Despite the evidence that breastfeeding saves 823,000 under five child deaths annually, provides major benefits to women health, and is valuable to national productivity and economy, globally only 4 out of 10 women are able to begin breastfeeding within an hour of birth and practice exclusive breastfeeding (0-6 months). This has a major detrimental impact on neonatal, infant and young child health and development.

Inadequate attention to policy and programmes, that help women remove barriers to successful breastfeeding at home, health facilities or at work places and infant and young child feeding practices, are the root cause of sub-optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

The World Health Assembly has set targets to increase exclusive breastfeeding from 38 percent in 2012 to 50 percent by 2025, to which all nations need to contribute. The WBT provides a useful tool to assess how countries are fairing, and what stands out as a gap. Use of this information helps to galvanise action to achieve the targets at country level.

Why WBTi

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) launched the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) in 2004, with a goal of assisting countries to assess the status of and benchmark the progress in implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding in a standard way. The WBTi assesses the strengths and weaknesses in 10 indicators of policy and programmes on breastfeeding and IYCF and documents gaps. It builds and maintains a Global Data Repository on policies and programmes of all countries that is quickly retrievable. It generates reports and report cards for advocacy. Further, it stimulates local action to bridge the gaps. It brings multiple sectors together to build consensus on findings and recommendations. It also colour codes and scores based on the performance. The WBTi has 881 partners/organisations in 97 countries and has shown positive impact.

Steps for WBTi Assessment

- Create a core group with diverse partners that include government departments, UN, civil society, health professionals and experts without conflicts of interest at country level
- Conduct the national assessment
- Discuss the gaps, build consensus and develop action plan to bridge them
- Develop country report and report cards and use these to advocate for increased funding of policy and programmes
- Repeat assessment after 3-5 years to study trends and advocate for changes still needed

The recently launched Global Breastfeeding Collective led by WHO and UNICEF, has recognised conducting a WBTi assessment every five years. Further, it has set a target that at least 75 percent countries of the world should do their WBTi assessment by 2030.

Testimonies

“WBTi has shown progressive trend over the four assessments…. due to WBTi, IYCF policy and strategy was developed and approved by Ministry of Public Health, Government of Afghanistan.”

Dr. Mohammad Hamayoun Ludin
Director of Public Nutrition Department, Ministry of Public Health, Afghanistan

“WBTi assessments provides a snapshot of how well a country is implementing the WHO Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. It is important that countries undertake an assessment at least every five years.”

Global Breastfeeding Collective (GBC)
UNICEF-WHO
MISSION

1. To provide critical information to governments, needed to bridge gaps in policy and programmes in order to increase rates of breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding practices and to use the WBT tools to galvanise action at country level.

2. To maintain a global data repository of information on policies in programmes related to breastfeeding and IYCF.

ETHICAL POLICY

The WBTi envisions that all countries create an enabling environment for women to be successful in breastfeeding their babies optimally at home, health facilities or at work places. The WBTi aspires to be a trusted leader to motivate policy makers and programme managers in countries, to use the global data repository of information on breastfeeding and IYCF policies and programmes. WBTi envisions to serve as a knowledge platform for programme managers, researchers, policy makers and breastfeeding advocates across the globe.

VISION

The WBTi’s mission is to reach all countries to facilitate assessment and tracking of IYCF policies and programmes through mobilising local partnerships without conflicts of interest and building a data repository for advocacy.

WBTi global data repository has information from 97 countries on policies and programmes related to breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding.

Reach us at:

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