



Report on State of Breastfeeding

8.1m children die a year

NEW DELHI: Almost 8.1 million under 5 children die each year (22,000 each day) in the world, more than 2.6 million in South Asia and majority being less than one year, this was revealed in a report, □The State of Breastfeeding in 33 Countries: 2010 □.

According to WHO and Unicef, 1.5 million could be saved with proper breastfeeding and timely and appropriate complementary feeding after six months along with continued breastfeeding.

However, globally out of 136 million babies born each year, only about 50 million practice exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and 86 million do not.

In the 33 countries, where an assessment of policies and programmes on infant and young child feeding was done, out of 78 million born each year 42 million are sub-optimally fed. For India, these numbers are 26 million born and 20 million do not practice optimal feeding, the report said.

Just take the case of diarrhea, more than 780 million cases each year in South Asia and optimal feeding could prevent half.

Ms Ann Ollestad, Ambassador of Norway to India, launched the report.

Ollestad pointed out the importance of optimal feeding of babies and shared strategies how it could be made possible in Norway through support systems for women both at work as well as in health system.

National groups in 33 countries assessed the policy and programmes on breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding as part of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTI).

The exercise revealed that not a single country among those 33 who have completed this work, have achieved a GREEN rating (score of 90 percent plus), and only 9 achieved a BLUE rating, the next level of performance.

The WBTI report clearly shows that policies and programmes are lagging behind in all the 10 areas of action highlighted in the W.H.O. □s Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, especially in relation to support to women when they need it most for feeding their children optimally.

The report is particularly important as the world prepares to rapidly achieve MDG 4 - halving under five-child mortality by 2015.

Optimal breastfeeding has been shown to protect lives irrespective of poverty, lack of sanitation, and other factors including in developing countries where majority of deaths take place. □BSS

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