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First hour breastfeeding saves 22% neonatal deaths

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ISLAMABAD—In Pakistan, the infant mortality rate is 74/1000 live births indicating that around 400,000 babies are likely to die during their first year of life.

This was stated by Dr. Talib Lashari, Executive Coordinator of The Network for Consumer Protection in Pakistan, here Saturday.

He said that according to estimates 11 percent deaths take place due to diarrhea and Acute Respira-

tory Infections. However, 22 percent of all neonatal deaths could be prevented if breastfeeding is initiated within one hour by all mothers. It is ironic that due to ignorance among general population; unethical market practices by the corporate sector; the percentage of breastfeeding is very low in Pakistan.

He said that the Breastfeeding Week would be celebrated the world over from August 01 to 07, 2007. In Pakistan, a week long drive of mass awareness and advocacy will

be lunched by The Network for Consumer Protection. About 3000 members of The Network would participate in this drive. A poster will be distributed at health facilities by the members of

The Network. News items and articles will be written for the print media and contacts will be made with TV channels to air news and views on the importance of breastfeeding. The Network for Consumer Protection will organize a Consultative Meeting on "Breastfeeding, a key element for achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)", he added.

He maintained that the exclusive breastfeeding can reduce infant mortality in Pakistan. This will also help in achieving Millennium Development Goals 1 and 4. The Goal 1 calls for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and Goal 4 calls for reducing child mortality by reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five.

Dr. Lashari added that Government of Pakistan has promulgated the "Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002". The Ordinance protects the first right of a baby consumer-citizen to have mother's milk since first hour of birth.