

INTRODUCTION

“Supporting breastfeeding makes economic sense for rich and poor countries and this latest breastfeeding study proves it”

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Today, the importance of optimal breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding practices is acknowledged by everyone, especially the role of early and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, in improving child health, development, in reducing childhood morbidity and mortality and both under and over nutrition. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition identifies this as one of the targets: “Increase exclusive breastfeeding rates in the first six months up to at least 50% by 2025”.¹ The WHO has also identified high-priority actions for protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding as (i) Actions at the national and legislative levels, (ii) Actions through the health care system, (iii) Actions in the community and (iv) Actions in exceptionally difficult circumstances.²

UNICEF has identified factors for success as “.....the large-scale implementation of comprehensive, multi-level programmes to protect, promote and support breastfeeding with strong government leadership.....”.³ Needless to say, a large scale action is required at national level applying several strategies, while UNICEF and WHO are leading global

advocacy efforts through Breastfeeding Advocacy Initiative (BAI).⁴

The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2001 and later by the UNICEF Executive board in the same year, has in its framework ten areas of action to achieve optimal feeding practices.⁵ WHO developed a tool⁶ “Infant and Young Child Feeding-A Tool for assessing practices, policies and programmes” to monitor it. However, the progress to implement it has been visibly slow even after a decade of its existence.

Based on these tools, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) Asia/Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) developed the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) in 2004-2005. This has 15 indicators, 10 for policy and programmes and five for infant and young child feeding practices. This tool fulfills the need for measuring inputs at national level plus generates action, which is inbuilt in its process.

This global report “Has Your Nation Done Enough to Bridge the Gaps?” showcases implementation of the Global Strategy in 84 countries highlighting gaps and achievements in 15 indicators of the WBTi tool.

This is the third in the series of WBTi global reports since 2010. The first was “The State of Breastfeeding in 33 countries” in 2010 and the second report titled “Are Our Babies Falling Through the Gaps?” was launched at the World Breastfeeding Conference in 2012.

This report is based on information from 84 countries of which 27 completed their assessment between 2008-2012 and 57 did it between 2013 to 2016.

The report describes methodology, process, findings, impact of WBTi action, including some case studies and experiences from countries having positive gains using WBTi tools. The report analyses impact of WBTi in generating action in 35 countries

that were able to conduct repeated assessments. In the way forward section, it provides recommendations for action at the international and national level.

Note: *Based on the feedback from field experiences of having used the WBTi tool, an expert group reviewed the tool in the year 2013 for its process and content.⁷ The revised WBTi assessment tool, updated as on September 2014 is available on our website <http://worldbreastfeedingtrends.org/>. In the revised tool the subset questions and scores have been slightly changed to balance for policy and programmes to give more weightage to implementation for some of its indicators.*



¹ WHO 2014. Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/113048/1/WHO_NMH_NHD_14.1_eng.pdf?ua=1

² WHO 2007. Planning guide for national implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43619/1/9789241595193_eng.pdf?ua=1

³ UNICEF 2011. Programming Guide: Infant and Young Child Feeding. http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/Final_YCF_programming_guide_2011.pdf

⁴ UNICEF 2015. Advocacy Strategy-Breastfeeding Advocacy Initiative. http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/Breastfeeding_Advocacy_Strategy-2015.pdf

⁵ WHO & UNICEF 2003. Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/global_strategy/en/

⁶ WHO 2003. Infant and Young Child Feeding. A Tool for assessing practices, policies and programmes. <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/42794/1/9241562544.pdf?ua=1>

⁷ Global World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative Review Workshop. <http://worldbreastfeedingtrends.org/wbti-tool-review/>