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சுகாதார மற்றும் வெகுஜன ஊடக அமைச்சு

Ministry of Health & Mass Media

Major General Sampath Kotuwegoda (Retd.)
Director General – Disaster Management Centre.

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


The Ministry of Health wishes to highlight an urgent public health concern related to the ongoing floods and any similar future 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. Hence international and national guidelines strongly discourage the donation and distribution of such items during emergencies.

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. Breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition, protects against infections, and ensures food security for infants and young children when other supply chains fail in addition being sustainable economically to the affected families. It is therefore essential that all efforts are taken to support, protect, and promote breastfeeding 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.

In view of the above, we kindly request the Disaster Management Centre to instruct all partners, donors, corporate entities, volunteer groups and individuals involved in disaster relief not to distribute infant formula, milk powder, feeding bottles or teats, and instead to coordinate with the Ministry of Health for any assistance related to infant and young child feeding.

Your cooperation to safeguarding the health and survival of infants and young children during this critical period is much appreciated.


Dr. Asela Gunawardana
Director General of Health Services

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