

# Breast Feeding - Empowerment of Women !

(A Resume of Maharashtra Breast Feeding Promotion initiative efforts )

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## Summary

Various factors brought about a decline in Breast Feeding in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, not only in the West, but also in India. The after effects of artificial feeding were disastrous. The encouraging results from a pilot project from the LTM Medical College and Ston Hospital, eventually led, to the formation of the Maharashtra Breastfeeding Promotion Initiative (MBPI). The training consisted of "18 hours" training programme and vast IEC material. Training proceeded in stages from senior members of Health Services and spread to various levels of Health Professionals and finally to community. BFHI Certification procedure was streamlined. ACASH overviewed the monitoring of the IMF Act. The results of the MBPI project are heartwarming. It represents a success of coordination of the State Government, Voluntary and professional Organisations. The Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI) decided the whole year 1997 as "Breast Feeding Promotion year 1997" to promote the concept to its thirteen thousand members.

## Introduction:

Breast milk remains the best naturally available perfect

food for an infant. It provides a baby with complete food, protection against infections and caring environment. Rapid industrialization in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought out a sudden change in socioeconomic behavioural patterns of the Western society. Many women entered the workforce. Lactating mothers were no exception to this new phenomenon. This socio-economical change created an outright demand for feeding bottles and artificial baby foods. As a result, large number of industries came out with different formulations for infant foods, feeding bottles and nipples to replace breast feeds. Aggressive marketing techniques adopted for promoting instant baby foods, prompted manufacturers to increase baby foods production and extend their tentacles to developing countries too. India was no exception to this new trend and fell a prey to the use of artificial baby feeding.

## Aftereffects of new trend :- Artificial feeding of Infants :

The deviation from natural breastfeeding resulted in a steep rise in the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases, infections and malnutrition and posed a problem to health service providers. National and international organisations started pondering on this new trend. UNICEF, who is concerned with health of children all over the world came out with the startling information that –

- the abandonment of breastfeeding is a significant factor in the death of at least one million infants every year,
- around six million infants die of diarrhoea and malnutrition,
- unaccounted numbers survive not being breastfed only to suffer later from impaired growth and development.

Studies carried out in different parts of India, also reveal many common problems related to knowledge, attitude and behavioural practices of the community as well as of

the service providers towards breast feeding.

Though infant mortality has come down, the major cause of infant death remains the same. 35.6% of infant deaths result from prematurity, 23.6% from respiratory infections and 11.4% contributed by diarrhoeal diseases.

Unhealthy practices of discarding colostrum is mainly prevalent in rural and slum population. In 38% of the cases mothers discard colostrum on the recommendation of elders and 21% of mothers on their own.

The studies show that an exclusively breastfed infant suffers on an average of 4.1 morbid episodes per child year which increases to 11.2 among infants receiving mixed feeding and 14.4 among artificially fed infants. Lower neonatal mortality rates are observed among exclusively breastfed infants.

### **Launching of Pilot Project in Mumbai**

After knowing the magnitude of this problem, it was felt necessary to initiate activities to promote, protect and support breast feeding practices in the community. A team of doctors from L.T.M. Medical College and Sion Hospital, Mumbai led by Dr. Armida Fernandes, Prof. and head of Dept. of Neonatology undertook a programme to promote breastfeeding and implement baby friendly practices in their Hospital. A decade long programme implemented in the departments of Obstetrics, Paediatrics and Neonatology made a great change in breastfeeding practices in the institutions.

Enthused with the response & the results observed in their pilot project, community health experts and Health Administrators decided to launch an Infant feeding programme in Mumbai Municipal Corporation in 1993. UNICEF Mumbai came forward to extend financial as well as the additional technical support needed. The BMC infant feeding project received overwhelming support from medical and nursing professional associations and National and International voluntary organisations. Corporation and Govt. health authorities participated actively in launching the project. A multi-disciplinary

18 hours training programme/ curriculum on breast feeding management and steps towards Baby Friendly Care were designed by a team of experts. Other teaching aids were also developed. In first phase, the newly designed package was used for the Training of Trainers (T.O.T), identified from the Municipal Medical Colleges in Mumbai, who in turn conducted inservice training programmes in their own institutions. Thirty two Municipal Hospitals and Maternity Homes in the city were covered under the pilot project. On completion of the training it was expected of the hospital and their staff to make the necessary changes in attitudes and practices to establish a baby friendly environment and to apply for certification to a central evaluation unit. The evaluation was conducted by trained assessors.

### **Establishment of MBPI**

In view of the commitment with which the professional team from Mumbai Municipal Corporation & Voluntary organisations implemented the Infant feeding project in 1993, the Public Health Department, and Govt. of Maharashtra in close collaboration with UNICEF Mumbai decided to have a high power policy making body to guide and support the movement of promoting breast feeding practices in Maharashtra State. After a series of deliberations with different professionals, voluntary organisations and experts committed to the cause of promoting breast feeding practices, Maharashtra Breast Feeding Initiative came into existence in May 1994. The overall objective of the MBPI was to consolidate the gains of the "BMC Infants Feeding Project" and to take the lessons learnt from the project to all over Maharashtra State to regenerate the healthy habit of Breast Feeding practice. Thus MBPI decided to accelerate the implementation of "INNOCENTI DECLARATION" of UNICEF and WHO on protection, promotion and support of Breast feeding.

The MBPI hoped to –

Equip health care providers with necessary knowledge and skills to support breast feeding,

Change existing hospital practices to make hospitals "Baby Friendly",

Provide necessary support to mothers for adopting healthy Infant feeding practices.

### **Start up**

The MBPI started functioning by adhering to its specific objectives. A detailed action plan was prepared for implementation. Initially it was decided to –

1. initiate activities in post-partum centres and make all post-partum centres “Baby friendly”,
2. prepare curriculum and information, education communication (IEC) material,
3. undertake training of Health personnel in phases,
4. adoption of mechanism for certification of hospitals for Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI).

In the training programme prepared for the BMC project for Breast feeding management and steps towards Baby friendly care an 80 minutes duration documentary and specific IEC materials prepared for the training of lower health staff as well as mothers were used as training aids.

### **Training process**

The curriculum was suitably modified by the experts as and when necessary to meet the requirements of the participants. The training remained to be the key factor in implementation of MBPI objectives. The training activities were initiated in different stages –

#### **Stage I**

In the first instance, the institutions covered by the Directorate of Health Services were considered and the training was undertaken in 3 phases.

#### **Phase I – Training of Trainers(TOTs)**

This was organised at LTM Medical college Sion. The training was of 18 hours duration. As this was the state level training of key trainers, senior members from Health Services viz. Principals of the Regional Training Centres, Asstt. Directors and Dy. Directors were invited for the training. The training was imparted by an experts group under the guidance of Dr. Armeida Fernandes, who was designated as a coordinator for training by the MBPI.

#### **Phase II**

The key trainers trained at the state level, organised training of Medical Superintendents., Paediatricians and Obstetricians from post partum centres at regional levels either at Regional Health & Family Welfare Training centres or at the Govt. Medical Colleges. In addition to faculty of post partum centres the faculty members of the Regional training centres, District / Regional level MCH Officers, Medical Officers i/c District Training Teams, were also incorporated in the training. This training was carried out in Pune, Kolhapur, Akot, Aurangabad, Nasik, Nagpur and Mumbai.

#### **Phase III**

The persons who had undergone training at the Regional level in Phase II formed a core group for organising training in each district in their region. These core groups completed the training of 107 post partum centres. The state level key trainers and specialists from MBPI Secretariat overviewed the training activities.

### **Training : Stage II**

#### **Govt. and Private Medical Colleges**

On completion of the first stage of training with the Directorate of Health Services, the MBPI decided to take up the Govt. Medical Colleges for training. The Deans of these colleges were invited for participating in an advocacy workshop – Steps towards Baby Friendly Care. This workshop – cum – reorientation programme discussed the concept of Baby friendly hospital initiative, 18 hours training programme and assessment procedures. Thereafter each of the medical colleges deputed two teams of key trainers for an 18 hours training programme in Breast feeding management, 10 steps to successful breastfeeding, and assessment of baby friendliness. In the first batch, 4 senior health personnel from Obstetrics, Paediatrics, and Preventive medicine departments were included. The second batch was meant for 2 nursing personnels from Maternity, Post-partum, Paediatrics wards & from Antenatal clinics so also one MSW/ Nursing staff from Preventive and Social medicine and Nutrition departments.

On completion of training of the 11 Govt. Medical colleges, the training of 17 private medical colleges were taken up. This training programme was organised by municipal and Govt. medical colleges in Mumbai.

### **Stage III**

#### **Private Hospitals, Private Nursing Homes and Others**

As a large number of health professionals serve the community outside the Govt. system, MBPI felt it necessary to orient them. Thus 40 private hospitals and maternity homes in Mumbai having 500 deliveries or more per year were identified. The training was organised to these institutions in coordination with Association for Consumer Action in Safety and Health (ACASH), which is an active member of the MBPI. Simultaneously, hospitals under the ESIS scheme, Port trust, Atomic Research Centre and other Central Govt. Hospitals were covered for breast feeding management training.

### **Stage IV**

In 1997, 18 hour training programme was conducted for 181 student tutors in 25 Govt., 9 semi govt., 15 public trust, and 18 Private Nursing Schools in the State. The programme was organised by the State training team at MBPI headquarters at F. T.M. Medical college Sion Mumbai with a sole intention to ensure incorporation of the principles of lactation management in nursing school's curriculum so that future generation, continue the practices and impart knowledge in the community.

#### **Shorter duration training programmes**

The efforts were also made to involve health professionals from all walks of life, specially busy Obstetricians and Paediatricians who are in private practice. A training capsule of 3 hours duration on breast feeding management was prepared with the active collaboration of IAP and FOGSI members.

Similarly in 1997, 18 hours lactation management training curriculum condensed to 6 hours capsule with an intention to orient private practitioners in lactation management education and neonatal care. Each team consisted of a

district MCH officer, a public Health Nurse and representative from IAP and FOGSI. Eight such teams were formed. These teams were trained by the central team in Mumbai. Thereafter the teams started training private practitioners with the help of IMA, IAP and FOGSI.

Motivated by the efforts of MBPI, FOGSI under the leadership of President Dr. D. K. Tank decided to have the entire year 1997, as "FOGSI - Breast Feeding Promotion Year 1997!" Over 13,000 Obstetricians all over India were exposed to Breastfeeding promotion. All letters of FOGSI carried the key messages. Thus obstetricians took an active role in receiving breastfeeding practices especially in the urban population.

### **Stage V**

#### **Training : Move to the Community**

Once training and reorientation of Health Service providers in breast feeding practices was achieved, MBPI focused its attention to the community to accept knowledge and change in behaviour. MBPI launched a massive IEC campaign to disseminate information and popularise early initiation and exclusive breast feeding up to 4 months of age. This involved orientation of community health workers and education of mothers. Mothers support groups were formed in slums to motivate mothers in breast feeding. Similarly mother support groups were formed for higher income groups. These women are trained in counselling.

#### **Training for ICDS Functionaries**

Front line workers under the ICDS programme i.e. Anganwadi workers were given a short training in breast feeding practices, its importance and role of supplementary feeds. Eight slum communities in Mumbai were selected for this study. A song based video film on breast feeding 'Lakh Molache Dhan' was used as a tool for the training. After training, these workers were expected to carry the message on breast feeding to the households during their house to house visits.

## Process for Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Certification

On completion of breast feeding management training, health administrators were expected to participate in a manner so that their institutions adopt Baby friendly practices. During the training programme, the participants were briefed about the intervention and were asked to prepare an action plan suggesting changes if any required for successful implementation of 10 steps of BFHI. Once hospital administrators were satisfied themselves that they met the requirements for certification they fill up self assessment forms and send it to MBPI headquarters. In MBPI headquarters, BFHI coordinators scrutinize and may suggest modifications for compliance.

Otherwise on satisfying himself about the appropriateness of the form he deputed an external team for assessment. On receipt of satisfactory recommendation of the external assessment team, the papers are submitted to the coordination (BFHI) National Task force for certification. If the external assessment teams suggest certain changes in their recommendations, these suggestions are forwarded to the institutions for compliance. Then, on receipt of this compliance report by the BFHI coordinator, external assessment team goes for a revisit and submits recommendations to MBPI.

### Monitoring the IMF Act

Regulation of production, supply and distribution of the infant milk substitutes feeding bottles and infant foods came in to existence by an Act in 1992- I.M.F Act of 1992. The monitoring of the IMF Act is one of the three main tasks of the MBPI. However, this task was given to

an active member of the MBPI, 'ACASH' to overview on behalf of MBPI. Only awareness amongst the community cannot bring about the change. The massive awareness campaign launched by the MBPI and voluntary organisations like ACASH, IAP, FOGSI, and UNICEF have brought down the demand for artificial baby food by the community despite aggressive marketing techniques adopted by the national and multinational baby food manufacturing companies. As a result, the production of artificial baby feeds came down very sharply and most of the manufacturers diverted marketing their products from Maharashtra.

Thus, Breast feeding promotion initiative in Maharashtra is a classic successful example of a coordinated effort of Govt., Voluntary and professional organisations. The scientific truths were conveyed to the community, through a wellknit competent, committed and zealous health infrastructure to make a health promotional activity into a 'People's movement!'

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