

# ENABLING BREASTFEEDING

*Making a difference for working parents*

## OBJECTIVES OF WBW 2023

- To initiate widespread awareness action in States and Districts of India to generate support to women in the health facilities and work-places.
- To share information on maternity entitlements and other support measures
- To advocate for strengthening existing programmes that enable working mothers.



# INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding is the right of both the mother and the child. However, for working mothers in India, balancing the demands of their careers with the desire to breastfeed can be challenging. A woman often plays a dual role, of a homemaker and a breadwinner. Achieving harmony in these two respective roles is nothing less than a battle for her. In addition to working outside the home, they have to perform time-consuming, often arduous domestic chores including fetching water and firewood to maintain the household; and they also have to breastfeed their children. This year we are focusing on maternity benefits.

This year's WBW theme “Enabling Breastfeeding- Making a difference for working parents” explores the importance of systems to protect, promote and support for breastfeeding in India. This document provides information on the status of policy, programmes and practices and action ideas for the governments, civil society and health professionals.

## BACKGROUND

The MOHFW-Government of India, WHO and UNICEF recommend i) initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth, ii) exclusive breastfeeding (only breastfeeding, nothing else) for the first six months of life and iii) continued breastfeeding till 2 years of age or beyond along with appropriate complementary feeding after six months of age. Optimal feeding has the potential to simultaneously reduce the burden of under-nutrition and overweight, obesity or diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

An international study on cost of not breastfeeding estimates that in India, inadequate breastfeeding results in 100,000 preventable child deaths (mainly due to diarrhoea and pneumonia), 3.47 crores cases of

diarrhoea, 0.24 crores cases of pneumonia, and 40,382 cases of obesity in India. Health impact on mothers is more than 7000 cases of breast cancer, 1700 cases of ovarian cancer and 87000 cases of type- 2 diabetes. India spends INR 875.84 crores on health care due to illness.

Despite its unparalleled value, breastfeeding rates remain low in India. Nearly 90% of women give birth in the health facilities (both public and private), as per the NFHS 5 (2019-21), but only 41.8% women initiate breastfeeding within the first hour of birth. It is encouraging to see that 63.7% children are exclusively breastfed during 0-6 months, which has shown a rise. But only 45.9% babies start semi solid foods between 6-8 months along with continued breastfeeding.

## Results of Inadequate Breastfeeding: India (Annually)

### Preventable Child Deaths

**100,000**

#### Cases of Diarrhoea

**34,791,524**

#### Cases of Pneumonia

**2,470,429**

#### Cases of Obesity

**40,382**

#### Cases of Breast Cancer

**7,976**

#### Cases of Ovarian Cancer

**1,748**

#### Cases of Type II Diabetes

**87,855**



### Health Care Costs

**INR 875.84 crores**

Source: <https://www.aliveandthrive.org/en/country-stat/india>

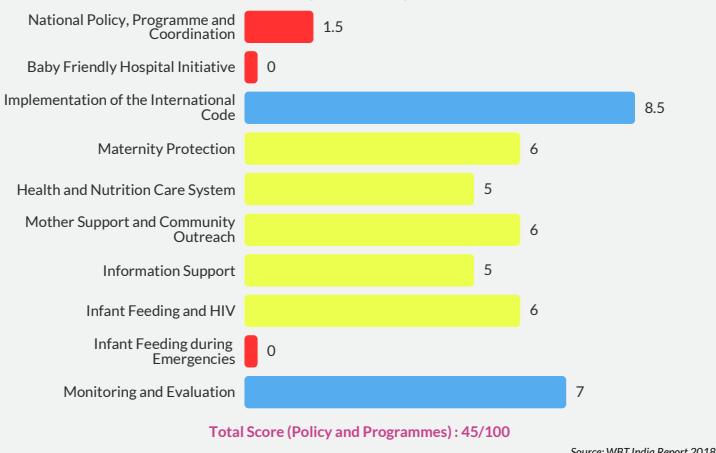
# WHERE INDIA STANDS ON POLICY AND PROGRAMME SUPPORT TO BREASTFEEDING

## INDIA: POLICY & PROGRAMMES

According to the World Breastfeeding Trends (WBTi) India's 2018 report on infant and young child feeding policy and programmes India score a low of 45 out of 100. There is scope of improvement in several areas including national policy and coordination, baby friendly hospitals, maternity protection and infant feeding during emergencies, and enforcement of the IMS Act. Overall, India ranked 79 out of 98 countries analysed on breastfeeding policy and support due to insufficient investment in this area.

Fig. 1: The State of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)

Policies and Programmes (Indicator 1-10)  
[score out of 10]



Source: WBT India Report 2018

## MATERNITY PROTECTION

### Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017 (MB Act)

According to the MB Act employed women in the formal sector have access to maternity benefits. These are important and every citizen must be made aware of:

- The Act extends to whole of India.
- Paid maternity leave of 26 weeks.
- It applies to all mines, plantations, shops, establishments and factories either in organized or unorganized sector in which 10 or more persons are or were employed on any day of the preceding twelve months.
- Any woman who has worked in the establishment for more than 80 days is entitled to the maternity benefit.
- All women who are employed in any capacity directly or through any agency i.e. either on contractual or as consultant.
- Every establishment with 50 or more employees to provide crèche facilities within a prescribed distance.
- The woman will be allowed four visits to the crèche in a day. This will include the interval of rest allowed to her.



### Penalties of violating the MB Act 2017

If any employer fails to pay any amount of maternity benefit to a woman entitled under this Act or discharges or dismisses such woman during or on account of her absence from work or her pregnancy, shall be punishable with imprisonment which is not less than 3 months but which may extend to one year and with a fine of no less than Rs. 2000/- which may exceed to Rs. 6000/-. Women in instance like these may make a complaint to the Inspector as prescribed in the Act.

### Where to make a complaint?

The Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India provides a SAMADHAN Portal, a digital initiative to raise grievances on non-payment of maternity benefits. Grievances could be filed on [samadhan.labour.gov.in](http://samadhan.labour.gov.in)

- An employer may permit a woman to work from home after the period of maternity leave, for a duration that is mutually decided by the employer and the woman.

### Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna (PMMVY) for women in unorganised sector

The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna (PMMVY), which is applicable to women working in the informal sector as well as home-makers, is not yet universalized. Further, there is very obvious discrimination between the entitlements due to women in the formal sector and those in the informal sector/home-makers, not only in terms of financial benefits, but also because there are several conditionalities attached to availing the benefits for women in the informal sector. Under PMMVY, a cash incentive of 5000/- is provided directly to the Bank / Post Office Account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) for first living child of the family subject to fulfilling specific conditions relating to Maternal and Child Health.

### The Facts are:

- As per the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India survey July 2021-June 2022 only 32.8% female (15 years and above) in all of India are part of the labour force.
- The MB Act only applies to a small percentage of women workers, mainly in the formal sector.
- The PMMVY in the year 2019-20 covered only 48% of anticipated first births and 24% of all births.

# CHALLENGES

All women are working in fact whether at home or outside home. Working parents often face several obstacles in initiating and sustaining exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding for 2 years or beyond.

- Lack of skilled breastfeeding support during pregnancy and at birth.
- Lack of awareness about the existing maternity entitlements.
- Confusing and misleading marketing of commercial baby foods through social media.

- Discrimination and exploitation at the work places, especially informal sector.
- Lack of creches, private and hygienic breastfeeding spaces.
- Lack of support from family and friends
- Social stigma associated with breastfeeding in public places further complicates the situation.

## TESTIMONY



"When I found out that I am pregnant in July 2016, I realised that I had never thought about childcare. And it was around that time in August 2016, that the maternity bill was first passed in the Rajya Sabha. That is when I decided I should do something to make the bill a law. Without any delay, I started a petition asking the government to pass the Maternity Bill and make it law. I did this because I realised that most corporates including the company I was working for will not give a paid maternity leave of 6 months to any mother. Campaigning for the petition didn't come easy. People are still not sensitized about the need for a mother to have a healthy time recuperating and taking care of her child post-delivery. After months of fighting, the bill was finally passed and the maternity bill became a law. I, like many other mothers who benefitted from this new law, was able to breastfeed my child till 5 years of age. This wouldn't have been possible if I wasn't able to get 6 months of maternity leave. People don't realise that it takes time for a mother to adapt to this phase. I hope more people realise that motherhood is a beautiful phase, it comes with its own challenges and providing a stress-free 6 months of paid maternity leave is the least we can do to give a healthy start for a mother and her child."

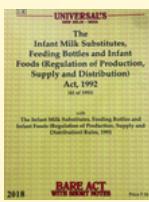
*Jincy Varghese, Age 36, Mumbai*

# OTHER POLICY PROVISIONS

In India, policy and programme provisions that contribute to enabling environment are given here:

## The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply, and Distribution) Act, 1992 and Amendment Act 2003:

This Act prohibits any advertising and promotion of any foods and feeding bottles for children under 2 years including sponsorship of health workers or their associations, gifts to parents, commission to employees and pictures of mothers, babies or graphics on labels.



## National Food Security Act, 2013:

This act recognizes the right to food and breastfeeding. It provides:

- meal, free of charge, during pregnancy and six months after the child birth,
- maternity benefit of not less than rupees six thousand, in such instalments as may be prescribed by the Central Government
- in the case of children in the age group of six months to six years, age appropriate meal, free of charge,



- Below the age of six months, exclusive breast feeding shall be promoted;

Government of India has from time to time issued guidance to promote breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child feeding.

- National Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding (2006) provides guidance on the recommended practices.
- The National Guidelines for Enhancing Breastfeeding (MoHFW, 2013) focus on health systems.
- The MAA (Mothers' Absolute Affection) programme (MoHFW, 2016): MAA programme is a flagship program aimed at promoting and supporting breastfeeding practices in the hospitals
- The National Guidelines for Lactation Management Centers (LMCs) (2017) that provide guidance on lactation support staff and human milk banks.



# ENABLING MEASURES

Following five can increase support to women

## 1. Effective implementation and monitoring of breastfeeding practices:

In the MAA Programme, following actions are most needed.

- Provide skill training in lactation support of its doctors and nurses.
- Ensure that every maternity hospital measures and monitors its breastfeeding indicators.
- Strengthen breastfeeding education in medical and nursing school curricula.
- Involve private hospitals.

## 2. Accreditation of hospitals as "Breastfeeding Friendly"

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) in partnership with private hospital Association of Health Care Providers in India (AHPI) has begun a unique accreditation programme for all maternity hospitals especially private sector.

<https://www.bfhi-india.in/home.php>

This is based on WHO's "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding". All maternity hospitals should aspire for

these benchmarks that can sustain good breastfeeding practices.

## 3. Launch an Awareness Campaign for the MB Act:

Parents must be made aware of their rights under this Act using mass media. Those who do not receive these can make complaints.

## 4. Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces:

Employers should create breastfeeding-friendly environments within workplaces. This includes providing:

- Paid maternity leave.
- Clean, private, and well-equipped lactation rooms where mothers can express milk comfortably.
- Breastfeeding breaks, allowing mothers to maintain their milk supply.
- Creches for babies.



## 5. Strictly enforce IMS Act through its awareness and regular monitoring especially in the health systems.

# ACTION IDEAS

## Governments

- Take steps to effectively monitor and implement the legal provisions for the MB Act and the IMS Act.
- Strengthen MAA programme implementation and its monitoring.



## Civil Society

- Organise an awareness programme about maternity entitlements in your area.
- Introduce 'breastfeeding friendly accreditation' to atleast one maternity hospital near by your area.

Share/post testimonies and experience of availing maternity entitlements at your workplace in India on social media tagging **@bpniindia** on twitter with a **#EnablingBreastfeeding**

## Health Professional Associations

- Organise awareness programmes about the provisions of MB Act and IMS Act for your members.

Report your activities during the WBW 2023 to BPNI to become eligible for the World Breastfeeding Week Awards and for wider dissemination of your work.

Send your WBW celebration reports to us at [bpni.india2022@gmail.com](mailto:bpni.india2022@gmail.com)

Download resources from [https://www\\_bpni.org/world-breastfeeding-week-2023/](https://www_bpni.org/world-breastfeeding-week-2023/)



### References

1. The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992 and Amendment Act 2003. [https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1958?sam\\_handle=123456789/1362](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1958?sam_handle=123456789/1362)
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## ABOUT BPNI

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) is a 31 years old registered, independent, non-profit, national organisation that works towards protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants and young children. BPNI works through policy analysis, advocacy, social mobilization, information sharing, education, research, training and monitoring the company compliance with the IMS Act. BPNI serves as the global secretariat for World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) programme, that analyses policy & programmes and galvanises action at country level in different regions of the world. BPNI is part of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

## BPNI's ETHICAL POLICY

BPNI does not accept funds or any support from the companies manufacturing baby foods, feeding bottles or infant feeding related equipments. BPNI does not associate with organizations having conflicts of Interest. BPNI request everyone to follow this ethical stance while celebrating World Breastfeeding Week.

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putting child nutrition  
at the forefront  
of social change

 **IBFAN**  
defending breastfeeding

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