



# BPNI BULLETIN

Number 23, October 2003

From the Desk of the National Coordinator

## Kudos Government of India !

*Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Amendment Act, 2003*; puts India on top of the world, taking lead in implementing the World Health Assembly Resolution on Infant and Young Child Nutrition (WHA 55.25) that was adopted at the 55th World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 2002. Delegates from 38 countries spoke in the debate at WHA, the large majority of speakers from the developing world, calling for amendments to stress the critical importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and to ensure that infant feeding programmes are not funded by the baby food industry. For this India has received world wide appreciation (see page 4).

The Government of India made its intentions clear at the World Health Assembly in May 2002, when The Indian delegate said: *“Commercial enterprises by definition are profit driven entities. It is neither appropriate nor realistic for the WHO to expect that commercial groups will work along with governments and other groups to protect, promote and support breastfeeding”*. The delegate from Palau appealed to W.H.O. *“to protect Member States from undue and unwanted influence by industries and manipulation by them”*.

While companies go unethical and undermine breastfeeding putting infant health at risk, the Indian Parliament has taken a historic step and set example for other nations in protecting lives of infants and young children from the commercial practices. The new IMS Amendment Act 2003 includes among other provisions, that baby food manufacturers can no longer advertise or promote any of their products intended to be consumed by babies less than two years; and manufacturers cannot fund health workers or their associations in any manner what so ever.

The International Code for Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (The Code) was adopted at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1981 with an aim to protect infant health by controlling marketing practices of manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes. The Code received overwhelming support from the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In 1992, India was 8<sup>th</sup> country to enact legislation as a follow-up to the Code. Deservingly, the Government of India in 1998 was awarded the UK Food Group “Hopeful Baby Award”.

The passage of this new law received support from all cutting across party lines, however, strong support of Parliamentarians like Mr. Ram Naik, Mr. Arjun Singh, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, Mrs. Sumitra Mahajan, and Mr. Rangnath Misra is highly appreciated. The Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development deserves special recognition for this step forward. Another significant happening in India is the setting up of a National Nutrition Mission headed by the Prime Minister to review National Nutrition Policy and Plan of Action on Nutrition. This recognizes infant and young child feeding as a significant component by including National Coordinator of BPNI as its expert member among other. Another feather in the cap! Government of India, KUDOS!!

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