

THE COMMITTEE ON  
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REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF  
INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING  
IN PAKISTAN



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### **Breastfeeding: key to child and maternal health**

The 1'000 days between a woman's pregnancy and her child's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday offer a unique window of opportunity to shape the health and wellbeing of the child. The scientific evidence is unambiguous: ***exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months followed by timely, adequate, safe and appropriate complementary feeding practices, with continued breastfeeding for up to 2 years or beyond***, provides the key building block for child survival, growth and healthy development. This constitutes the infant and young child feeding practice recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>1</sup>.

Breastfeeding is key during this critical period and it is the single most effective intervention for saving lives. It has been estimated that optimal breastfeeding of children under two years of age has the potential to prevent 800,000 deaths in children under five in the developing world annually<sup>2</sup>. Mother's breastmilk protects the baby against illness by either providing direct protection against specific diseases or by stimulating and strengthening the development of the baby's immature immune system. This protection results in better health, even years after breastfeeding has ended.

Breastfeeding is an ***essential part of women's reproductive cycle***: it is the third link after pregnancy and childbirth. It protects mothers' health, both in the short and long term, by, among others, aiding the mother's recovery after birth, offering the mother protection from iron deficiency anaemia and is a natural method of child spacing (the Lactational Amenorrhea Method, LAM) for millions of women that do not have access to modern form of contraception.

### **Infant and young child feeding and human rights**

Several international instruments make a strong case for protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding, and stipulate the right of every human being, man, woman and child, to optimal health, to the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, and to proper nutrition. These include the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)**, especially ***article 12 on the right to health***, including sexual and reproductive health, ***article 11 on the right to food*** and ***articles 6, 7 and 10 on the right to work***, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, especially ***article 24 on the child's right to health***, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, in particular ***articles 1 and 5 on gender discrimination on the basis of the reproduction status*** (pregnancy and lactation), ***article 12 on women's right to health*** and ***article 16 on marriage and family life***. Adequately interpreted, these treaties support the claim that 'breastfeeding is the right of every mother, and it is essential to fulfil every child's right to adequate food and the highest attainable standard of health.'

As duty-bearers, States have the obligation to create a protective and enabling environment for women to breastfeed, through protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

<sup>1</sup> WHO, Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding, 2002, available at:

[www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/9241562218/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/9241562218/en/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> WHO. 10 facts about breastfeeding, available at: [www.who.int/features/factfiles/breastfeeding/en/](http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/breastfeeding/en/)

**SUMMARY**

*The following **obstacles/problems** have been identified:*

- Lack of general awareness regarding importance of optimal breastfeeding practices.
- Lack of stringent system for reporting violations of the existing laws and implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.
- The national legislation only covers women working in the public sector. It does not cover women working in the private sector neither does it cover home-based and informal workers.
- Absence of national guidelines regarding infant feeding and HIV.
- Poor food security for a large number of households. As a result, mothers and children are suffering from nutritional deficiencies.
- Pakistan's mothers and children are at risk due to the long standing emergency especially in the north-western part of the country and various other districts as well.
- Lack of a comprehensive strategy towards tackling the root causes of hunger and malnutrition with severe impact on growth, development and health of children.
- Irregularities and delays in addressing emergency situations like the Tharparkar drought and its impact on the nutritional well-being of children.

***Our recommendations** include:*

- **The national strategies regarding IYCF should be implemented through provincial health ministries** by engaging key stakeholders at grassroots level.
- Each provincial health ministry should take measures **to ensure the execution of the existing laws, rules and regulations implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes**. Deterrent sanction mechanisms should be implemented and enforced to prevent Code violations.
- The protection of breastfeeding ordinance 2002 passed by the province of Punjab was recently replicated in the provinces of Sindh and Khyberpakhtunkha and should also be passed in Balochistan and Azad Jamu and Kashmir (AJK). **It is necessary to ensure the implementation of the act nationwide.**
- **Community midwives and other volunteers should be trained and involved in the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.**
- **A comprehensive IEC strategy for IYCF should be developed and implemented by the State and the civil society** in order to enhance awareness on importance of optimal breastfeeding practices and to reduce infant mortality and maternal mortality.
- **Baby Friendly Hospitals (BFHs) should go through a comprehensive re-assessment process** and the lessons learnt should be shared with all public sector hospitals in the country.
- Pakistan has a large network of Lady Health Visitor and Lady Health Workers working all over the country at village level through Basic Health Units (BHUs) based in every village. **Improve the role of LHV's and LHW's in disseminating information** regarding breastfeeding practices and child feeding program.

- Currently, the prevalence of HIV is very low so little attention has been given on the prevention of HIV. **A comprehensive awareness-raising campaign on infant feeding and HIV should be developed and implemented nationwide.**
- There is a dire need of **developing comprehensive nutrition and food policies in each province in order to ensure food and nutrition security for all**, particularly targeting to the marginalized and disadvantaged groups of society, which are vulnerable to food insecurity.<sup>3</sup>
- As a matter of priority, **sufficient resources need to be allocated to the swift, transparent and fair distribution of adequate food supplies** to communities affected by extreme hunger to prevent further deaths by malnutrition, including in remote rural areas.
- Cases of child malnutrition need to be dealt with effectively; especially the inadequate health facilities in the Tharparkar district of Sindh province, including the lack of sufficient number of doctors (particularly female), staff and medicine supplies, need to be addressed.
- Long-term measures need to be adopted to enable families in Tharparkar district to access water and grow food crops and fodder, and thereby feed themselves sustainably and with dignity, including the development of irrigation systems and other drought coping mechanisms.

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<sup>3</sup> Such policies should be based on the existing international standards on the right to adequate food, including the General Comment No. 12 of this Committee, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food in the Context of National Food Security, the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Tenure of Land, Forest and Fisheries and the Directive Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, among all other relevant standards on the field.

## 1) General situation concerning malnutrition and breastfeeding in Pakistan

WHO recommends: 1) **early initiation of breastfeeding** (within an hour from birth); 2) **exclusive breastfeeding** for the first 6 months; 3) **continued breastfeeding** for 2 years or beyond, together with adequate and safe complementary foods.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these recommendations, globally more than half of the newborns are not breastfed within one hour from birth, less than 40% of infants under 6 months are exclusively breastfed and only a minority of women continue breastfeeding their children until the age of two.

### **Rates on infant and young child feeding:**

- **Early initiation:** Proportion of children born in the last 24 months who were put to the breast within one hour of birth
- **Exclusive breastfeeding:** Proportion of infants 0–5 months of age who are fed exclusively with breast milk
- **Continued breastfeeding at 2 years:** Proportion of children 20–23 months of age who are fed breast milk

**Complementary feeding:** Proportion of infants 6–8 months of age who receive solid, semi-solid or soft foods

Maternal and child health as well as child survival remain major challenges in Pakistan. The country is a signatory of the Millennium declaration and publicly declared its intention to reduce maternal and child mortality.

In addition to the smoldering decade-old conflict in neighboring Afghanistan, a debilitating insurgency in the North and the growing militancy in Southern Punjab and Baluchistan, Pakistan had faced a spate of recent disasters. The earthquake in 2005 left over 75,000 dead with massive infrastructure damages and the recent unprecedented floods in 2010 also affected close to 20 million people, displacing almost 8 million in its wake. The unprecedented torrential rains in Sindh broke the last 60 years record: they left 3 million people homeless and 2 million with food starvation. Thus, the country faces the triple challenge of political fragility, complex security issues and natural disasters. Policy environment and distribution of key primary care programs are negatively affected by the fragile security situation in large parts of the country. The relatively recent economic downturn has also affected overall purchasing power and households' food security.

**Little systematic information is available on trends of maternal and childhood nutrition status over the last decade apart from the limited population based surveys undertaken following the recent floods in 2010.** Given the critically important contribution of social determinants, especially nutrition, to health and development outcomes, this is a key policy relevant information gap.

### **General data**

	2013	2014	2015/16
Annual number of birth, crude (thousands)	30	-	22.3 <sup>5</sup>
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	47.4	46.6	45.5

<sup>4</sup> [www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/)

<sup>5</sup> Source: [www.indexmundi.com/pakistan/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/pakistan/demographics_profile.html)

Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	69.1	67.4	65.8
Infant -under 5– mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	85.6	83.3	81.1
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	190	184	178
<i>Delivery care coverage:</i>			
Skilled attendant at birth	52.1%	-	52% <sup>6</sup>
Institutional delivery	48.2%	-	-
C-section	14.1%	-	-
Stunting (under 5 years)	45%	-	44%
Wasting (under 5 years)	11%	-	15%
Underweight (under 5 years)	31.6%	-	-

Data retrieved from the World Bank<sup>7</sup> and Pakistan DHS 2012-2013<sup>8</sup>

### **Malnutrition, child mortality and lack of breastfeeding**

In Pakistan, 72 infants die out of 1,000 live births every year. Out of these 72 deaths, 53 die before reaching the age of one month due to diarrhea, pneumonia, respiratory infections and malnutrition. The major reasons of these diseases are the lack of exclusive breastfeeding, the use of unhygienic bottles, formula milk and teats.

Most infants could be saved if they would benefit from the natural protection of mother’s milk without the use of any prelacteal feeds, such as water, honey, green tea etc. Indeed, many women<sup>9</sup> traditionally believe that colostrum, the first thick milk produced by the body, which provides all the nutrients and fluid that newborn needs in the early days, as well as many substances to protect neonates against infections, should be discarded. According to their erroneous belief, the colostrum would be too thick to be digested by the baby, or would be stale.<sup>10</sup>

**A 2013 study reveals that 35% of child deaths in Pakistan are caused by malnutrition and that the risks of death are nine times higher for malnourished children. A quarter of Pakistani infants are born with low birth weight and half the children suffer from chronic malnutrition. Even though breastfeeding**

<sup>6</sup> Annual report UNICEF 2015: [www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Pakistan\\_2015\\_COAR.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Pakistan_2015_COAR.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Accessible at [data.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org)

<sup>8</sup> Accessible at: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR290/FR290.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Up to 71% in Hyderabad.

<sup>10</sup> Ali et al. 2011, Perception and practices of breastfeeding of infants 0-6 months in an urban and a semi-urban community in Pakistan: a cross-sectional study, Journal of Pakistani Medical Association, accessible at: [http://www.jpma.org.pk/full\\_article\\_text.php?article\\_id=2553](http://www.jpma.org.pk/full_article_text.php?article_id=2553); Asim et al., 2015, Infant Health Care: Practices in Pakistan: A systematic review, The Professional Medical Journal, accessible at: [http://applications.emro.who.int/imemrf/Professional\\_Med\\_J\\_Q/Professional\\_Med\\_J\\_Q\\_2015\\_22\\_8\\_978\\_988.pdf](http://applications.emro.who.int/imemrf/Professional_Med_J_Q/Professional_Med_J_Q_2015_22_8_978_988.pdf); Patil et al., 2013, Early interruption of exclusive breastfeeding: results from the eight-country MAL-ED study, Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition, accessible at: <http://jhpn.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s41043-015-0004-2>

could help solve this issue, breastfeeding practice among mothers in Pakistan is still alarmingly low as reported at the end of the year 2009. Exclusive breastfeeding, as well as the duration for which a child is breastfed, is lowest in Pakistan, compared to neighboring South Asian countries including India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Experts pointed out the lack of protection, promotion and support to breastfeeding causing this dire situation.

They also highlighted the negative impact of early marriages, women's illiteracy, poor access to health facilities as well as the lack of women's empowerment and the lack of birth spacing that are the main causes of poor food choices underlying the widespread use of weaning diets of poor micronutrient content and bioavailability, and they called for increased efforts to educate girls.<sup>11 12</sup> Violations of women's human rights across the life cycle have significant intergenerational implications. For example, child, early and forced marriage results in the deprivation of the human rights (e.g. their right to education, reproductive rights, etc.) of the girls and young women who are victims to these violations, and is linked to early and adolescent pregnancy, possibly associated with nutritional deprivation and stunting, risk of death, distancing from family, workload, and imposed obligations of child care and breastfeeding. Early or adolescent pregnancy places a severe burden on the nutritional well-being, growth, and development of the still growing girl, even if provided with an adequate diet because these have to compete with the nutritional demands of bearing a child. This scenario results in young women and girls who become pregnant at an early age, many of them already stunted, to become chronically undernourished, further stunted and anemic.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the risk of maternal malnutrition and mortality in these young women is increased by three to four times in comparison to the risk for an adult woman.<sup>14</sup> In fact, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are among the most important causes of death for girls aged 15-19 in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, pregnant adolescents are more likely than adults to have unsafe abortions, which contribute not only to lasting health problems, but also maternal deaths.<sup>16</sup>

For the child who is born as a result of a child, early and forced marriage and thus, many times, as a result of an early pregnancy, the realization of his or her right to adequate food and nutrition, and thus of other human rights, is severely impaired for his or her lifetime.<sup>17</sup> The infant mortality and malnutrition rates

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<sup>11</sup> Dawn, 22 Aug 2013, '[Malnutrition causes 35pc of child deaths in Pakistan](http://www.dawn.com/news/1037448)', accessible at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1037448>

<sup>12</sup> World Bank, PAKISTAN - Overview of Childhood Under-nutrition, accessible at : <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1171488994713/3455847-1232124140958/5748939-1234285802791/PakistanNutrition.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> See United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Child under nutrition in India: a Gender issue*, 2009, accessed February 3, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/india/nutrition\\_5901.htm](http://www.unicef.org/india/nutrition_5901.htm).

<sup>14</sup> See United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *State of the World Children – 2011*, accessed February 3, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/SOWC\\_2011\\_Main\\_Report\\_EN\\_02092011.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/SOWC_2011_Main_Report_EN_02092011.pdf), 22.

<sup>15</sup> See World Health Organization (WHO). *Women's health fact sheet*, accessed January 13, 2013, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>.

<sup>16</sup> See World Health Organization (WHO). *Women's health fact sheet*, accessed January 13, 2013, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>.

<sup>17</sup> For a specific country example of the impact of child, early and forced marriage on women's human rights throughout the life span, including the right to health and education, see Plan Nepal, Save the Children, and World Vision International, *Child Marriage in Nepal – Research Report*, 2012, accessed December 15, 2013, <https://217.86.242.33/exchange/cordova/Posteingang/WG:%20OHCHR%20Call%20for%20Submission%20on%20child,%20early%20and%20forced%20marriage%20->

associated with adolescent pregnancies are higher than those of adult pregnancies.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, adolescent mothers have a higher risk of having low birth weight babies.<sup>19</sup> Low birth weight babies have a much higher risk of dying before reaching age 5, of developing more severe malnutrition, specially stunting<sup>20</sup>, and of developing chronic degenerative diseases in adult age<sup>21</sup>. Low birth weight, wasting, stunting, and child malnutrition, has the further consequence of impaired cognitive development and malnutrition, including under-nutrition and obesity, in adulthood.<sup>22</sup>

Optimal breastfeeding practices protect the baby from various diseases, develop bond between mother and child, protect the mother from breast cancer and are a source of natural birth spacing.

### **The desperate situation of babies in the Tharparkar district**

Hundreds of infants and young children have died of severe acute malnutrition in the last years in the Tharparkar district, one of the country's poorest areas, located in the province of Sind. Only within the 48 first days of 2016, some 167 children died in the hospitals of the district.<sup>23</sup> During the National Nutrition Survey conducted in 2011, the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate in the province of Sindh is 17.5% and the Severely Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is 6.6 per cent. Chronic Malnutrition, which could cause stunting, is 49.8%. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, if the GAM rate among children and women is above 15%, it is to be considered an emergency situation.<sup>24</sup>

This crisis is a consequence of the severe drought that is affecting the region, and the absence of an irrigation system, have prevented thousands of families from growing food crops and with no resources to feed their cattle leaving them in a state of extreme vulnerability, hunger and undernourishment. Children and women have been particularly affected; many families have been forced to leave their homes and migrate to other areas in search of water, food and fodder. The situation has been aggravated by poor arrangements in hospitals and lack of basic facilities such as clean water supply.

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[%20Deadline%2015%20Dec%202013.EML/Child%20Marriage%20in%20Nepal-%20Report.pdf/C58EA28C-18C0-4a97-9AF2-036E93DDAFB3/Child%20Marriage%20in%20Nepal-%20Report.pdf?attach=1](#).

<sup>18</sup> See United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *State of the World Children – 2011*, accessed February 3, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/SOWC\\_2011\\_Main\\_Report\\_EN\\_02092011.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/SOWC_2011_Main_Report_EN_02092011.pdf), 22.

<sup>19</sup> See World Health Organization (WHO). *Adolescent pregnancy fact sheet*, accessed January 13, 2013, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>.

<sup>20</sup> Stunting, or low height for age, is usually caused by continued insufficient nutrient intake and frequent infections, higher prevalence below age 2. Wasting, or low weight for height, is a strong predictor of infant or child mortality, and is usually associated with acute lack of adequate nutrient intake and disease. For more information, see United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children Statistical Review*, accessed February 5, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2007n6/index\\_41505.htm](http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2007n6/index_41505.htm).

<sup>21</sup> See United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *State of the World Children – 2011*, accessed December 12, 2013, [http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2006n4/index\\_lowbirthweight.html](http://www.unicef.org/progressforchildren/2006n4/index_lowbirthweight.html).

<sup>22</sup> See United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), *Sixth report on the world nutrition situation*, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.unscn.org/files/Publications/RWNS6/html/>.

<sup>23</sup> Dunya News, Two more children die of malnutrition in Tharparkar, toll reaches 167, accessible at: <http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/323252-Two-more-children-die-of-malnutrition-in-Tharparka>

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF, UNICEF Reaching Children and Women in Thar Desert to Counter Malnutrition, May 2015, accessible at: [http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/reallives\\_9501.htm](http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/reallives_9501.htm)



In 2014, a fact finding committee on Thar, formed on the direction of Sindh Chief Minister, has said that the Sindh government and bureaucracy were responsible for the present situation in Tharparkar. The report revealed that 67% vacancies of doctors, including 27 specialists and 163 general doctors, were lying vacant in the hospitals of the district.<sup>25</sup> It also pointed out the dilapidated state of the building of District Headquarter (DHQ) Hospital Mithi.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, the Supreme Court has accused the provincial government of failing to truthfully report the facts and the chief minister of the province has admitted major administrative flaws, in particular the failure to distribute 60,000 bags of wheat flour allocated for the region. The Sindh High Court has also noted that the failure to fill 271 posts for doctors at government hospitals in Umerkot, one of the towns serving Thar, contributed to inadequate health care for sick people, especially children.<sup>27</sup>

### **Breastfeeding data**

	2012/13	2014	2015
Early initiation of breastfeeding (within one hour from birth)	18%	-	
Exclusive breastfeeding under 6 months	37.7%	-	<sup>28</sup> 38%
Introduction of solid, semi-solid or soft foods (6-8 months)	66%	-	
Bottle-feeding	42%	-	
Continued breastfeeding at 2 years	56%	-	
Median duration of breastfeeding (in months)	19.0	-	

## **2) Government measures to protect and promote breastfeeding**

Adopted in 2002, the ***Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*** defines 9 operational targets:

1. Appoint a **national breastfeeding coordinator** with appropriate authority, and establish a multisectoral **national breastfeeding committee** composed of representatives from relevant government departments, non-governmental organisations, and health professional associations.
2. Ensure that every facility providing maternity services fully practises all the “**Ten steps to successful breastfeeding**” set out in the WHO/UNICEF statement on breastfeeding and maternity services.
3. Give effect to the principles and aim of the **International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes** and **subsequent relevant Health Assembly** resolutions in their entirety.
4. Enact imaginative **legislation protecting the breastfeeding rights of working women** and establish means for its enforcement.
5. Develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a **comprehensive policy on infant and young child feeding**, in

<sup>25</sup> Dunya News, Sindh govt, bureaucracy responsible for Thar situation: fact finding body, accessible at: <http://dunya.com.pk/News/2014/07/21/Sindh-govt-bureaucracy-responsible-for-Thar-situation>

<sup>26</sup> Jaag TV, Malnutrition kills 431 children so far in drought-hit Tharparkar, accessible at: <http://www.jaagtv.com/Malnutrition-kills-431-children-so-far-in-drought-hit-Tharparkar-news-22934.html>

<sup>27</sup> IRIN News, Malnutrition stalks Pakistan’s desert regions, accessible at: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/99867/malnutrition-stalks-pakistan%E2%80%99s-desert-regions>

<sup>28</sup> UNICEF annual report 2015.

the context of national policies and programmes for nutrition, child and reproductive health, and poverty reduction.

6. Ensure that the health and other relevant sectors **protect, promote and support** exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continued breastfeeding up to two years of age or beyond, while providing women access to the support they require – in the family, community and workplace – to achieve this goal.

7. Promote timely, adequate, safe and appropriate **complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding**.

8. Provide guidance on feeding infants and young **children in exceptionally difficult circumstances**, and on the related support required by mothers, families and other caregivers.

9. Consider what **new legislation or other suitable measures may be required**, as part of a comprehensive policy on infant and young child feeding, to give effect to the principles and aim of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and to subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions.

Evidence clearly shows that a great majority of mothers can breastfeed and will do so if they have the accurate and full information and support, as called for by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, **direct industry influence** through advertisements, information packs and contact with sales representatives, as well as indirect influence through the public health system, submerge mothers with **incorrect, partial and biased information**.

***The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes*** (the International Code) has been adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981. It is a **minimum global standard** aiming to protect appropriate infant and young child feeding by requiring States to regulate the marketing activities of enterprises producing and distributing breastmilk substitutes in order to avoid misinformation and undue pressure on parents to use such products when not strictly necessary. Even if many countries have adopted at least some provisions of the International Code in national legislation, the implementation and enforcement are suboptimal, and violations persist.

### **National policies**

A national infant and child health policy has been officially adopted and approved by the government through an ordinance in 2002. The policy includes promotion of exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, complementary feeding to be started after 6 months and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond.<sup>29</sup>

A national IYCF strategy has been prepared in consultation with the federal and provincial health department, the Pakistan Pediatric associations and other medical organizations, the Pakistani Counsels and other partners in Development. It was submitted to the federal ministry health for final approval on 15 April 2009. However, **the shortage of funds does not allow for proper implementation of the IYCF strategy**.

There are some improvements in the breastfeeding indicators in the Pakistan like the increase in the rates of early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, and children ever breastfed. In the last two decades, a number of maternal and child health interventions including the National Maternal New born and Child Health (NMNCH) were adopted in Pakistan, with infant and child health nutrition being an important component of all. Although no impact evaluation of these projects with reference to their role

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<sup>29</sup> Pakistan Health Policy Forum, Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding, accessible at: <http://www.heartfile.org/blog/1837>

in breastfeeding indicators improvement has been done, they may have contributed directly or indirectly in improving certain indicators of breastfeeding.

The devastating floods, earthquakes and difficult security situations resulted in poor governance and implementation of social services for citizens especially to the most vulnerable such as women and children. The limited capacity of state for development and services provision to millions of citizens has made the life more difficult for families. There is a dire need of improvement in existing policies and expansion of implementation intervention at micro level.

### **Indicators and monitoring of the IYCF programme**

The Government of Pakistan developed Health Management Information System (HMIS) and District Health Information System (DHIS) which is being implemented all over the country through provincial health ministries. This includes monthly monitoring sheets and annual budget assessment reports. The country has the monitoring mechanism in all five year planning at each province level.

The national nutrition programme has integrated these indicators and the reports are used by the managers to plan the different programme and activities. The authenticity of these reports and actions taken on the basis of these monitoring reports are again a question mark due to the insurgency and low level of implementation of services as mentioned earlier. As far as donor funded projects are concerned, only a few focused on IYCF; they collect a baseline information and have inbuilt mechanisms for monitoring of their projects.

**The National Breastfeeding Committee** was created in 2002 and is headed by the national breastfeeding coordinator. It does not hold regular meetings and have only a few links with other departments. Within the Ministry of Health, there should be a nutrition department which is responsible for organizing the meeting of National Breastfeeding Committee.

### **The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes**

Pakistan was among 118 countries who had voted in favour of adopting International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk substitutes during the World Health Assembly in May 1981. However the legislation came very late in Pakistan when “Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance,2002” (XCIII of 2002) was passed on 26 October 2002, and Pakistan become one of the 42 countries with legislation but implementation of law in Pakistan remained a dream in the absence of rules and detail procedures for its implementation. These rules came very late through the Protection of Breastfeeding Rule 2009, notified through the Ministry of Health S.R.O on 2 November 2009.

Although the Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002 also stressed on formation of a National Infant Feeding Board (NIFB), to monitor implementation of the said ordinance. This NIFB came into existence very late on 5th July 2010.

On the 30th June 2011, the 18th Constitutional Amendment abolished many Federal Ministries including health and health becomes completely a provincial subject in Pakistan. After this devolution, provinces were authorized to make legislation pertaining to all matters in health including provincial level health policies and strategies.

**The Breastfeeding Code Law (Ordinance) was approved for the province of Punjab in 2002 Called “Protection of Breast-feeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance, 2002”.**<sup>30</sup> This law covers all the provisions of the international Code. The rules and regulations corresponding to the law have been finalized and submitted to the competent authority for approval, which has recently taken place. Under this ordinance the Punjab government constituted the Punjab Infant Feeding Board.

The law also provides for a National Infant Feeding Board as one of its key monitoring components. Meetings are supposed to be held on a regular basis but unfortunately this is not taking place. **It is now necessary to focus to enforcing the same laws and regulation throughout Pakistan.**

Recently in 2012, Sindh Assembly also unanimously passed the Sindh Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Act 2013 on 13th February 2013 which is also similar to the Federal Law and has same implementation modalities.<sup>31</sup>

On January 9, a provincial assembly unanimously passed “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Act 2015” thus rendering propagation or assertion of any material in any manner what so ever by a manufacturer or a distributor that encouraged bottle-feeding or discouraged breastfeeding; a punishable deed. Under the said law, headed by the provincial health minister an 11-member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Infant Feeding Board would be constituted. The board would report violations, recommend investigation against manufacturers, distributors or health workers and would advise the government on policies or guidelines for the promotion and protection of breastfeeding. Spearheaded by a district council nazim, in every district an eight-member district infant feeding committee will also be formulated. Violators of the law can face imprisonment for a term that may extend up to two years, or a fine not less than Rs 50,000 or more than Rs 500,000 or both.

#### **Monitoring and enforcement of the Code**

**As far as monitoring and sanctioning system for the violators is concerned, there is not system available yet. Neither the formats for reporting this issue is available.** However it is important to develop a mechanism for monitoring of implementation of the Code and laws for improvement of breastfeeding status in the country. **The data of these cases sanctioned by the monitoring authorities should also be shared with the general public for general awareness about the law.**

Government of Pakistan knowing the importance of the issue initiated a National Alliance which includes Nutrition Wing, Ministry of Health, Govt. of Pakistan, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, MI, The Network for Consumer Protection, SPARC, NRSP, Plan-Pakistan, FPAP, SUNGI Development Foundation, BINA, PAIMAN, PIEDAR, Save the Children UK, Save the Children US, Islamabad Medical and Dental College, APNA SEHAT, BEHBUD Association of Pakistan, Rasti Pakistan, Batool Welfare Foundation, Sultana Foundation, DADO and other NGOs. The Alliance demanded of the Ministry of Health to ensure early implementation of ‘Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002’ as the rules and regulations of protection of

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<sup>30</sup> Accessible at: <http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/2246a.html>

<sup>31</sup> See [www.af.org.pk/Acts\\_Fed\\_Provincial/Sindh\\_Acts\\_since\\_2002/Sindh%20%202013/The%20Sindh%20Protection%20and%20Promotion%20of%20Breast-Feeding%20and%20Child%20Nutrition%20Act,%202013.pdf](http://www.af.org.pk/Acts_Fed_Provincial/Sindh_Acts_since_2002/Sindh%20%202013/The%20Sindh%20Protection%20and%20Promotion%20of%20Breast-Feeding%20and%20Child%20Nutrition%20Act,%202013.pdf)

Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002 were notified in 2009 but had yet to be disseminated at a larger level.

**Mother support and community outreach**

In Pakistan, there is a National Programme for Family Planning and Primary Health Care that is commonly known as the Lady Health Workers Programme. It is the largest programme in Pakistan with more than 90,000 lady health workers enrolled but even so, the programme covers only 65% of the population. A larger portion of the population is therefore not covered and is deprived of any community outreach programme. In the areas where it is implemented, lady health workers provide complete information on IYCF to pregnant women and to mothers after birth. **In the other areas, there is no proper system of volunteers and community workers to provide services to mothers and children on breastfeeding.**

**Information, Education and Communication**

**There is no definite Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy for infant and young child feeding but breastfeeding is addressed in some way in three programmes of the Ministry of Health**, respectively the National Nutrition Programme, the Lady Health Workers Programme, and National Maternal Neonatal and Child Health Programme. The messages are based on scientific and technical facts but are not systematically disseminated. The World Breastfeeding Week promotes breastfeeding every year from August 1 to 7, focusing on specific theme is actively implemented at local level.

**Promotion campaigns**

On 30th June 2011, the 18th Constitutional Amendment abolished many federal Ministries, including health. Thus, health became a provincial subject in Pakistan. After this devolution, provinces were authorized to make legislation pertaining to all matters in health including provincial level health policies and strategies. In 2012, in collaboration with UNICEF, the Department of Health of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa celebrated the World Breastfeeding Week and highlighted the critical role of breastfeeding in child survival, growth and development.<sup>32</sup> **The other provinces should also observe WBW.**

**Monitoring of national policies and legislation**

The national as well as the district health information system in Pakistan have not integrated all of the indicators on IYCF. **There is no monitoring and regulatory mechanism on implementation of existing laws regarding breastfeeding in Pakistan.** No monitoring reports and data of sanctioned cases available.

### **3) Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) and training of health workers**

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Lack of support to breastfeeding by the health care system and its health care professionals further increase difficulties in adopting optimal breastfeeding practices.

**The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative** (BFHI), which consists in the implementation by hospitals of the 'Ten steps for successful breastfeeding', is a key initiative to ensure breastfeeding support within the health care system.

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<sup>32</sup> See <http://nation.com.pk/national/25-Aug-2012/breastfeeding-rate-in-pakistan-up-unicef>

However, as UNICEF support to this initiative has diminished in many countries, the **implementation of BFHI has significantly slowed down**. Revitalization of BFHI and expanding the Initiative's application to include maternity, neonatal and child health services and community-based support for lactating women and caregivers of young children represents an appropriate action to address the challenge of adequate support.

Since infant mortality in Pakistan is very high, the BFHI was started in 1992. The BFHI in Sindh provided training to 10,500 health care providers over 10 years and has been a role model program. In Pakistan, out of 75 baby-friendly hospitals, 53 are in Sindh. Since 1992, the BFHI was implemented through assessments of hospitals by WHO/UNICEF questionnaire on 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.' The baby-friendly hospitals were given the status based on training of staff on curriculum of breastfeeding practices and policies. The assessments of hospitals were held in Sindh based on tools of assessment and re-assessment of WHO and UNICEF. It was recommended that baby-friendly facilities enforce maintenance of adherence to the criteria of the 10 BFHI steps. Baby-friendly hospitals were re-assessed after 3 years but, according to UNICEF Pakistan office, the functionality of the initiative was observed till 2002-2003. **There is no official notification of BFHI closure, although the functionality of BFHI declined with the passage of time.**

The training was provided at three levels: Level I for faculty/gynecologists/Obstetricians/consultant; Level II for residents/house officers and physicians; and level III for paramedical staff, including maid-servants, cleaners etc. Pakistan has been ranked worldwide as developing, poor resource country where maternal and infant mortality and morbidity have not been reduced at the required rate to achieve millennium development goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 till 2015. Since Pakistan has been the signatory to MDGs, **the BFHI should be re-visited in terms of their assessment of currently using practices and their impact analysis regarding the adherence of the 10 steps and other guidelines.**

#### **Training on IYCF in the Health Care System**

**There is only little information on the pre- or in-service training of health workers on breastfeeding-related issues, including the Code.** Present curricula of undergraduate doctors, other health professionals and community workers lack reference to these issues, as do the policy documents of the Ministry of Health and of the provincial health departments on in- service training.

Nonetheless, some IYCF training modules have been adopted by the government and are implemented in a few selected health facilities of the public sector only. **Due to scarcity of funds, at present, only community health workers effectively receive pre-service training on breastfeeding on a regular basis though the authorities have decided to provide training to all health care providers (including in the private sector).** Some partners including PAIMAN, USAID, and UNICEF are implementing in-services trainings in a few districts in Pakistan. Such training should be added to the pre-service training of other health professionals.

#### **4) Maternity protection for working women**

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The main reason given by majority of working mothers for ceasing breastfeeding is their **return to work following maternity leave.**

It is therefore necessary to make adjustments in the workload of mothers of young children so that they may find the time and energy to breastfeed; this should not be considered the mother’s responsibility, but rather a **collective responsibility**. Therefore, States should adopt and monitor an adequate policy of maternity protection in line with ***ILO Convention 183 (2000)***<sup>33</sup> that facilitate six months of exclusive breastfeeding for women employed in all sectors, and facilitate workplace accommodations to feed and/or to express breastmilk.

**Maternity leave**

Pakistan has four different laws relating that cover the issue of maternity and its related benefits: the Mines Maternity Benefits Act, 1941; the West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958; the Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance, 1965; the Civil Servants Act, 1973 (Revised Leave Rules, 1980). Additionally, the Constitution, under its article 37, requires the state to ensure the maternity benefits for women in employment. **However, there are no laws covering home-based workers in Pakistan and the country has not ratified the ILO Conventions 177 and 183.**

**Condition for eligibility**

Law	Qualifying Condition	Leave Time/benefit	Pay rates during maternity leave
The Mines Maternity Benefits Act, 1941	Must have been working in the mine for at least 6 months	12 weeks (84 days)	Full Pay
The West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958	Must have been working in the organization for at least 4 months	12 weeks (84 days)	Full Pay
The Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance, 1965	Contribution paid in your respect for at least 90 days in preceding 6 months	Pre-natal confinement and post natal care	none
Revised Leave Rules, 1980	Permanent worker	13 weeks (90 days)	Full Pay

**Paternity leave**

In Pakistan, a paid paternity leave is not usually provided under the labour legislation for the private sector. However, the Government of Punjab has amended the Revised Leave Rules, 1981 on 30 October 2012 to grant male civil servants can with paternity leave for a maximum of 7 days. However, this paternity leave on full pay is admissible only two times during the entire service.

**Breastfeeding breaks**

There is no clear provision on breastfeeding breaks. However, Factories Rules (section 93, under section 33-Q) require employer to facilitate nursing for mothers at the workplace. Every factory wherein more than 50 women are employed has to provide a room or rooms for the use of children, under the age of 6

<sup>33</sup> ILO, C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)

years, belonging to these women workers. It also requires employers to hire a trained nurse and a female servant to attend to these children during working hours. Women workers can also use these rooms for breastfeeding during their rest/meal breaks. These rooms are restricted only to children, their attendants and children's mothers.<sup>34</sup>

## 5) HIV and infant feeding

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The HIV virus can be passed from mother to the infant through pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding. The *2010 WHO Guidelines on HIV and infant feeding*<sup>35</sup> call on national authorities to recommend, based on the AFASS<sup>36</sup> assessment of their national situation, either breastfeeding while providing antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) or avoidance of all breastfeeding. The Guidelines explain that these new recommendations do not remove a mother's right to decide regarding infant feeding and are fully consistent with respecting individual human rights.

### **Prevalence of HIV/AIDS**

The prevalence of HIV / AIDS in Pakistan is less than 0.1% among the general population. Pakistan was classified as a 'low prevalence high risk' country but now Pakistan is in a 'concentrated phase' of the epidemic with HIV prevalence of more than 5% among injecting drug users (IDUs) in at least eight major cities. However, the country still has a window of opportunity as the current estimates, using the various latest prevalence estimation models; indicate that the HIV prevalence among general adult population is still below 1%. According to the latest national HIV estimates there are approximately 97,400 cases of HIV/AIDS in Pakistan.

### **Policies or Guidelines on infant feeding and HIV/AIDS**

In Pakistan, there is a national policy on HIV/ AIDS that includes specific guidelines on infant feeding and HIV. However, it was developed in 2007 and since then, the country underwent the devolution process in 2011 and health now falls under the authority of provinces. **As the provinces started working independently under provincial health ministries the guidelines were not being disseminated** and observed and policies under provincial health departments were not finalized at province level. Therefore the final versions of the policies are not available.

### **Specialized Courses/targeted information campaigns regarding HIV/Infant Feeding**

As Pakistan is a low prevalence high risk country, the issue is not considered at a priority and therefore there aren't specialized courses/targeted information campaigns in this regard.

## 6) Infant feeding in emergencies (IFE)

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In 2007, the IFE Core group developed an Operational Guidance on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies

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<sup>34</sup> Reference from the website [www.paycheck.pk](http://www.paycheck.pk)

<sup>35</sup> *WHO Guidelines on HIV and infant feeding, 2010. Available at: [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/978921599535\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/978921599535_eng.pdf)*

<sup>36</sup> Affordable, feasible, acceptable, sustainable and safe (AFASS)



that aims to provides a “concise practical but mainly non technical guidance on how to ensure appropriate infant and young child feeding in emergencies”.<sup>37</sup> In 2014, the NGO Action Contre la Faim issued guidelines on breastfeeding/infant and young child feeding in emergencies<sup>38</sup> and the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Unit of the European Commission (DG ECHO) released a Guidance for programming on Infant and young children feeding in emergencies.<sup>39</sup>

Pakistan has suffered a lot of emergencies in the past few decades and as a result, the government of Pakistan has established a National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as well as Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMA) which are actively working on general health issues in emergencies but no specific data nor specific program for protection and support of breastfeeding is available.

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**About the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)**

IBFAN is a 37-year old coalition of more than 250 not-for-profit non-governmental organizations in more than 160 developing and industrialized nations. The network works for better child health and nutrition through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding and the elimination of irresponsible marketing of breastmilk substitutes.

IBFAN is committed to the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding (2002), and thus to assisting governments in implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and its relevant resolutions of the World Health Assembly (WHA) to the fullest extent, and to ensuring that corporations are held accountable for International Code violations. In 1998, IBFAN received the Right Livelihood Award “*for its committed and effective campaigning for the rights of mothers to choose to breastfeed their babies, in the full knowledge of the health benefits of breastmilk, and free from commercial pressure and misinformation with which companies promote breastmilk substitutes*”.

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<sup>37</sup> [www.enonline.net/operationalguidanceiycfv2.1](http://www.enonline.net/operationalguidanceiycfv2.1)

<sup>38</sup> *Baby friendly spaces, a holistic approach for pregnant, lactating women and their very young children in emergency, ACF international manual, 2014.* Available at: <http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/node/100939>

<sup>39</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/2014/toolkit\\_nutrition\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/media/publications/2014/toolkit_nutrition_en.pdf)