

SECTION 1.1

COUNTRY LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

Background Rationale for Revisions

When the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative was conceived in the early 1990s in response to the 1990 Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding call for action, there were very few countries that had dedicated Authorities or Committees to oversee and regulate infant feeding standards. Today, after nearly 15 years of work in support of optimal infant and young child feeding, 156 countries have, at one time or another, assessed hospitals and designated at least one facility “Baby-friendly.” The BFHI has measurable and proven impact,³ however, it is clear that only a comprehensive, multi-sector, multi-level effort to protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding, including legislative protection, social promotion and health worker and health system support via BFHI and additional approaches, can hope to achieve and sustain the behaviours and practices necessary to enable every mother and family to give every child the best start in life.

The 2002 WHO/UNICEF *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* (GSIYCF) calls for renewed support - with urgency - for exclusive breastfeeding from birth for 6 months, and continued breastfeeding with timely and appropriate complementary feeding for two years or longer. This Strategy and the associated “Planning Framework for Implementation” being prepared by WHO and UNICEF reconfirm the importance of the Innocenti Declaration goals, while adding attention to support for complementary feeding, maternal nutrition, and community action.

The nine operational areas of the Global Strategy are:

1. Appoint a national breastfeeding co-ordinator, and establish a breastfeeding committee.
2. Ensure that every maternity facility practices the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*.
3. Take action to give effect to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant resolutions of the World Health Assembly.
4. Enact imaginative legislation protecting the breastfeeding rights of working women.
5. Develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a comprehensive policy covering all aspects of infant and young child feeding.
6. Ensure that the health care system and other relevant sectors protect, promote and support exclusive breastfeeding for six months and continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond, while providing women with the support that they require to achieve this goal, in the family, community and workplace.
7. Promote timely, adequate, safe and appropriate complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding.
8. Provide guidance on feeding of infants and young children in exceptionally difficult circumstances, which include emergencies and parental HIV infection.

³ Kramer MS, Chalmers B, Hodnett ED, et al: PROBIT Study Group (Promotion of Breastfeeding Intervention Trial) Promotion of Breastfeeding Intervention Trial (PROBIT): a randomized trial in the Republic of Belarus. JAMA. 2001;285:413-420, and Merten S, Dratva J, Ackermann-Liebrich U. Do baby-friendly hospitals influence breastfeeding duration on a national level? Pediatrics. 2005;116(5):e702-e708.