

## Information Support

### *In many countries the IEC messages do not deal with WHO guidance on powdered infant formula preparations and its safety*

Women and caregivers having the right to appropriate and objective support and information, education and communication (IEC) strategies are important aspects of a comprehensive programme to improve infant and young child feeding practices. However, because such programmes are expensive and often take place within a commercial context, they tend to attract inappropriate funding, for example, from the baby feeding industry. This can undermine the effectiveness of any

campaign and lead to unwise decision-making.

The first crucial step in an information strategy should be to ensure that baby food industry's influence of such messaging is kept to an absolute minimum. IEC approaches may include the use of electronic (TV, radio, video), print (posters, counseling cards, flip charts, manuals, newspapers, magazines), interpersonal (counseling, group education, support groups) and community activities to



communicate important information and motivational material to mothers, families and the community.

Information strategies are more likely to lead to positive behavior change if they are supported by counseling sessions, home visits, action-oriented group discussions and dramas focused on problem solving. IEC strategies are comprehensive when they ensure that all information channels convey concise, consistent, appropriate, action-oriented messages to targeted audiences at national, facility, community and family levels.

This indicator examines what kind

of information on IYCF is handed out by the State through media or other methods, whether it is technically correct or not, and what are the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategies. (Table 7).

The average score of this indicator is 6.91 out of 10 with only ten countries getting a full 10. Almost half of the countries (41) are coded Blue, scoring between 7 and 9; 24 countries score between 4 and 6 and nine score below 3.5 are coded Red (Figure 17).

There is regional variation as seen clearly in the Figure 17 and work cut out for all of them.

**Table 7: Key question and subset questionnaire for indicator on information support and scoring criteria**

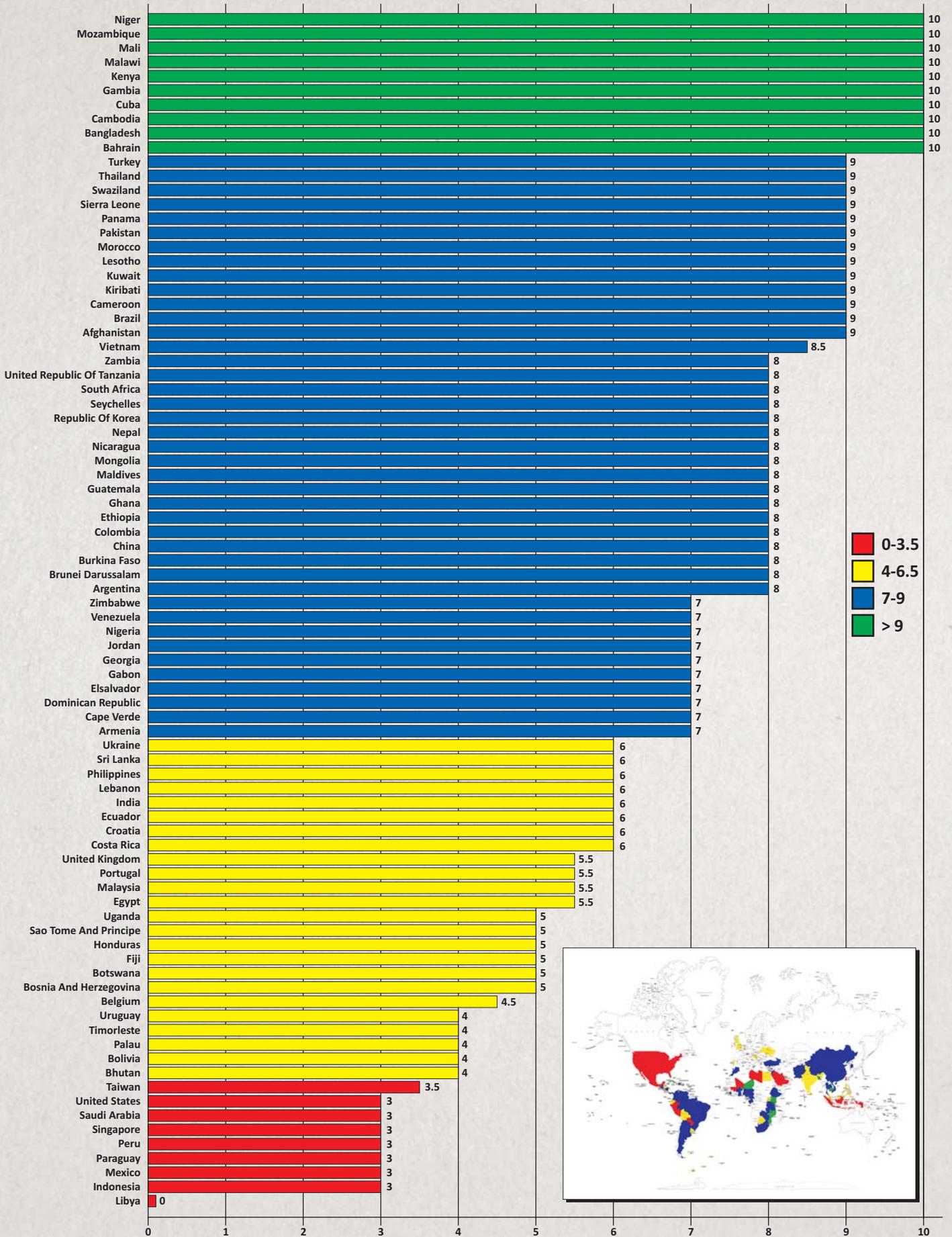
**Key question:** Are comprehensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategies for improving infant and young child feeding (breastfeeding and complementary feeding) being implemented?

**Guidelines for scoring Criteria**

	<b>Scoring</b>		
	<b>✓ Check that apply</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>To some degree</b>	<b>No</b>
7.1) There is a national IEC strategy for improving infant and young child feeding that ensures all information and materials are free from commercial influence/potential conflicts or interest are avoided.	2	-	0
7.2a) National health/nutrition systems include individual counseling on infant and young child feeding	1	.5	0
7.2b) National health/nutrition systems include group education and counseling services on infant and young child feeding	1	.5	0
7.3) IYCF IEC materials are objective, consistent and in line with national and/or international recommendations and include information on the risks of artificial feeding	2	1	0
7.4. IEC programmes (eg World Breastfeeding Week) that include infant and young child feeding are being implemented at local level and are free from commercial influence	2	1	0
7.5 IEC materials/messages to include information on the risks of artificial feeding in line with WHO/FAO Guidelines on preparation and handling of powdered infant formula (PIF).*	2	-	0
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>-----/10</b>		

\* to ensure that clinicians and other health-care personnel, community health workers and families, parents and other caregivers, particularly of infants at high risk, are provided with enough information and training by health-care providers, in a timely manner on the preparation, use and handling of powdered infant formula in order to minimize health hazards; are informed that powdered infant formula may contain pathogenic microorganisms and must be prepared and used appropriately; and, where applicable, that this information is conveyed through an explicit warning on packaging;

**Figure 17: The state of information support in 84 countries on a scale of 0-10**



## Analysis and Conclusion

An analysis of the indicator (Figure 18) shows that 50 countries provide technically correct information to their population, and only 36 have a comprehensive IEC strategy for improving IYCF practices. Fifty-four countries report that IEC programmes are being actively implemented at local levels.

The countries seem to be improving over years. However, this indicator should

aspire to get a maximum score of 10, as this is most easily achievable with the vast and digital medium available these days. There needs to be a comprehensive approach. With only 40% countries having a policy, there is a need to provide a clear direction for communication for improving breastfeeding or infant and young child feeding practices.

**Figure 18: Status of subset questions for indicator on information support in 84 countries**

