

Report of Special Session – Meeting with Development Partners

The special session – Meeting with Development Partners – was organized on 8th December 2012, as part of the World Breastfeeding Conference 2012, held in New Delhi from 6th to 9th December 2012.



Objective

The objective of the session was to share with the participants, including the donor community, an estimation of the costs of scaling up breastfeeding/infant and young child feeding interventions, and the strategic plans of the global Breastfeeding Initiative for Child Survival (gBICS), over the next 10 years to meet the goal of such scaling up.

Participants

The session was attended by delegates from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Eritrea, Finland, Ghana, Kenya, Korea, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, and Uganda. Among those present, were representatives of several governments including Kenya, Sudan and India, as well as Dr. Francesco Branca, Director of Nutrition for Health and Development, World Health Organisation, Geneva; Dr. Nune

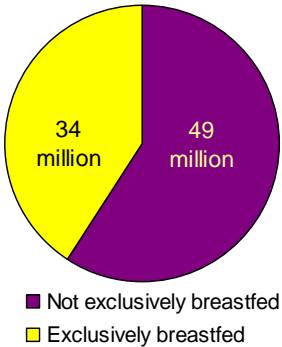


Mangasaryan, Senior Nutrition Advisor (Infant and Young Child Nutrition), UNICEF Headquarters, New York; Ms. Ellen Muehlhoff, Food and Agriculture Organisation, Rome; representatives from UNICEF Eitrea and UNICEF Nicaragua, Mr. Billy Stewart of DfID India, Ms. Ashi Kathuria of World Bank, Dr. Sanjay Kapoor of USAID-India and Mr. Carl-Gustaf Gutberg, who represented SIDA. Other participants included representatives of civil society organizations and professional and academic bodies such as the South Asia Infant Feeding Research Network (SAIFRN).

Presentations and discussions

The special session was chaired by Dr. Urban Jonsson, ex-senior Advisor, Nutrition at UNICEF and currently Executive Director of The Owls, an international consultancy company specialized in Human Rights and Development. The session opened with a presentation by Dr. Arun Gupta, chair global Breastfeeding Initiative for Child Survival (gBICS), on why special focus is needed on breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding if global child survival goals and reduction in malnutrition have to be achieved. Optimal IYCF, especially exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding for at least two years, is the single biggest contributor to child survival. Dr. Gupta highlighted the lack of policies and guidelines on IYCF in many countries as revealed by the national assessments of policies and programmes conducted by 51 countries as part of the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi). The assessments revealed particularly the lack of a specific budget for promoting, protecting and supporting optimal infant and young child feeding practices. There is little support to breastfeed optimally for women working in the unorganized sector in the form of maternity benefits as well as during disasters and emergencies. While the International Code for Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes has been in place for over three decades, it is not being strictly enforced in most countries, many of which have not yet translated it into national legislation.

WBTi assessments in 51 countries



The next part of the presentation, explained by Radha Holla, focused on the costs of scaling up breastfeeding/IYCF interventions to meet the target set by the UN Secretary General’s Global Strategy for Women and Child Health. One of the targets set by the Strategy is to increase exclusive breastfeeding rates in the first six of life months to at least 50%. Essential interventions included in the estimation included development of policies, guidelines and legislation based on the International Code and Maternity Protection, promotion of breastfeeding through one-to-one counseling and use of mass media, support to breastfeeding through maternity protection, and protection of breastfeeding through strict implementation of the International Code/national legislation. An imperative is that all the interventions are implemented concurrently. The costs were based on actual expenditures incurred by countries on these interventions, except for maternity protection, and extrapolated to all countries. In the case of maternity protection, the presenters sought a universal payment of US\$ 2.00 per

day for 180 days for all women living below the poverty line. Global as well as regional estimates were presented, as well as document entitled: Scaling Up Breastfeeding/Infant and Young Child Interventions: What Will It Cost? The presentation highlighted the need for creating special budget heads both by governments and donor agencies to effectively raise rates of optimal IYCF. The draft global estimate of essential expenditure over five years, inclusive of maternity protection to women living below the poverty line, was US\$ 67,355.34 million, while without maternity protection costs, it came to US\$ 3994.12 million. IBFAN Asia team will be developing a financial tool to help countries estimate more closely what they would need to spend, based on their special requirements, staff salaries, etc.



Marta Trejos, chair IBFAN, concluded the presentation explaining gBICS' strategic plan for transforming policies into action. These actions include supporting governments and the dyad mother-baby through its specialized program action areas:



- Building, comprehensive IYCF national policies and programmes and monitoring and evaluating their implementation using the WBTi to accelerate national processes,
- Strengthening legislation on International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (Code), Codex and maternity rights,
- Improving corporate accountability and safeguarding of public interest - democratisation of global public health and nutrition,
- Creating supportive environments for mothers, children and women's health, and
- Encouraging Optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding practices in difficult circumstances including emergencies and HIV.

This would be done through building national capacity, production of global reports, advocating for annual WHA resolutions, UN policies and Codex Alimentarius Committees agreements that support nations to restrict marketing of baby foods and commercial influence in the development agendas and decision making processes, and celebrations of the World

Breastfeeding Week. gBICS estimates it would require a budget of US\$ 3 million over the next 10 years to achieve these ends.

Discussions followed the presentation. The participants were unanimously agreed that the allocation of a specific budget line for IYCF should be promoted/advocated during the preparation of national health budgets.

The representative from DfID, Mr. Billy Stewart, felt that the exercise presented was good, especially for donors and countries because it helps identify the essential/key packages for interventions; provides an estimate for possible implementation; tracking/monitoring of aid is used by the donee countries and helps countries and donors track progress in meeting goals.

Reiterating these points, the representative from the WB added that the exercise should help put Nutrition high on the agenda; she however cautioned that it is important to look also at the Cross-Agency Budget (different ministries may have a stake in the intervention, so resources may come from their budgets too).

Dr. Branca, Chief Nutrition Advisor, WHO, said that synergies should be considered as well as shared costs; the Unicef representative highlighted the need to have a tailor-fitted approach that is contextualized. The FAO representative cautioned that access to food should be a component of the programme.

Conclusions

The participants endorsed the exercise of attempting to estimate the costs of scaling up breastfeeding/IYCF interventions and unanimously agreed that the exercise needs to be carried forward. Such estimation is essential for both countries to successfully plan and implement policies to improve optimal infant feeding practices, as well as for donor agencies to track where their investments in nutrition are actually being used. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Jonsson stressed that while it is not yet known how much money is needed, it is clear that all governments, multilateral organizations and donor agencies include a specific budget line for improving breastfeeding rates.

Next steps

Following the unanimous endorsement of the work done and the need to take this forward, IBFAN Asia will be preparing a second draft of the paper, which will look more closely at the synergy as well as cost sharing between various sectors of the government and stakeholders. IBFAN Asia will also be finalizing the web-based tool that countries can use to work out accurate costs of what it will cost them to scale up these interventions.

Both the paper and the tool will be shared with development partners, government representatives, academics and experts at the POLICY DIALOGUE Workshop scheduled to be held in June/July 2013. The discussions will be incorporated into the draft which will then be finalized.

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Feb 16 2013