practices in Pondicherry

	NFHS-1 1992-93	NFHS-2 1998-99	GOI's 10 th Five year Plan goals for 2007
% Initiation of Breastfeeding within 1 hour	NA	NA	100.0
% of Exclusive Breastfeeding 0-3 months	NA	NA	70.0
% of Exclusive Breastfeeding 0-6 months			
% of Complementary Feeding (6-9 months)	NA	NA	100.0

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