

The ration support containing commercial baby foods may cause more harm than good to health of babies

29 April 2020

BPNI came across this video available at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/144666722367030/posts/1602227173277637/?vh=e&d=n>.

This video shows that Ladli Foundation Trust and Delhi Police is distributing free “Lactogen milk powder” to women in Timarpur area of North Delhi meant for very young babies. This is a commercial infant formula manufactured by Nestle. On further dwelling into Ladli Foundation’s twitter handle, it can be seen that they have distributed Lactogen in many slums across Delhi to thousands of mothers with newborns and young children.

On being alerted on twitter Ladli Foundation has tweeted this morning saying that they are stopping the distribution of baby food and that it was done on demand from the communities. Though, it is a matter of investigation to understand the procurement process of the product, sponsors of the donations and their claim of demands from the communities.

The Ladli Foundation promoted this effort on its website and called on Nestle to support. Giving the benefit of doubt Ladli Foundation may be ignorant of the issues around breastfeeding, the foundation out loud spreads misinformation about feeding of newborn babies that “they cannot digest regular milk” and “their unhealthy mother don’t have milk for them” and therefore this milk powder is being supplied free.

The DCP North Zone also joined in to talk about feeding of young babies even below 6 months that they are not able to get enough mothers milk because they are from low income society. She says powder milk is necessary.

Dr Arun Gupta, central coordinator of BPNI said” *I strongly condemn this action of Ladli Foundation Trust and Delhi Police that can undermine breastfeeding. This is playing with the life of babies of poorer families given the known dangers of [powder infant formula, which according to WHO is NOT a sterile product](#)*”. He said further, *if safe drinking water is not available it can be very risky. Moreover, donation of infant formula is not sustainable and can lead to diluting the milk powder, which will perpetuate undernutrition.*

Dealing with Covid, **WHO advises** “*In a situation when the mother is unable to breastfeed or express breastmilk, relactation, wetnursing, donor human milk or appropriate breastmilk substitutes should be used. Appropriate precautions should be taken to avoid promotion of breastmilk substitutes, feeding bottles by the health facility and the health care providers.*”



And [UNICEF says "Donations of BMS by manufacturers has been shown to lead to increased use of substitutes and a reduction in breastfeeding."](#) For this reason, there should be no donations of free or subsidized supplies of breastmilk substitutes in any part of the health care system. Any required breastmilk substitutes should be purchased, distributed and used according to strict criteria. **Donations of breastmilk substitutes (BMS), complementary foods and feeding equipment should not be sought or accepted by the Government and partners.**

BPNI believes it is just a tip of the iceberg that happened in North Delhi. BPNI, has also received two more instances of free supplies of commercial baby foods.

BPNI, therefore, demands,

1. MoHFW should immediately issue a "notification" to States, Districts and State Police that "free distribution or donations of baby foods for children under two is harmful and prohibited"
2. MOHFW may inform the Nation through one of its daily briefings.
3. Establish a criteria for handing over a substitute for any baby after assessment of individual baby is carried out.(for its need such as in case of mother not available).
4. MOHFW may also include in its notification "Supply of provisions to meet the needs of infants/ small children · Counselling for lactating mothers", ([as per NDMA Plan 2019](#)), which is critical to maintaining breastmilk supply from mother to the baby.
5. District Magistrates and State Planners for Covid19 may use their powers to stop free supplies and donations of infant formula in ration supplies.

Issued by: Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI)

www.bpni.org

Response from Ladli Foundation Trust and Photo Evidence from their twitter handle:



Tweet



Ladli Foundation Trust

@FoundationLadli

Replying to [@jaidadhich6](#) and [@Moveribfan](#)

After the Concern Raise by [@bpniindia](#) and Dr. Arun it is already stopped providing The Baby Milk Powder to needy families. Who were contently requesting us to provide the same for thr newborn.

10:56 · 29 Apr 20 · [Twitter for Android](#)











Photo Credit: Manoj Parida, IAS , Chandigargh Twitter Handle