

JOINT STATEMENT CALLING FOR FOOD RIGHTS OF INFANTS (First Year of Life)

WE, A GROUP OF civil society organizations and individuals working on children's and women's rights, child malnutrition, food and livelihood rights, public health, professional organisations, economists and activists,

Concerned that child malnutrition continues to affect almost half of the children under five;

Conscious that one million infants die every year before they are 28 days old, another 0.4 million die in the first year of life, and 0.6 million between 1-5 years of life, and that most of these deaths are related directly and indirectly to poor feeding during infancy, and are therefore avoidable and preventable,

- that beginning breastfeeding within one hour is the key intervention to reduce newborn deaths,
- that breastfeeding provides all nutrients during 0-6 months of life and a significant proportion during 6-12 months;

Aware that proper nutrition is necessary for brain development, more than 70% of which takes place during first year of life,

- that breastfeeding is natural immunization, better than external immunization;

Recognizing that infants have a human right to food, and that this right depends upon proper feeding by the caregivers – exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and thereafter, continued breastfeeding while adding adequate and appropriate complementary feeding with family foods to their diet, for up to 2 years or beyond,

- that of the 2.6 crore infants born annually, only about 40% of 0-6 months and 23% of 6-12 months are able to realize their food rights according to the district level health survey (DLHS-3),
- that the infant's right to food and nutritional security can be met only if women are supported to take care of them, especially breastfeed them optimally, are ensured maternity entitlements including adequate nutrition, financial assistance of at least the prevailing minimum wages, and crèches in the community and at the work place, and the family's food security is ensured,
- that policy and public debates on the proposed 'Food Security Act' revolve primarily around access to food grains, and ignore the food security needs of infants as well as of their mothers;

Recalling that in 2006-2007, 16 civil society groups and professional organizations and groups submitted to the Government of India a "Joint Statement on Infant and Young Child Feeding : ensuring Optimal Infant Nutrition, Survival and Development" demanding support to women to meet the food rights of infants especially 0-6 months, maternity benefits, ensuring coordinated and budgeted response to 'breastfeeding education' and infant and young child feeding counseling as a health service,

- that the Prime Minister of India on 15th August 2007 called upon the nation to tackle the child malnutrition in India with additional inputs like breastfeeding of infants, safe water supply and access to health care,
- that on 31st October 2008 the Prime Minister's Council on India's Nutrition Challenges was established to review the programmes and provide policy directions on nutrition,
- that on 3rd August 2009, 83 civil society organizations, through the People's Charter for Food and Nutrition Security, demanded that the Government of India ensures food rights of vulnerable groups like infants and women,
- that on 16th February 2010, a Public Declaration: Right to Food, the Eighth Kolkatta Group Workshop from Calcutta called for a 'Right to Food Act' covering justiciable food entitlements which should be non-discriminatory and universal, especially for the vulnerable groups of society;

Reiterating that the Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act of 2003, the National Nutrition Policy and its Plan of Action 1995, and the National Guidelines on infant and young child feeding 2006, establish the framework to provide services to women to meet the food rights of infants, but lacks coordinated effort towards its implementation,

- that the order of the Supreme Court of India provides Rs.4/- per child per day for all children under six years of age for supplementary nutrition in order to mitigate hunger and malnutrition in children; and children under six months require this in the form of breastfeeding promotion, protection and support;

CALL UPON the Chairperson of the UPA and the Prime Minister, Government of India to:

- 1. Include infants and children below two years and in particular infants 0-6 months as a special vulnerable group in the Food Security Act.**
- 2. Allocate budgetary resources of at least Rs.4/- per child per day for infants 0-6 months old for the purpose of activities to implement the National Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding, with a special focus on activities for infants 0-6 months.**
- 3. Ensure that independent support and counseling on 'breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding is recognized as a key component under NRHM and ICDS, with a specific budget allocation as is done for immunization.**
- 4. Establish a national nutrition authority under the Prime Minister's Council on India's Nutrition Challenges to coordinate, supervise and provide technical guidance to the government on nutrition of infants and children as an urgent measure.**
- 5. Effectively implement and universalize the maternity entitlements and ensure the provision of Crèches at all work places and in the community, both in the organised and unorganised sectors.**
- 6. Ensure strict implementation and monitoring of the IMS ACT, including ending of all kinds of promotion in the public health and nutrition system**

List of Signatories

1. Annie Raja, *National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)*
2. Dr. Arun Gupta, *International Baby Food Action Network-Asia (IBFAN-Asia)*
3. Aruna Roy, *National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPCR)*
4. Arundhati Dhuru, *ASHA*
5. Asha Mishra, *Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS)*
6. Ashok Bharti, *National Confederation of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR)*
7. Colin Gonsalves, *Human Rights Law Network (HRLN)*
8. Devika Singh, *Mobile Crèches*
9. Dr. Dharam Prakash, *Indian Medical Association (IMA)*
10. Dipa Sinha, *Office of Commissioner of Supreme Court*
11. Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, *HAQ: Centre for Child Rights*
12. Gautom Modi, *New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI)*
13. Harsh Mander, *Commissioner of Supreme Court*
14. Jean Dreze, *Allahabad University*
15. John Thomas, *Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI)*
16. Dr. J.P. Dadhich, *Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)*
17. Dr. Jyotsna Chatterji, *Joint Women's Programme*
18. Kavita Srivastava, *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)*
19. Dr. K. Kesavulu, *Senior Pediatrician, Andhra Pradesh*
20. Lakshmi Menon, *Women's Health Movement*

21. Laxman Dasari, *Human Rights Law Network (HRLN)*
22. Dr. Mira Shiva, *Initiative for Health Equity & Society, Diverse Women for Diversity*
23. Mridula Bajaj, *Mobile Crèches*
24. Paul Diwakar, *National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)*
25. Dr. R.K. Anand, *Senior Pediatrician, Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai*
26. Radha Holla, *Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)*
27. Ramasamy Selvam, *Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers Federation and Safe Food Alliance*
28. Razia Ismail Abbasi, *India Alliance for Child Rights (IACR)*
29. Sanjay Rai, *FoodFirst Information and Action Network-India (FIAN India)*
30. Savitri Ray, *Forum for Creche and Child Care Services (FORCES)*
31. Dr. P.K. Shah, *Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI)*
32. Dr. K. Shanmugavelayutham, *Tamil Nadu-Forum for Creche and Child Care Services (TN-FORCES)*
33. Sheila Seda, *Trained Nurses association of India (TNAI)*
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