



THENETWORK FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION IN PAKISTAN

Press Release

After 8 years implementation of breastfeeding laws remain a far cry

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Islamabad: While observing the "World Breastfeeding Week 2011", TheNetwork reminded the health care authorities that to the detriment of the child health, lack of implementation of 8 years old breastfeeding law has made Pakistan a leading bottle feeding country in the world. According to Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, situation is dismissal as the exclusive breastfeeding is low as 37 % while bottle feeding is 27% which contributes to higher Infant mortality rate.

World Breastfeeding Week commenced on August 1 and reminds once again the progress on the implementation of Protection of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002 remains sluggish. Significant gaps in the implementation mechanism of BF ordinance and lack of awareness among health care providers leave a question on the functioning of government regarding child health indicators. After the devolution of Ministry of health hopes lie with the provincial governments' need to adopt protection of breastfeeding laws and form the Infant Feeding Boards apace, for the stricter and strengthened enforcement mechanism, Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator TheNetwork for Consumer Protection said. TheNetwork for Consumer Protection, is a member of Consumer International, a UK based world federation of consumer groups.

Nadeem Iqbal expressed his concerns over the upcoming challenges of the capacity of provincial governments for quick adoption and implementation of protection of breastfeeding ordinance and activation of provincial infant feeding committees. He emphasized the health care providers to play their pivotal role to protect the health of future generations.

The theme of World Breastfeeding Week 2011 is "Talk to Me! Breastfeeding – A 3D Experience." The "3D" refers to the many dimensions of our lives and the centrality of communication to our personal experiences. During the week, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is "calling for the benefits of breastfeeding to be broadcast beyond clinics and delivery rooms to the public at large."

Every year in Pakistan, 72 infants die out of 1000 live births and out of these 72, 53 infants die before reaching one month of their age due to diarrhea, pneumonia, respiratory infections and malnutrition. These lives can be valued and saved through exclusive breastfeeding upto first six months of their age. Pakistan's progress on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is far from encouraging as the country is off-track in reducing

child mortality. It depicts the commitment of the government with its obligations regarding development of child health.

A recently conducted survey "Monitoring of Breast Milk Substitutes Labeling Compliance with BF Ordinance 2002" reveals that maximum number of national and transnational infant formula samples chosen for the study were found violating the set standards in the above mentioned law. It is worth mentioning that Pakistan has highest number of bottle feeding in the region.

Pakistan adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes in 2002, then promulgated and implemented "Protection of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002 to restrict the promotion of infant formula feeding. Unfortunately, Pakistan continues to provide an ever-promising market for the promotional and sales tactics of multinational corporations. Deplorably neglecting the importance of breastfeeding for new born and the widespread availability of infant formulae and feeding bottles have introduced a new trend in infant feeding patterns in Pakistan. The prevalence of unsuitable and/or low-quality bottles and teats further aggravates the situation in country. Despite the proven benefits of breastfeeding, mothers of Pakistan are under pressure to use artificial milks as a result of the unethical marketing practices of the baby food industry, Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection said.

World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends optimal breastfeeding in the first two years of life, and particularly exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, can have the single largest impact on child survival of all preventive interventions, with the potential to reduce 14 folds of infant mortality. There is documented evidence of increased risk of infant mortality in formula fed infants versus breast fed babies.

TheNetwork is concerned for the implementation of promotion and protection of breastfeeding legislation since in the post devolution process the laws are in limbo. The absence of administrative authority to watch out the implementation of laws gives liberty to the baby formula industry to violate the legislation. We urge the provinces for early adoption/adaption and implementation of legislation to promote and protect breastfeeding.

Pakistan continues to lag behind other South Asian countries in terms of child health indicators. World Breastfeeding Week is time for the government of Pakistan to reassess it's commitment with respect to MDGs and international obligations to protect breastfeeding for healthy development.