



BPNI BULLETIN

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From the Desk of the National Coordinator

Time for action is NOW!

10th five year plan goals: Exclusive Breastfeeding for the first 6 months to be 80% by 2007

We had a befitting close to 2003. The Asia Pacific conference on Breastfeeding and National Convention of BPNI was successfully organized. A few days after this conference was over, a friend and Head of the Department of Pediatrics in a medical college visited BPNI and said, *"I have attended many a conferences in the world, but this was the greatest! People were sitting during plenary and working sessions. They were listening. The halls were full. And the programme was of the best quality!! And....."*

I liked our work being appreciated. Many more such positive comments were happily received from all corners of the world. On the concluding day of the conference i.e. on 3rd December 2003, it was a delight to see that more than 500 delegates from 38 countries and nearly every state of India rose to adopt the *"Delhi declaration on infant and young child feeding"*. This was a historic moment in the life of all those involved in protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding across the globe. Another level of support was built for mothers and babies of the region. Everyone pledged to initiate, accelerate and support the actions contained in the *Delhi Declaration*.

I felt happy and thought, this was truly a great conference. Representation of several State governments at the conference was a very heartening experience. It would certainly kick start new action and strengthen the existing one. Action news from different states has already started flowing in. The learning period of more than 3 days of conference culminated into a planning exercise for future action. It was no surprise that hard work paid on the last day, when several of action ideas that emerged daily, led to a set of Major Recommendations for Action of this conference.

Friends, 10th plan goals are in front of us. This is a gigantic, but the feasible and an achievable task, as several studies from across the country and other parts of the world have clearly demonstrated. The 10th five- year Plan of Government of India has set a target to increase exclusive breastfeeding rate to 80% during first 6 months from the current level of around 40% according to NFHS-2 (*NFHS 2 data for exclusive breastfeeding is the average of 0-3 & 4-6 months period*), and increase rate of initiation of breastfeeding within one hour to 50% from the current level of about 15%. This requires massive action down at district, block and village levels.

What we need to do is provide skilled help and support to mothers delivering in the hospitals to establish early and exclusive breastfeeding, the famous Baby Friendly Hospitals Initiative (BFHI) should be kept central to our work. Community/grassroots level support must be strengthened through skilled training of the grassroots level workers. Communication strategy must build in information for all family members to generate support for breastfeeding women. Keep the infant formula/food industry out of picture in implementing such programmes as guided by the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding; adopted at the World Health Assembly 2002. In the RCH II and ICDS programmes infant and young child feeding counseling by trained counselors should form an integral part of services offered. Employers must support women at work place and reap the benefits of healthy mothers and babies.

Many government and other participants made several commitments during the conference. This is the time of fulfilling those commitments. We at BPNI remain committed to full cooperation with you all. Wish you good luck and a very happy outcome in the year 2004. Dear friends, to see 2007 goals to be achieved, **TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW!**

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