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*Establishment of  
Breastfeeding Cell by the  
Government of West Bengal*



# *Why Breastfeeding*



# Why Breastfeeding

- The importance of breastfeeding needs no emphasis.
- People all over the globe are increasingly becoming aware of the benefits of breastfeeding and dangers of artificial feeding and bottle feeding.
- To express the benefits of breastfeeding, only one statement is sufficient, the quality of life of artificially fed babies can never reach the desired level as in breastfed babies.
- Breastfeeding is an important single *issue* which encompasses many issues like, *women's issue*, *human rights issue*, *health issue* and *feminist issue*.
- Breastfeeding empowers women. Women who wish to breastfeed their babies but do not, because of inadequate support from family or health workers, constraints in the workplace, or misinformation, often feel guilty because of this failure at something they wanted to do.

# *What Is the Present Scenario*



# What Is the Present Scenario

## **GLOBAL:**

The whole world is acting actively to promote, support and protect *exclusive* breastfeeding in various ways. There are international organizations like:

- **World Alliance of Breastfeeding Action (WABA)**
  - A network of individuals & organizations concerned with the protection, promotion & support of breastfeeding worldwide.
- **Australian Breastfeeding Association**
  - An Australian organization of people interested in the promotion and protection of breastfeeding. Amongst these are breastfeeding women and their partners and health professionals such as doctors, lactation consultants and midwives.
- **Baby Friendly Initiative (UK)**
  - The UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative was launched in the UK in 1994 as part of the international Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, a worldwide program of the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

# ***What Is the Present Scenario***

- **La Leche League International**
  - Its slogan is: “Do you need help with a breastfeeding question? La Leche League has many sources of breastfeeding information”.
- **Mom's Breastaurant is a US**
  - A charitable organization devoted to promoting breastfeeding, particularly at public events and festivals.
- **Professional Breastfeeding Organizations :breastfeeding online**
  - It hopes to help empower women to choose to breastfeed and to educate society at large about the importance and benefits of breastfeeding.

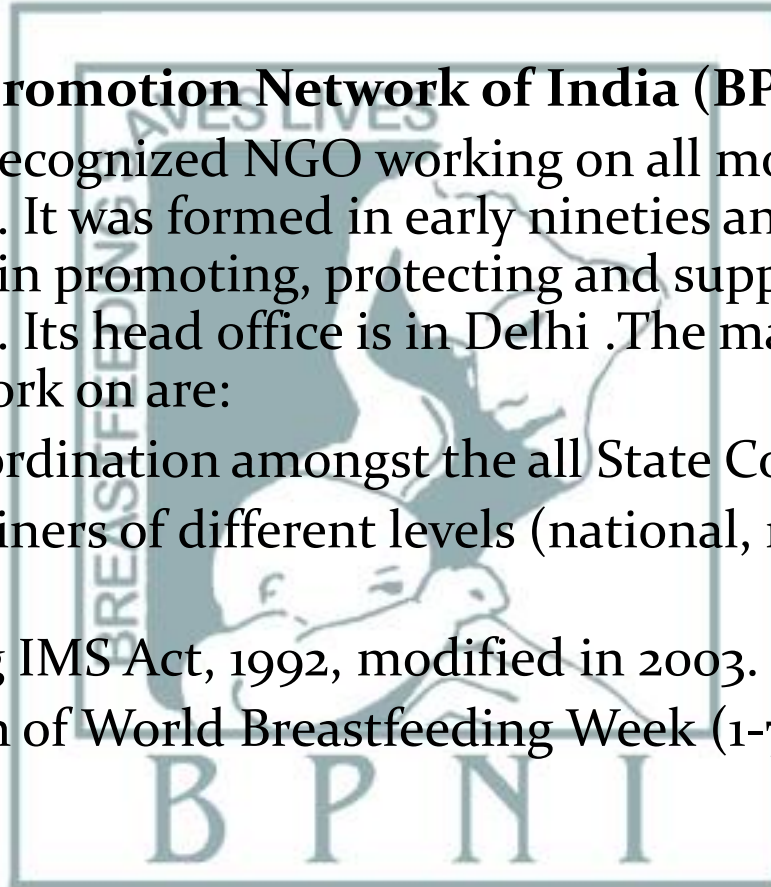
**There are many other such organizations working on various aspects of breastfeeding.**

**All these organization are nongovernmental and independent and are answerable to government concerned.**

# *What Is the Present Scenario*

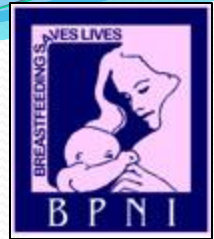
## **NATIONAL**

- **Breastfeeding promotion Network of India (BPNI)**
  - It is the only recognized NGO working on all most all the aspects of breastfeeding. It was formed in early nineties and working continuously in promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding. Its head office is in Delhi .The main component on which they work on are:
    - ✓ Central coordination amongst the all State Coordinators.
    - ✓ Making trainers of different levels (national, middle level and front-line).
    - ✓ Monitoring IMS Act, 1992, modified in 2003.
    - ✓ Celebration of World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August, every year).





# *What Is the Present Scenario*



## **WEST BENGAL**

- The breastfeeding activities started in WB in early nineties under the banner of BPNI (WB).
- Whatever progress the state has done in this field should be credited to the State Coordinator of BPNI and its members.
- In early years, UNICEF has shown keen interest and given free and fare financial support to various activities of BPNI (WB).
- The state government showed some interest in this regard. But gradually, in spite good works by the BPNI members, the Government lost interest in this field, and UNICEF, because of the lack of background support of the Government, became very much reluctant to give financial support.

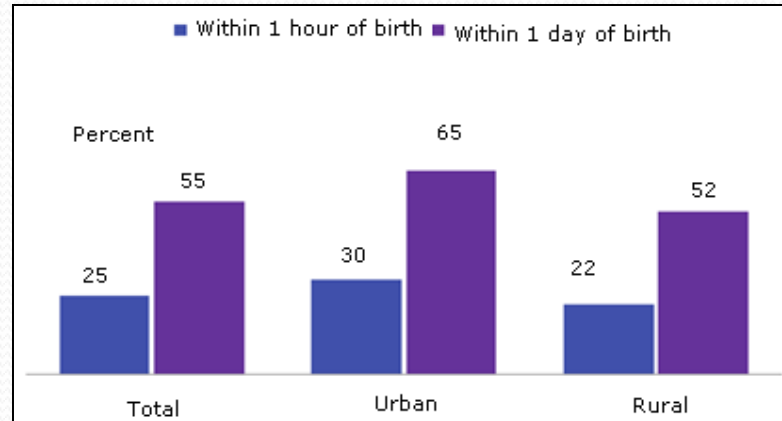
**As result, the breastfeeding movement in WB has almost come to halt.**

# ***THE RECOMMENDATIONS VS. STATUS AT PRESENT***

Here we will compare the present status of Breastfeeding and its practices compared to the recommended practice.



# Timing of Initiation of Breastfeeding



## Recommendation

- The Government of India recommends that breastfeeding should begin immediately after childbirth, preferably within one hour of delivery.
- It is important to breastfeed the child right after birth because
  - the first breast milk (called colostrum) is highly nutritious
  - it contains antibodies that help protect the newborn child from diseases.

## Present Status

- Although almost all children in India have been breastfed (96 percent), breastfeeding typically begins much later than recommended.
- Overall, only one quarter of children are breastfed within the first hour of birth and slightly more than half are breastfed within one day of birth.
- Although the early initiation of breastfeeding is more common in urban areas than in rural areas, even in urban areas, 7 out of every 10 children are not breastfed within the first hour after birth.

# “Prelacteal” Feed

## Recommendation

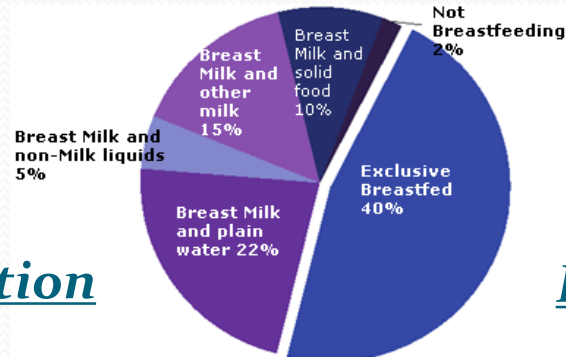
- It is also recommended that children should not be given anything to drink or eat before the initiation of breastfeeding, not even plain water.

## Present Status

- Most mothers (57 percent) gave their babies something other than breast milk to drink in the first three days after birth.
- The most common “prelacteal” liquid given to babies is milk other than breast milk, followed by honey, sugar or glucose water, and plain water. Honey is often given to the baby as part of a blessing ceremony.



# Feeding Practices of Infants Under Six Months



## Recommendation

## Present Status

- The Government of India recommends that children should be *exclusively breastfed* for the first six months of life
- There are many reasons for recommending exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> breast milk is nutritionally superior to other liquids and solid foods.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> when a child consumes other liquids and solid foods, the intake of breast milk is reduced, which in turn decreases the mother's supply of milk.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> feeding young infants liquids and solid foods increases their exposure to pathogens, putting them at greater risk of contracting diarrheal disease.
- In India, the introduction of liquids and solid or semi-solid foods often takes place before the recommended age of six months.
- Less than half of children under six months of age are exclusively breastfed.
- Exclusive breastfeeding drops to only 28 percent for children age 4-5 months.
- In addition to breast milk, 22 percent of children under six months of age are given plain water, 15 percent are given milk, 5 percent are given liquids other than water or milk, and 10 percent are given solid or semi-solid food.
- Only 2 percent of infants under six months of age are not being breastfed.

# Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)

## Practices

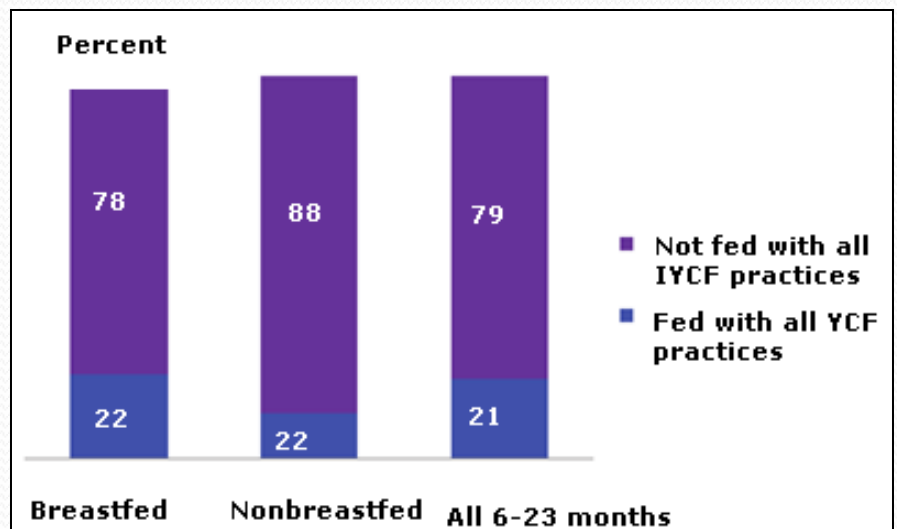
### Recommendation

In 2008, the W.H.O. published a standard set of *RECOMMENDED* feeding practices for infants and young children, based on the recommendations of the WHO Global Consensus Meeting on Indicators of Infant and Young Child Feeding

- For children age 6-23 months, they developed a summary IYCF indicator to measure the minimum acceptable diet for children in that age group.
- The indicator is based on
  - continued breastfeeding or feeding with appropriate calcium-rich foods if not breastfed
  - the consumption of solid, semi-solid, or soft food for a minimum number of times per day according to age and breastfeeding status
  - the inclusion in the diet of foods from a minimum number of food groups per day according to breastfeeding status.

### Present Status

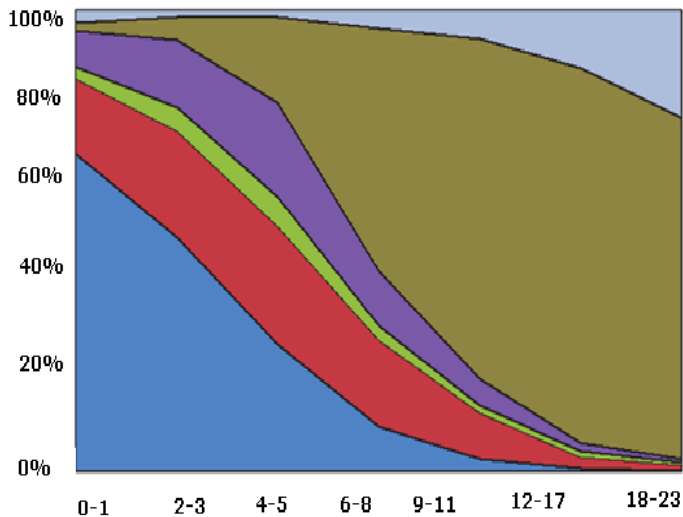
- Overall, only 21 percent of children ages 6-23 months are fed according to all three IYCF recommended practices.
- Twenty-two percent of *breastfed* children ages 6-23 months are fed according to all IYCF recommended practices.
- Only 12 percent of *non-breastfed* children age 6-23 months are fed according to all IYCF recommended practices.



# Practices by Age and Incidence of Under 5 Year Old Deaths



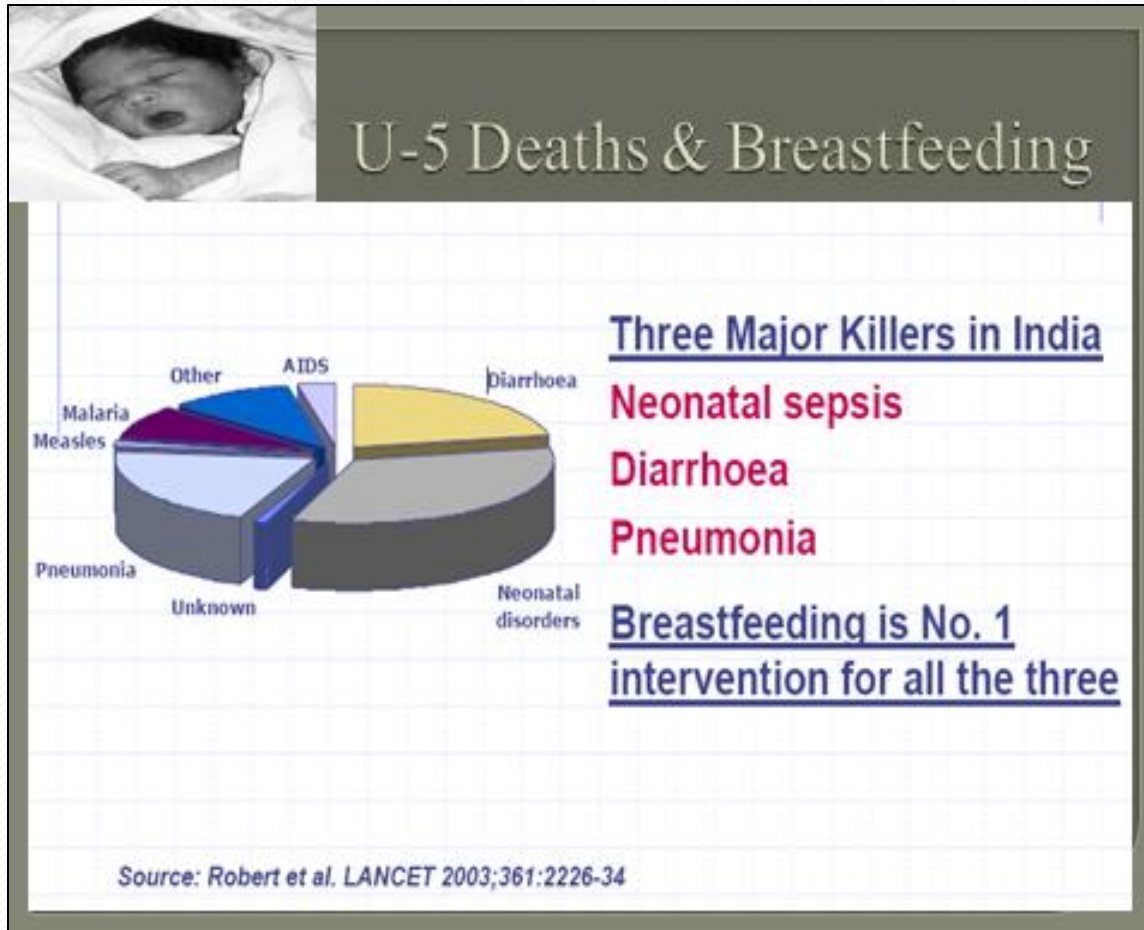
# Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices by Age



- One-third of infants under two months of age are not being exclusively breastfed, primarily because they are given water or other milk in addition to breast milk.
- Some children are weaned before they are one year old and the pace of weaning accelerates beyond 12 months of age.
- More than one-fifth of children ages 18-23 months are not being breastfed at all.
- Complementary foods are added to the diet at too young an age for many children. Almost one-fifth of children age 4-5 months are given complementary food, contrary to nutritional recommendations.

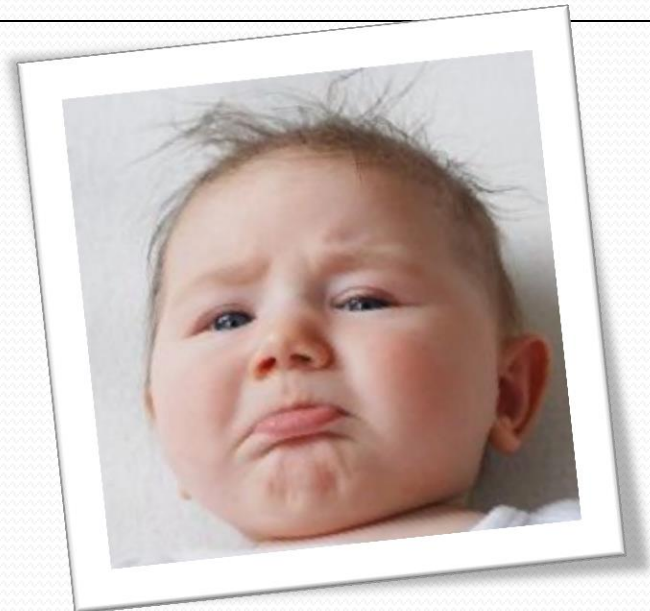


# Under 5 Year Old Deaths



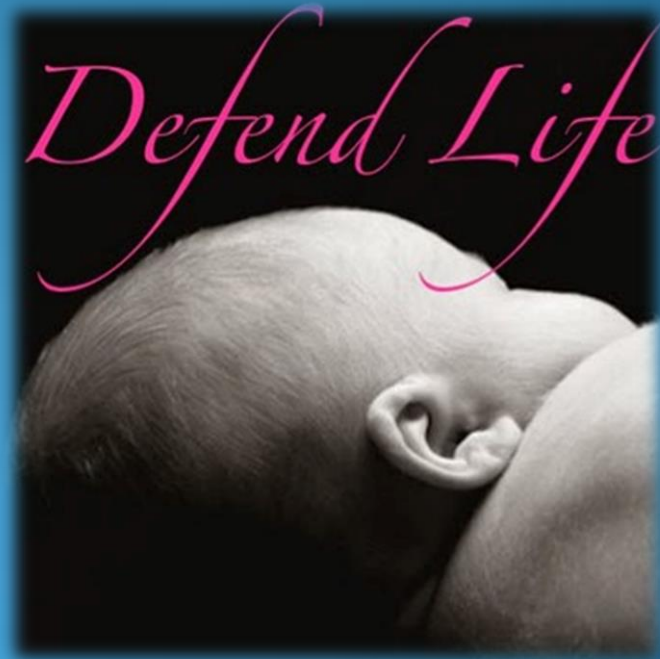
# *What do all these data mean*

All these figures clearly show that the global, national pictures are not very encouraging. The picture of West Bengal is also gloomy. In West Bengal, though we have tried sincerely for last 20 years, the movement instead taking off, gradually losing its path. And the present Project Proposer has come out with his thought of establishing a BREASTFEEDING CELL under the jurisdiction of Government.



# *Why Government*

There are several reasons why the Government should take up the matter and control the activities of breastfeeding.



# Why Government

The reasons why the Government should take up the matter and control the activities of breastfeeding are as follows:

- **Coordination**: Presently, whatever breastfeeding activities are going on, the works are going on at NGO level. And the government is almost ignorant about these and the works are so scattered that even people working in this same field do not know what is going in other places. This special cell will be able to coordinate these activities.
- **Control**: It is a strong feeling of the Project Proposer that the Government should have an overall control of the activities going around in every sphere of the state. Otherwise governance is likely to be blamed if something wrong crop out of the unsupervised acts. Breastfeeding is such an important area where unsupervised and unscientific methods may lead to catastrophes in million of children's life.
- **Support**: Financial constrain is a big problem in promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding. NGO like BPNI is a good NGO which does not take any sponsorship from any company and is totally dependent on financial support of the Government or organizations like, UNICEF etc. A steady financial support of the government will help these organizations.

# Why Government

- **Monitoring :**

- The overall activities of breastfeeding will be easier to monitor if a central pull is made.
- In 1992 Government India, has come out a strong law (IMS Act) to stop unethical promotion of baby foods, infant foods and feeding bottles. The full name of the act is “*Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992*”. The baby food manufacturing companies found some loopholes in the Act and continue their unscrupulous activities. As a result, Government of India amended the Act in 2003 making the Act more strong and airtight as much as possible. But because there is no definite responsibility is laid on any person or section from the Government side, there are free and unfair violations throughout the country making such an important and essential Act almost non-existent. Active participation of the Government is likely to stop such violation of the Act.

# Why Government

- **During Emergency:** It has been seen that during emergency like natural calamities, riots or war, the unscrupulous baby food companies rush to the site, and in the name saving babies, distribute their product free. Ordinarily, it appears that these companies are very concerned about the babies, but in reality these cause un-reparable damage to the babies and their families. Government often thinks in the same way. But it must be stopped. And it is the Government who can stop such acts the companies.
- **Authority:** When an individual or an organization tries to talk about changing unscientific policy of breastfeeding, he/it faces the identity crisis. ‘Who are you’ and ‘why should I listen to you’ often act as not just questions, but as a strong barrier to safeguard their opinions. But when the instructions come from a person or persons authorized by the government, they become order.



# *Breastfeeding is not a big issue, why Government should be involved in it*

People often have the mistaken idea that breastfeeding is just an issue of mother and child and other persons should not interfere in it. But in fact it should be considered to be biggest issue in an ethical society and good governance.



# *Breastfeeding is not a big issue, why Government should be involved in it*

The reasons why it is a big issue are:

- For the present Government of মা-মাটি-মানুষ the breastfeeding promotion aptly fits in. “মা” (the motherhood: breastfeeding is the best priority of motherhood); “মাটি” (the earth: breastfeeding does not disturb the ecology of the earth, whereas artificial feeding definitely causes environmental pollution); “মানুষ” (the people: only breastfed babies can achieve the ultimate human quality and artificially fed babies can never achieve the desired level).
- The benefits of the government are:
  - Keeps away from sinful act
  - Monitors violation of IMS Act
  - Keeps away from economic loss
  - Saves environment
  - Lessens the hospital pressure
  - Save from violation of IMS Act, 1992
  - Lessen numbers of sick adults
  - Increase the number of socially acceptable and intelligent children and adults
  - Lessens the number of anxious and inattentive women at work





# *What all these above mean*

The above facts and figure point towards one thing that the Government should take active participation and act to establish *BREASTFEEDING CELL*.



# ***What is BREASTFEEDING CELL***

The Breastfeeding Cell is a unborn dream child of the project proposer. No other states in India, and probably, in other countries have such separate cell or department exclusively meant for breastfeeding under direct control of the government. If everything goes alright, then Government of WB will be the first to establish that.



# *Why proposer is interested in* **BREASTFEEDING CELL**

The proposer is interested because his life-mission is to see all babies on earth to be exclusively breastfed. And for that he wants to share whatever knowledge and skill he has gained for last 20 years. In return, he just want to work freely and lawfully.



# *Why now*

- To admit the truth, the proposer served the Government for 34 years, but he joined WB Health Services as Medical Officer and retired as the same Medical Official. He did not have promotion in spite of having the highest academic degrees. He was pushed down, down and down because he refused to join the ruler-sponsored association. As he did not have any suitable posting, he could not do much about this project.
- The project proposer has retired from the service in December, 2009, and is now free to contribute the skill and knowledge for the society.
- The project proposer feels that the present Government will give due importance to issue of breastfeeding.

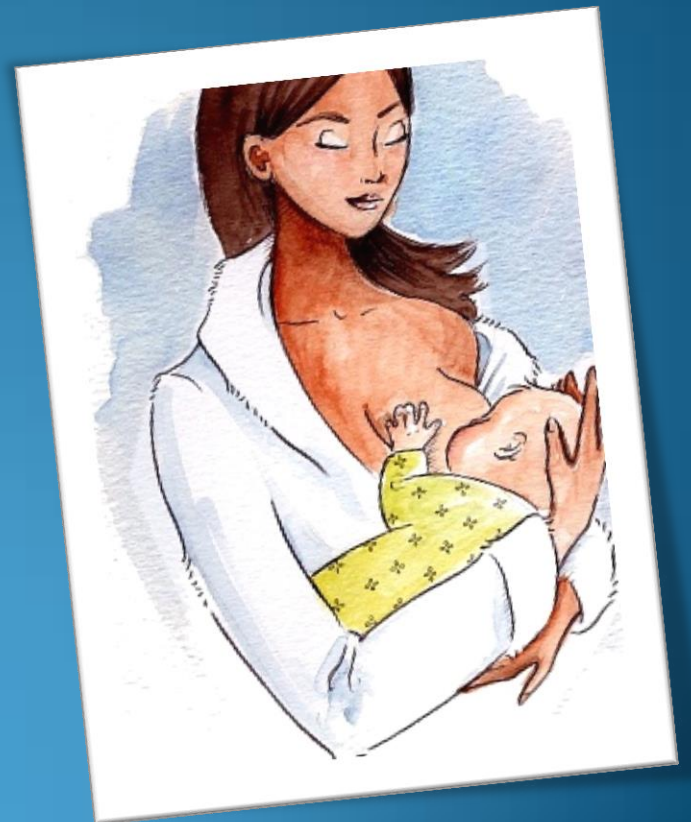


# *Under which ministry the cell will work*

In may be under direct control of the Ministry of health, Bikash Bhaban or Ministry of women and child development, writers' building.



# *What are the main aims of the proposed BREASTFEEDING CELL*



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## **OFFICIAL WORKS**

- It will act as a central office of the government for all the breastfeeding activities of the state.
- It will have an full-fledged office, which will perform he following duties:
  - Maintenance of the local office
  - Collecting, pooling, analysis of the data to review the existing situations of breastfeeding of the state.
  - Planning for immediate and future line of actions
  - Distribution team to cover the different districts of the state.
  - Communication with higher authority to inform the situations time to time.
  - Control of day-to-day works
  - Acting as an authorized body to ensure breastfeeding in both public and private health care systems.

# What are the main aims of the proposed **BREASTFEEDING CELL**

## CLINICAL WORKS

- **Positioning and Counseling:** One of the most important jobs of the CELL will be regular counseling and helping mothers for breastfeeding. It has been almost constantly seen in almost every case, delivered in government hospitals other any other places, that almost no bother is counseled and shown breastfeeding positions. Proper breastfeeding *position* is a must for all mothers. But unfortunately, most of the health professionals themselves know its importance and skills involved. Therefore, it will be ensured that all the mothers and their babies must attend the POSITIONING and COUNSELING CELL of the attached hospital at or before discharge to learn how to achieve the proper positioning of the babies during breastfeeding.
- **Expression and Counseling:** There are many reasons to counsel all mothers to express breast milk. For working mother, it is best method to breastfed their babies exclusively while she out for her work. Besides demonstrating expressing, the working mothers will also be counseled the other possible methods of breastfeeding exclusively. Because expression gives best result if started early, all mothers will be sent to the EXPRESSION and COUNSELING CELL after attending POSITIONING and COUNSELING CELL.
- **Management of breastfeeding problems and counseling:** There are many problems the mothers can face during breastfeeding. They need special care and for those situations breastfeeding experts with adequate knowledge and skill are required. These mothers will be managed SPECIAL CARE CELL.



# *Is It Practically Possible To Have So Many Separate Arrangements*

The above mentioned divisions sound a bit impractical especially in relation to space and manpower.

Therefore, alternatively, all the mothers and their babies can be grouped into two, one that come from in-doors (IN-DOOR CELL) and the others coming from outside (OUT-DOOR CELL).

# REGULAR VISIT TO POST NATAL WARD

There will be regular visit by one of the team-member to the post natal ward. This is important because this will help for *early initiation, early positioning, early detection of any problem—all these will help mother to build self-confidence*



# VISITS TO OTHER NEARBY HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES AND PRIVATE CLINIC

When trained team members will increase, regular visits to will help those places to improve breastfeeding status. They will be insisted on sending regular monthly reports of breastfeeding status. One nodal person, trained adequately will be selected from these places and will be given the responsibilities of looking after the individual institution.



# THE DISTRICT

The cell will sit with all the district health administrators and plan for action

Nodal person in each district will be given the charge of the breastfeeding activities and send monthly reports.

# THE TRAINING

The state of West Bengal needs a plenty of breastfeeding trained persons. The training will aim at

- Imparting knowledge and skills to the concerned health workers of different levels for helping the mothers.
- Making efficient trainers of deferent levels. It is a top priority. In West Bengal, there are only two NATIONAL TRAINERS for breastfeeding and infant feeding, designated by Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI). One of them is the present proposer, and the other person is the State Coordinator. In both of them, geriatric problems have already supervened. So, making breastfeeding trainers of good quality is vey essential to give breastfeeding movement a strong forward boost.



# RESEARCH

The cell will be actively involved in research works.

# DISASTER MANAGEMENT

This is a new but very important aspect breastfeeding. The breastfeeding cell will try to make a team to directly help the babies to breastfeed in emergency situation.

# FEEDING OF BABIES OF HIV/AIDS MOTHERS

Extensive researches have come out with definite feeding options for babies born of HIV/AIDS mothers. Breastfeeding has a vital role to play in these conditions.



# *Any other issue*

There are many other issues like, women and health and breastfeeding, maternal illness and breastfeeding, working mother and breastfeeding, complementary feeding etc.

*If the whole project is acceptable and the Government feels its necessity, further discussion about the proposed project may done.*

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