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சுகாதார மற்றும் வெகுஜன ஊடக அமைச்சு

Ministry of Health & Mass Media

Mr. S. Alokabandara

Secretary - Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Government

Prevention of Distribution of Infant Formula, Milk Powder, Feeding Bottles and Teats During Disaster Situations

With reference to above subject, at the Nutrition Steering Committee meeting held on 10.04.2026, chaired by me, the critical need for safeguarding infants and young children in the context of donations of infant formula, milk products and related items during disaster situations was discussed at length.

During emergency situations faced by the country in the past, health staff have repeatedly encountered instances where donations of such products were made. As a result, they have been compelled to take measures to prevent them from reaching the families as they can undermine optimal infant and young child feeding practices, particularly breastfeeding, and expose children to significant health risks, especially during disaster situations and their aftermath. Therefore, preventing such occurrences in similar situations in the future is considered an important public health priority.

Sri Lanka's national guidelines, as well as international guidelines, strongly discourage the donation and distribution of such items during emergencies. Evidence and global best practices consistently show that the donation and distribution of infant formula, milk powder, feeding bottles and teats during disaster situations pose significant health risks to infants and young children, increasing their morbidity and mortality. Breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition, protects against infections, and ensures food security for infants and young children when other supply chains fail, in addition to being sustainable economically for the affected families.

In emergency settings, the safe preparation of infant formula and other milk powders is extremely difficult due to limited access to clean water, fuel, sanitation and hygienic environments. Improper preparation greatly increases the risk of diarrhoeal diseases, undernutrition, and other life-threatening infections. Feeding bottles and teats, which require stringent sterilization, further heighten this risk. Distribution of such items also undermines breastfeeding, which is the safest and most reliable feeding method during emergencies.

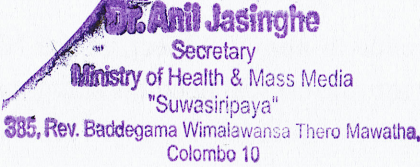
It is essential that all efforts are made to support, protect, and promote breastfeeding and appropriate child feeding in displaced settings. This includes establishing mother-friendly spaces, ensuring privacy and comfort for breastfeeding mothers, and facilitating access to trained health staff for infant and young child feeding support.

Therefore, all relevant public sector institutions must adhere to national guidelines and established protocols during disaster response, in order to protect and promote the health and nutrition of children.

In view of the above, we kindly request the Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Government to instruct all central and peripheral staff as well as the other stakeholders including donors, corporate entities, volunteer groups and individuals involved in disaster relief to strictly refrain from donating and distributing infant formula, milk powder, feeding bottles or teats. We would greatly appreciate it if the relevant parties could be encouraged to coordinate with the Ministry of Health and Mass Media on all matters related to child feeding and nutrition, and to work in close collaboration with the designated health focal points, namely Provincial and Regional Directors of Health Services at provincial and district levels, and Medical Officers of Health at the MOH area level, during disaster response, in order to obtain the necessary support in this regard.

Your cooperation in safeguarding the health and survival of children during disaster situations by supporting the Ministry of Health & Mass Media in this endeavour is highly appreciated.


Dr. Anil Jasinghe
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- Additional Secretary – Public Health Services
- Director General of Health Services
- Director General – Disaster Management Centre
- Deputy Director General – Public Health Services II
- Deputy Director General – EOH&FS
- Director - Maternal and Child Health
- Director – Nutrition
- Director – EOH&FS
- Director - Health Education and Publicity
- National Coordinator - Disaster Preparedness and Response Division - MoH