

Govt. urged to enforce bill of iodine deficiency control



Islamabad: National Alliance on Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding & Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control met today and demanded to immediately pass the bill of iodine deficiency control.

The alliance urged the government to initiate the legislative process on IDD control bill in parliament and take necessary actions to enforce Breastfeeding law 2002 in true spirit. There has been rampant violation of the breastfeeding law since it is implemented.

The National Alliance on Breastfeeding and Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) met to discuss and strategize campaign for enforcement of Protection of Breastfeeding law, 2009 and to advocate government for IDD control bill to be tabled before parliament to formally pass it.

The alliance members expressed their deep concerns over the enforcement of

Breastfeeding law 2002 and the delay in enactment of IDD Control bill 2009 which is still pending with the Cabinet Division.

The IDD Control Bill 2009 has been vetted by all provincial assemblies and other stakeholders including relevant government departments. The bill is looking forward for a formal push to actuate it from Parliament.

The members of alliance called it an emergency situation for protection of breastfeeding and IDD control in Pakistan and urged to expedite the process of enactment of IDD legislation and stringent measures for enforcement of BF law.

The National Alliance on BF and IDD consists of over a dozen civil society organisations including UN agencies UNICEF, World Food Program (WFP) and APNA, NRSP, SANGI, Plan International Pakistan, and GAIN etc. TheNetwork for Consumer Protection, having a history of two decades of efforts to protect and promote breastfeeding in Pakistan holds the secretariat of alliance.

It is not sufficient to mere enact and implement laws but need to ensure the enforcement in an ample manner, said Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator TheNetwork for Consumer Protection, the secretariat of national alliance.

Startling facts from TheNetwork's recent study reveal the absence of iodized salt quality monitoring and checks on regular basis at market level. There are also gaps in the monitoring mechanisms and control marketing levels. There is need for an appropriate legislation and enforcement mechanisms in country.

On the other hand, a study on monitoring the implementation of BF ordinance in selected hospitals of twin cities by TheNetwork unveil that 87% doctors of Rawalpindi and Islamabad remain unaware of the existence of BF law 2002 and 81% are not aware that Infant formula container are legally required to label their designated products under law. The poor enforcement mechanisms dismay the situation and provide a room to violators.

Iodine deficiency is a major public health problem in Pakistan and is a threat to the social and economic development of the country. Every year in Pakistan, around 200,000 (two million) are born mentally deficient due to Iodine Deficiency during pregnancy. Pakistan is already lagging behind its progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015. Country direly needs to prioritize the enforcement of BF law 2002 and accelerate the process to promulgate the IDD control bill in the best interest of future generations of Pakistan.