



putting child nutrition
at the forefront
of social change

**Breastfeeding
Promotion Network of India**
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BPNI/2023/26

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Dr. M.S. Lakshmi Priya, IAS
Mission Director,
National Health Mission (NHM), Assam
Office of the Mission Director,
Saikia Commercial Complex,
Srinagar Path, Christianbasti,
G.S. Road, Guwahati-781005

Sub: - Proposal for Accreditation of Maternity Hospitals as "Breastfeeding Friendly" to increase early breastfeeding rates in Assam.

Dear Dr. M.S. Lakshmi Priya,

Greetings from Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)!!

As you may be aware that BPNI is a national professional organisation working on protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in India for the last 31 years. It is registered, independent, and a non-profit organisation. BPNI works through policy analysis, advocacy, training, monitoring the company compliance with the IMS Act and last but not the least promoting "Breastfeeding Friendly Accreditation" of maternity hospitals. The Government of India has notified the Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) in the Gazette of India (No G.S.R. 540 (E), dated the 27th July, 1995) as a child welfare NGO to initiate action under section 21(1) of the IMS Act for officially monitoring and implementing the Act.

The MoHFW-Government of India, WHO and UNICEF recommend i) initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth, ii) exclusive breastfeeding (only breastfeeding, nothing else) for the first six months of life and iii) continued breastfeeding till 2 years of age or beyond along with appropriate complementary feeding after six months of age. These practices are beneficial for the health of both mothers and babies.

The WHO and UNICEF recommend "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding" in the health facilities that provide maternity services. Based on this MAA programme has been launched. Scientific evidence shows that it leads to improved breastfeeding outcomes in health facilities.

In India about 88.6% of mothers now give birth in the health facilities but only 41.8% begin breastfeeding within an hour of birth at national level. The situation in the State of Assam is that 49.1% babies are breastfed within an hour of birth and 84.1 % women give birth in the health facility. (Annex 1 compares NFHS-4 with NFHS-5)

BPNI in partnership with Association of Health Care Providers (AHPI) has launched Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) in the year 2021. BFHI proposes action to achieve higher rates of early breastfeeding within health facilities. It is supported by several health, public health and academic organisations. Over 100 hospitals from different Indian States have expressed interest, and 17 hospitals have already acquired accreditation. There is now a web portal available at <https://www.bfhi-india.in/home.php>. For a brief description, a pamphlet is attached.

As a policy, BPNI does not accept funds of any kind from the companies manufacturing baby foods, feeding bottles etc. and from organization/industry having conflicts of interest.

Currently, the programme has two components –

- a) Self-Assessment: To check the readiness of the health facility for Accreditation on a digital platform.
- b) External Assessment: Carried out by an independent authorized assessor to conduct 11 interviews in the hospital(Doctors, Nurses, and Mothers)at the facility level according to given standards, which have been developed and validated. Based on independent assessments, hospitals are provided with accreditation certificates for 3 years.

We are happy to share that the Government of Telangana has adopted this model and several MCH centres have been accredited. Others are in the pipeline. Additionally, Shri Thaneeru Harish Rao, the Telangana government's minister of finance, health, and family welfare, tweeted on his official twitter account to announce the accreditation of MCH Centres in various Telangana districts to become "Breastfeeding Friendly" (Annex 1).

BFHI India aims to bring structural improvements in monitoring breastfeeding data and builds competence and capacity of the staff, which helps mothers to succeed in breastfeeding and thus increase the rate of early breastfeeding.

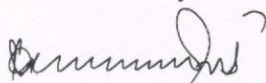
We request you to consider that the Assam Government also adopts this "Breastfeeding Friendly Accreditation" model for public hospitals having maternity services.

BPNI will be happy facilitate and assist in this work. We will be happy to set up a virtual call or visit as necessary to take this forward.

Looking forward to a positive response from you.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Arun Gupta
Central Coordinator, BPNI