



Assessment of status of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practice, policy and programs: Achievements and Gaps in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Background: Breastfeeding is universal in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Demographic Health Survey indicates that only 52 percent of children under six months are exclusively breastfed despite the World Health Organization's recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for up to the first 6 months of life.

Objectives: To find achievements and gaps in the existing policy, program and practices in reference to Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Ethiopia and to build a consensus among all partners on the way forward to improve the existing IYCF practice

Methods: Review of Secondary data including different national publications, guidelines and reports were made and assessed based on the 15 indicators modified by International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) in order to identify the current situations in the country in reference to the infant and young child feeding policy, program and practices.

Results: In this assessment gaps were identified and recommendations were also forwarded. The main gaps identified were absence of National Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes and Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, Inadequate maternity leave conditions to exclusively breastfeed for six months, lack of knowledge and experience by mothers about optimal complementary feeding practices.

Limitations in the pre-service nutrition education curriculum for health care providers, Inadequate skills and competencies by care providers to provide effective IYCF counselling support to mothers/caretakers and Lack of awareness of the mother on the risk of bottle feeding.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Despite all the gaps identified in this assessment Ethiopia is still on good track with 92 out of 150 scores in overall achievements with blue coloring status. This calls for the attention of policy makers to support and promote optimal breastfeeding in the country through bridging the gap between the gaps identified in this assessment and the WHO infant and young child feeding recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding contributes to infant nutrition and health through a number of important mechanisms. Despite the inspiring result in the reduction of under five morbidity and mortality in Ethiopia the rate of initiation of breastfeeding and exclusive breast feeding have less progress in the past decade. According to EDHS exclusively breastfed children account for 38% in 2000, 49% in 2005 and 52% in 2011. Initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth was 51.8% in 2000, 69% in 2005 and 52% in 2011 (13, 14, 15). The trend in the decrease rate of initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth from 69% in 2005 to 52% in 2011 also needs serious attention to protect and promote optimal breastfeeding in infants and young children. The aim of this study is, therefore, to assess the status of infant and young child feeding practices, policies, and programs in Ethiopia in terms of achievements and gaps.

Objectives:

To find achievements and gaps in the existing policy, program and practices in reference to Infant and Young Child Feeding in Ethiopia to build a consensus among all partners on the way forward to improve the existing IYCF practice

Methodology

Selected reviewers: Participants were invited from government, non-government and international organizations to review different documents and compile the report.

Updates on IYCF global strategy: International Baby Food Action network (IBFAN) regional coordinator made two presentations to update reviewers with current IYCF guidelines and recommendation

Group Discussions: A five days continuous discussion was made on the subject with the national reviewers in the presence of the IBFAN regional coordinator. The group assessed the 15 indicators on the overall scoring, color rating, and grading based on IBFAN guidelines for World Breastfeeding Trends initiative (WBTi) .

Conclusions and Consensus Building: There was an elaborated discussion on each indicator before consensus was reached. During discussions on each indicator, reference was made to different national publications, guidelines and reports.

Validation workshop: A half day validation workshop was conducted on February 13, 2013. A total of 38 participants from 24 organizations were present in the workshop. The comments and feedbacks obtained during the workshop were addressed in the final document.

Results

COUNTRY STATUS ON INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING INDICATORS

Total score of infant and young child feeding policies and programmes (indicators 1-10) are calculated out of 100.

Table 1. Summary part 1: Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) policies and programmes

Scores	Colour- rating	Grading
Green		
0 - 30	Red	D
31-60	Yellow	C (55)
61-90	Blue	B
91-100	Green	A

Part II: Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices

Total score of infant and young child feeding Practices (indicators 11-15) are calculated out of 10. Total out of 50.

Table 2. Summary part II: Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices

Scores	Colour- rating	Grading
Green		
0 - 15	Red	D
16-30	Yellow	C
31-45	Blue	B (37)
46-50	Green	A

Total of Part I and Part II (indicator 1-15): IYCF Practices and Policies and Programmes.

(Indicators 1-15) are calculated out of 150. Total score from part one is 55 and total from part two 37. Overall score is 55+37= 92

Table 3. Total of Part I and Part II (indicator 1-15): IYCF Practices and Policies and Programmes. (Indicators 1-15)

Scores	Colour- rating	Grading
Green		
0 - 45	Red	D
46-90	Yellow	C
91-135	Blue	B (92)
136-150	Green	A

CONCLUSION

Despite all the gaps identified in this assessment Ethiopia is still on good track with score of 92 out of 150 in overall achievements with blue coloring status. The main gaps identified in this assessment need the attention of policy makers to bridge the gap between the current breast feeding practices and the WHO infant and young child feeding recommendations.

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