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Focus Group Discussion Report:

Attitudes on Breastfeeding Among Young Mothers in Uzbekistan

Author:

Center for Social Research "Expert-Fikri"

November 2002

Ferghana Oblast, Uzbekistan



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MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three focus-group discussions held with young mothers in the Ferghana Region allowed us to get a better understanding of the attitude of that category of women towards breastfeeding of children. Following are the main conclusions made on the basis of the discussions:

- Young mothers have a very positive attitude towards breastfeeding of children.
- Most of the problems related to breastfeeding do not result from an unwillingness of mothers to breastfeed their babies. Such problems rather are caused by the fact that mothers cannot ensure good nutrition of their babies when using this way of feeding.
- Personal experience and the experience of elders in their families oftentimes provide them with precise and correct benchmarks to be used by women during the process of breastfeeding of their children.
- Along with correct concepts about breastfeeding, young mothers have concepts that sometimes have religious and cultural grounds.

Despite the substantial modernization progress, Uzbek society to a large extent is still a traditional society. At least with regard to the issues of the main functions of women in families, traditions obviously dominate. This statement may be supported, for instance, by the fact that none of the female participants in the group discussions said that she wanted to stop breastfeeding or decrease its frequency because it was impeding her career growth or because it had a negative impact on her appearance (bosom). Family, every day life traditions, religious norms, and medical information form the positive attitude of young mothers towards breastfeeding. That is why many women take it hard when they cannot breastfeed their children.

Along with the actually existing advantages of breastfeeding, young mothers sometimes also attribute to breastfeeding certain mystical features. Young mothers believe that breastfeeding plays a special role in forming the psychological attachment between a mother and a baby. Besides, young mothers support the idea of compulsory breastfeeding stating that the Koran, the holy book of Muslims, directly regulates the periods of time during which mothers should breastfeed boys and girls. Thus, the positive image of breastfeeding among young mothers is deep and steady.

Because of the above-mentioned reasons, the problems related to breastfeeding result not from the negative attitude of women, but rather from the impossibility to provide babies with full value nutrition. The main obstacles are the shortage or complete lack of breast milk as well as its poor quality. Most young women believe that neither the way of life of the mother (whether she works or not), nor her nutrition (certainly, if she is provided with the required minimum) has any impact on the amount or quality of her milk. Thus, during the discussions young women gave many examples disproving a direct relation between a woman's employment or her nutrition and the amount of her breast milk.

On the other hand, the small income and poor nutrition of many women along with the denial of the relationship between nutrition and amount and quality of breast milk makes these women look for a universal recipe for breast milk of good quality. According to some participants, one such recipe is to consume plenty of onions. There were also given baseless explanations of the reasons why children refused to drink breast milk. Thus, one of the participants said that a baby of her neighbor refused the mother's milk because the mother had blood of the "A" group.

Oftentimes, the problems result from the condition of the breasts of the mothers breastfeeding their babies: chaps (cracks) cover their nipples and breastfeeding becomes painful for them. Moreover, breastfeeding cannot be stopped for a relatively long period of time. As a result, women have to treat

their breasts and at the same time continue breastfeeding their babies. For treatment they use either, ointments or solutions (*Synthomycinum*, *Furacilinum*), dairy products (sour cream, kaymak), or vegetable oil.

There are two main concepts the young women have regarding the age till which it is necessary to breastfeed babies. According to the first concept, mothers should keep breastfeeding their children as long as children like breast-milk. According to the second concept, breastfeeding should be limited to a certain age (they mentioned the age of one year, one year and a half, two years). The prevailing opinion with regard to breastfeeding of boys and girls was the following one: boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time than girls. To support this idea they used both “physiological” arguments (“boys are stronger than girls”) and “religious-legal” arguments (references to the Koran and traditions).

During the discussion of the issue of exclusive breastfeeding, it turned out that practically none of the young women believed that breastfeeding had to be supplemented with anything else. Many women stated that “exclusive breast feeding” means that it is acceptable and necessary to give boiled water and juices to children of any age who are breastfeeding. According to the majority of the participants, however, supplementary feeding should be started not earlier than the age of 7-8 months. However, some participants even mentioned the age of two. Among the supplementary products there were mentioned the following: pap, mashed potatoes, soups, juices, grated fruits, and cookies steeped in water or milk. The participants had different opinions regarding how often a baby should be fed. Most of them believe that it is necessary to breastfeed babies not according to schedule but based on the wishes of the baby. A mother should breastfeed her baby whenever the baby cries. According to some participants, it is necessary to feed according to schedule only those babies that are bottle-fed.

In general, to answer whether modern women have enough breast milk and whether it is of good quality or not, young women compared the current situation with the situation in the past. Young women receive information about the situation in the past from the elders in their families. According to them, mothers always had plenty of breast milk of good quality, children never refused to drink mother’s milk, children drank mother’s milk for as many years as they liked, parents had 10-12 children and still they were healthy themselves. Such insubstantial pictures of the past certainly form a negative attitude towards the current situation, given that at present the problems of breastfeeding are among the most serious ones. Thus, oftentimes, women face not only the problem of a shortage or lack of breast milk, but also the problem of poor quality of breast milk (“breast milk is too watery”).

However, according to the absolute majority of the young women, despite all the problems, women should stop breastfeeding only under the following extreme circumstances: (1) when they become pregnant while breastfeeding babies; (2) if lactation has completely stopped; (3) when mothers are seriously ill. In all other cases, women should breastfeed their babies even if the quality of their breast milk is poor. They should keep breastfeeding their babies because without breastfeeding babies will feel worse. Most likely, such an attitude towards breastfeeding results not only from the actual characteristics of mother’s milk, but also from some financial factors. Thus breast milk is an available and free product that allows feeding a baby till the baby reaches a certain age (sometimes, even till the age of three). Bottle-feeding products available in the market are either of poor quality but relatively cheap (for instance, “Kichkintoy”), or they are expensive and thus cannot be purchased in the entire amount by the majority of families (for instance, “Nestle,” and “Malysh”).

Elder women in the families (mothers-in-law and mothers) are the main source of information for the young women when it comes to the issues related to breastfeeding. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the importance of the role of medical professionals and medical institutions in this regard. Religious norms taken from the Koran and other religious sources are used as another parallel source of information and as the ideological basis for supporting the decisions made by women. Certainly, these sources cannot substitute for all the other sources of information, but their importance should not be underestimated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the survey, we may come up with some recommendations regarding the ideas of young women about breastfeeding that in our opinion are rather important. The generally positive attitude of young women towards breastfeeding should be supplemented with clear and precise information about all the problems that face women feeding their babies. Since the main problem is the impossibility to ensure full value breastfeeding, the informational activities should be conducted in the following directions:

- Give as far as possible complete information about factors that have an impact on availability or lack of breast milk as well as on its quality;
- Recommend to young women breastfeeding their babies the best combination of food products that would have a positive impact on lactation; at the same time, certainly, it is necessary to take into consideration the limited means of families rather than the ideal combination of food products;
- Change the mysterious and patriarchal idea about the differences of breastfeeding of boys and girls; and
- Show that modern medical knowledge does not contradict the personal experiences of people but rather incorporates all their wealth; this will help to change the current situation where modern medicine has a smaller influence on the behavior of mothers feeding their babies than does the experience of the family.

BACKGROUND

According to the contract concluded between USAID/ZdravPlus and Expert-Fikri Center for Social Studies, the latter conducted a survey on breastfeeding of babies in rural areas of the Ferghana Region. The list of questions was made by USAID/ZdravPlus. On the basis of the list Expert-Fikri Center developed a guideline for holding group discussions. The survey included holding group discussions among women under 30 who have children.

METHODOLOGY

In keeping with the specifications attached to the contract between the USAID/ZdravPlus project and the Expert-Fikri Center, the method of focus-group discussions was chosen to carry out the study. Participants were selected in the rural areas of Ferghana Oblast. Group listings, as well as selection criteria are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The list of groups for focus-group discussions

Group No.	Group Name	Participants	
		Sex	Age
1	Women under 30 with children	Female	18-30
2	Women under 30 with children	Female	18-30
3	Women under 30 with children	Female	18-30

The location of the focus-group discussions is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Location of focus-group discussions

Group No	Province	District	Rural Citizen Assembly, Village	Mahalla
1	Ferghana	Akhunbabaev	Sarmazor	
2	Ferghana	Marghilon city		Kashkar
3	Ferghana	Kuva	Laylayk uay	Mukhitdinov

Fieldwork was performed between the fifth and eighth of November, 2002. Group discussions were conducted by moderator Mavluda Eshtukhtarova and assistant Luybov Prokhorova. Discussions took place in isolated premises and were recorded with a dictaphone. Then detailed scripts of the discussions were produced. This report has been prepared by Igor Pogrebov, the Project Head, on the basis of transcript analysis and moderators' comments.

I. IDEAS ABOUT BREASTFEEDING

A. Attitudes Toward Breast Feeding

All participants certainly approved of breast feeding. In none of the groups was there anybody who said that artificial feeding was better, more convenient, or healthier. In general, participants mentioned the following advantages of breastfeeding:

- **Breast milk is much healthier for babies than any artificial food.**

Babies need breast milk. Besides, nowadays, it is easier to breastfeed, than to provide babies with artificial nutrition. Breastfeeding makes babies healthy and strong. Mother's milk has all the necessary components. In comparison with pap, milk contains a bigger number of all the substances. [Group #1]

Children that have been fed with breast milk are chubby, well nourished, and good looking. [Group #2]

The difference between artificial and breastfeeding is well known to a mother who was feeding one baby with artificial food and who was breastfeeding another baby. [Group #2]

The more a mother is breastfeeding her baby the better. In any case artificial nutrition is worse than mother's milk. [Group #2]

Mother's milk helps a baby to overcome diseases. It is richer in calories than pap. [Group #3]

A baby is growing poorly if fed artificially. When breastfed, a baby is growing up healthy. Such a baby usually does not catch a cold. [Group #3]

- **Breastfeeding of babies is sanctified by religious and folk traditions.**

It is mentioned in religious books, and this rule is passed on from one generation to another one. I, myself, have read such books. They say in TV programs that babies should be breastfed up till such an age. [Group #1]

In the Koran it is also written that up to the age of two a child should get her/his share from her/his mother. Breastfeeding prevents a child from getting ill. Vitamins received by the mother's organism are passed to a child. The longer the child is breastfed the better. [Group #2]

- **During the process of breastfeeding a mother and her baby become very attached to each other.**

They say that if a mother breastfeeds her baby for the first time shortly after delivery, then the mother and the baby will be attached to each other. [Group #1]

On giving birth to my baby in the maternity hospital, I was told by doctors about breastfeeding. They gave me an opportunity to hold my baby shortly after I delivered the baby. They put the baby on my stomach. They told us that we had to breastfeed our babies. It is necessary to do so to ensure that love will emerge between a mother and a baby. [Group #1]

There is a difference between children who are fed by artificial food and those who are breastfed. A mother who is breastfeeding her baby and such a baby are usually very attached to each other. Mothers who are breastfeeding their babies normally treat such babies kindly. In their turn such babies are also very attached to their mothers. Mothers who are not breastfeeding their babies as a rule are indifferent towards the babies. Such mothers may leave their children for a long time if they need to solve some problems. I have come across such cases myself. When a mother who is breastfeeding her baby and the baby do not see each other, they are getting nervous. [Group #3]

As a rule, such a positive attitude of women towards breastfeeding results from the following factors: (1) everyday life traditions passed from one generation to another; (2) religious norms; (3) medical patient education. Elder women in families (mothers-in-law and mothers) most often are the bearers of everyday life traditions. Elder women give pieces of advice to young women. This is advice about taking care of babies and correct nutrition during the period of breastfeeding. Religious norms attach much importance to everyday behavior. Usually, people competent in religious issues communicate such norms. Besides, women get information about them when reading the Koran or other religious books. Some participants

in the discussions mentioned this fact rather often. They said that they read themselves in the Koran about breastfeeding. There is also the rather strong influence of medical patient education and propaganda that women receive in medical institutions.

The combination of all the above-mentioned factors results in a positive attitude towards breastfeeding. During the discussions, for instance, none of the participants said that breastfeeding deformed women's breasts. None of them mentioned any negative consequences of breastfeeding.

B. Breastfeeding: Main Problems

One of the main problems related to breastfeeding is the shortage or complete lack of mother's milk.

My baby does not eat to satiety; the baby sucks, but I do not have breast milk. They told me that to increase the lactation I needed to eat well. I eat a lot, but the lactation is still small. I do not know why I do not have enough breast milk. [Group # 3]

Due to the lack of breast milk my baby spent one month in reanimation. The baby caught a dangerous cold. Besides, the baby did not like pap; the baby could not digest it. [Group # 1]

My mother-in-law did not like it at all when I was feeding my daughter with «Laktogen». She did not like the fact that I was not breastfeeding. She thought that I had chosen an easy way of feeding the baby. However, I had to feed my baby with pap because I did not have enough breast milk. My mother-in-law was angry with me even when I was feeding the baby with cow's milk. She said that to increase the lactation I had to breastfeed. I was breastfeeding my baby, but lactation was still small. [Group # 3]

Mothers often stop breastfeeding due to their new pregnancy. Participants said that sometimes by the time they discovered that they were pregnant they had been breastfeeding their babies for a long time.

It was a difficult decision for me when I had to stop breastfeeding my baby. Soon after giving birth to my first baby I became pregnant. As a result, I had problems with breastfeeding. Due to my pregnancy I stopped breastfeeding. [Group # 1]

Another group of problems are those that women face while breastfeeding their babies such as chaps (cracks) on nipples. Discussions revealed that young mothers faced the problem rather often, and that the problem made their life a misery. To get rid of the cracks on nipples women applied various ointments (they often mentioned Synthomycinum ointment) as well as such various food products as kaymak, sour cream, and vegetable oil.

Some mothers have problems. For instance, they have cracks on their nipples. I have seen such women in the maternity hospital. [Group # 1]

My neighbor had cracks on a nipple during the period of breastfeeding. She went to see a doctor. She was prescribed to cleanse the cracks with Furacilinum. [Group # 1]

I also always had cracks on my nipples. I had cracks when I was breastfeeding my three babies. The second baby I delivered seven years after the first one. Perhaps due to the big interval between the two deliveries I had cracks. I medically treated the breasts both in the maternity hospital and at home. I cleansed them with an ointment. Before breastfeeding I washed the ointment off. After medical treatment the cracks disappeared. [Group # 2]

2nd Participant: I had cracks on a nipple. I showed the cracks to a doctor. I was breastfeeding even though it was very painful. I even had a festering sore. I felt very bad. A doctor told me to cleanse the cracks with Synthomycinum ointment. 7th Participant: I also used Synthomycinum ointment. 2nd Participant: During the period when I was cleansing the cracks, I was also breastfeeding my baby. I was told about Synthomycinum ointment in the maternity clinic. I did not like the idea of self-treatment; my baby was very small. [Group # 3]

Even if a mother has breast milk, this fact does not guarantee that breastfeeding will be successful, because for some reason her baby may refuse to suck. When women try to solve this problem themselves, sometimes they face grave consequences.

When I was breastfeeding my baby the baby had a tongue ache. This happened the day after I left the maternity hospital. My sister-in-law advised me to cleanse the nipple with zeleynka (Solutio Viridis Nitentis Spiritiosa) and to continue breastfeeding my baby. As a result, when I did so, my baby boy was crying till morning. Zeleynka had burnt through a mucous membrane in his mouth. I did not have to take the advice of my sister-in-law. [Group # 3]

7th Participant: Doctors said that it was necessary to cleanse the nipples with zeleynka. 8th Participant: They said that zeleynka was good for babies. 2nd Participant: Zeleynka kills germs in a baby's mouth. If a baby has a tongue ache when breastfeeding, then the mother should cleanse the nipples with zeleynka. [Group # 3]

My baby was born prematurely; that is why the baby could not be breastfed. I had to switch to artificial feeding. Nowadays, as a result, the child often falls ill. Every fall I face the consequences of the fact that I was not breastfeeding my child. [Group # 2]

Oftentimes, mothers' milk is of poor quality. As a result they cannot breastfeed their babies. Women give various, sometimes absolutely odd, explanations as to why mother's milk cannot be used to feed babies.

When I was in the maternity hospital, I met a woman who was prohibited to breastfeed her baby because she was ill. Her baby had sores on the body as a result of breastfeeding. [Group # 1]

6th Participant: In many cases mother's milk is not good for the baby. As a result, mothers do not breastfeed their babies. If the quality of mother's milk is not good, then babies become blue. 1st Participant: Such a baby has liquid stools. 4th Participant: Our neighbor has blood of the «A» group. That is why her babies did not like her milk. She did not breastfeed either of her children when they were babies. [Group # 1]

Finally, some women face the problem of excess milk. According to such women, this problem may also become a rather serious one during the process of breastfeeding.

I think that I was breastfeeding my baby too much. As a result, now he has a big stomach and he often has diarrhea. [Group # 2]

When I was breastfeeding my smaller child, I had a lot of milk, and I was exclusively breastfeeding. They applied various traditional methods to minimize the amount of milk. If a mother has too much milk, then her breasts become hard. This is harmful for health. [Group # 2]

When mothers substitute bottle-feeding for breastfeeding, according to most of the participants, usually children as they grow up become more feeble and unhealthy. The women's own experience often supports these ideas.

My baby was often ill. I think it resulted from the fact that I was not breastfeeding the baby. I weaned the baby three months ago. When I was breastfeeding my baby, the baby was not ill. [Group # 1]

I also had two children. I breastfed both of them till the age of 2.5-3 years. They were rarely ill. I believe that they were rarely ill because I breastfed them. [Group # 1]

Two months after giving birth to my older child, in addition to breast milk I started feeding the baby with the food that we were eating ourselves. Nowadays, as a result, the child has a big stomach. It turns out that we started feeding him with food in addition to breastfeeding too early. As a result, he has poor health. My younger child is 5 years old, but he looks older than my first child. [Group # 2]

I was feeding my older child with pap "Kichkintoy." The baby did not want to suck. Besides, I did not have breast milk, even though I am a rather big and stout woman. However, I did not have breast milk. It turns out that the constitution of a mother does not predetermine whether she will have breast milk or not. When my younger daughter was a baby, I breastfed her. She has grown up healthy, whereas my older

child often falls ill. When he was three months old, I had to go to the hospital with him to get medical treatment. He was often catching a cold. [Group # 2]

My sister-in-law has a child. She did not breastfeed this child. Nowadays, the child is big; he is 7 years old. He goes to school. When the child was a baby, he refused to suck her milk. As a result, she had to feed him with “Malysk” pap. Nowadays, he is very skinny and weak. Based on his example, I came to the conclusion that mother’s milk was very good for health. If one compares my 5 year-old daughter with her son, she/he will notice that my daughter looks bigger than her son. He is taller, but he is skinny as a ghost. My children were fed only breast milk. My sister-in-law did not breastfeed because she did not have enough breast milk. [Group # 3]

The fact that women have a lot of problems and the fact that they hear the stories of elderly people make some women believe in illusions of the “radiant past.” In this “radiant past” mothers always had plenty of breast milk of good quality, babies never refused to suck, children were breastfed as many years as they liked mother’s milk, parents had up to 10-12 children and still were healthy themselves.

Nowadays, children differ from children of the past. Elderly people say that many families had ten children and children did not fall ill. Nowadays, women have only one child or two children. Still their children are constantly falling ill. Elderly people say that in the past they did not get ill themselves; their children were also healthy. Nowadays, many women face the problem when babies do not suck. As a result, mothers have to stop breastfeeding their babies. Due to this fact babies are getting ill often. In the past women breastfed two children: a baby and a child that already could eat without any external help. Women breastfed their children as long as the children liked mother’s milk – approximately till they reached the age of 3-5. [Group # 3]

C. Colostrum

When discussing the issue of defining the term “colostrum,” participants divided into two groups. The larger number of participants knew what the term colostrum meant, and they had personal experience of using colostrum. However, some of the participants did not have any idea about colostrum, even though perhaps they had some experience of using it.

I also know what colostrums is. It is a thick substance that has a canary color. [Group # 1]

2nd Participant: During the period of pregnancy a liquid is accumulated in the breasts of a woman. This liquid is exuding also during the first days after a woman gives a birth to her baby. After a baby is breastfed for a certain period of time, colostrum disappears. Instead of colostrum there appears mother’s milk. Many female participants: Colostrum has a yellow color; it is thick. 7th Participant: We were told that we had to feed babies with colostrum. They said that feeding babies with colostrum would guarantee their good health. We were told this in our maternity hospital; elderly people also say so. It turns out that mothers should not strain off colostrum. It is necessary to feed babies with colostrum as much as possible. [Group # 3]

Many participants thought that colostrum is a miraculous liquid that is very good for the health of a newborn baby.

Colostrum is very good for health; it starts exuding during the first days after mothers deliver their babies. Colostrum has a yellow color. We were told that to be healthy a baby should be fed with colostrum. [Group # 1]

If a baby has sores on the face, then it is very useful to cleanse the face with colostrum. It helps. [Group # 1]

2nd Participant: There is a lot of ferrum in colostrum. 1st Participant: There are all the vitamins in colostrum. [Group # 1]

Colostrum starts exuding after delivery of a baby, when a mother is breastfeeding her baby for the first time. Colostrum is very good for the health of babies. [Group # 2]

In colostrum there are specific substances such as vitamins. During the period of pregnancy vitamins are accumulated in colostrum. After delivery within the first 3-4 days these accumulated vitamins are exuding from breasts together with colostrum. They say that there are ten vitamins that are good for health. Colostrum contains all these vitamins. [Group # 3]

My mother-in-law told me that it is necessary to feed the baby with colostrum. It is necessary to wipe the baby's face with colostrum to prevent the appearance of sores. She told me not to strain off colostrum, but to feed my baby with it. [Group # 3]

Colostrum purifies the organism of a baby. After birth a baby may be infected with germs; colostrum purifies an organism. It is just my assumption. I do not know this for sure. [Group # 3]

According to the participants, the practice of feeding with colostrum in hospitals and maternity hospitals does not have a long history. In the past mothers strained off the colostrum. They tried not to feed their babies colostrum.

In the past in maternity hospitals mothers strained off colostrum. They did not bring babies to their mothers shortly after delivery. They told mothers to strain off colostrum. It turns out that babies should be fed with colostrum. Nowadays, in maternity hospitals they bring babies to their mothers shortly after delivery, so that mothers can feed their babies with colostrum. We have started feeding babies with colostrum only recently, because it is good for health. I did not feed my first babies with colostrum. They brought me my babies for breastfeeding only 2-3 days after delivery. [Group # 2]

According to the participants, many of them were told about colostrum and its good characteristics by their mothers-in-law. However, some of them received this information in maternity hospitals.

Moderator: Where did you get information about the qualities of colostrum? 1st and 2nd Participants: elderly people at home told us about it. 3rd Participant: Doctors at the maternity hospital told me about the advantages of using colostrum; they told me to feed my baby with colostrum. [Group # 1]

My mother-in-law told me that I had to feed my baby with colostrum. She said it was necessary to wipe the baby's face with colostrum to avoid the appearance of sores on the baby's face. She told me not to strain off the colostrum, but to feed my baby with it. [Group # 3]

II. IDEAS ABOUT RULES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF BREASTFEEDING

A. Age Till Which Breastfeeding Is Necessary

In the process of discussing the topic of the age up till which it is necessary to continue breastfeeding, there were two positions. According to the first position, it is necessary to breastfeed a child as long as possible without limiting the period of breastfeeding. It is necessary to take into consideration the opinion of the child. Children will refuse breastfeeding themselves when they consider it to be necessary.

It is necessary to wean a child when she/he already starts walking and becomes independent, to let the child start eating without getting help from outside. [Group # 1]

In the Koran it is written that till the age of two a child has her/his share to be received from the mother. Breastfeeding protects a baby from getting ill. Vitamins received by an organism of a mother are transferred to a baby through mother's milk. The longer a mother breastfeeds her child, the better it is for the child. [Group # 2]

According to the second position, breastfeeding has to be limited to a certain age. Women mentioned the ages of one year and a half, two, and three years.

At the age of three, children are already big. It is difficult to breastfeed such children. In my opinion, it is enough to breastfeed children till they reach the age of one year and a half. At present my son is a first-grade pupil. He does not differ at all from second and third-grade pupils. [Group # 2]

It is necessary to breastfeed a baby till she/he reaches the age of 2. If a woman becomes pregnant again and wants to deliver a baby, then she should stop breastfeeding her child. A child may get enough mother's milk till the age of two. Mothers also normally have a lot of breast milk till their children reach the age of two. I myself breastfed my son till the age of two. I had enough breast milk till the end of this period of breastfeeding. [Group # 3]

In the Koran it is written that a child should be breastfed till the age of two. This is the will of Allah. My husband insisted that I had to breastfeed the children till the age of two. I breastfed my younger son till the age of one year and a half. He was clinging to my skirts. As a result, I could not do anything. Then I weaned him. After I stopped breastfeeding him, he was ill for two months. Perhaps he became ill because I stopped breastfeeding him earlier than was necessary. During that period he was getting injections. Only recently he started feeling better. He had problems with his stomach. [Group # 3]

It is significant that the majority of women would agree to limit breastfeeding of their children only due to extreme circumstances: loss of milk, new pregnancy, etc. Women care too little about themselves and their own health. They care mostly about the health of their children.

I have faced such a situation myself. I faded away while I was breastfeeding my children. In the past I was stout. However, after breastfeeding I have grown thin. I breastfed one child till the child reached the age of two years and a half, and the second child – till the age of three. [Group # 1]

I breastfed both sons up to the age of one – one and a half years; however, I myself faded away while breastfeeding them. [Group # 2]

I had enough milk for breastfeeding my child till he became two years old. At the end of the period of breastfeeding my son was crying every 10-15 minutes. To make him stop crying I had every time to start breastfeeding him. I was very tired of such a schedule. [Group # 3]

B. Breastfeeding of Boys and Girls

An absolute majority of participants said that boys and girls should be breastfed differently: boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time, and girls should be breastfed for a shorter period of time. They

gave various reasons to support this point of view. The first reason is “physiological:” boys should be stronger than girls. That is why it is necessary to breastfeed them for a longer period of time than girls.

Boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time because they should become strong. [Group # 3]

My mother told me the following: “When I die my coffin will be carried by a boy. That is why it is necessary to feed him more.” [Group # 3]

Reason number two – legal: boys have more rights on Earth than girls. That is why it is necessary to breastfeed boys longer than girls.

From time immemorial they say that it is necessary to breastfeed boys till the age of three years, and it is necessary to breastfeed girls till the age of two or two years and a half. Boys have more rights than girls do. [Group # 1]

Everybody respects men. Probably that is why starting from their childhood they receive more of everything. [Group # 1]

...mothers have bigger shares for boys than for girls. [Group # 2]

...religious people... say that boys have more rights than girls do. This is what people say from time immemorial. [Group # 2]

Reason number three –religious: it is written in the Koran that mothers should breastfeed boys for a longer period of time than they should breastfeed girls. The supporters of such an explanation tend to interpret the Koran more uncritically than others.

I have read the whole Koran. It is written there that breastfeeding is the will of Allah, and that a mother should breastfeed her baby. When mothers are breastfeeding their babies the share for boys is bigger than the share for girls. All children should be compulsorily breastfed till the age of two. [Group # 3]

Moderator: Why should boys be breastfed till the age of three and girls should be breastfed till the age of two years and a half? Many participants: It is written in the Koran. We have read about this ourselves. We also have heard about this at home. [Group # 2]¹

Some participants insisted that in maternity hospitals they had seen posters where the following was written: “Boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time than girls.” These women believe the statement written in these posters. Finally, only in the first group did some participants have doubts as to whether there had to be any difference in the duration of the period of breastfeeding of boys and girls.

1st Participant: A mother bears her baby in the same way whether this is a baby boy or a baby girl. If a child pricks a finger by a bur, her/his mother will be upset equally whether her child is a boy or a girl. I believe that both girls and boys have to be breastfed equally. I myself did not make any difference between my children based on their sex. I weaned both of them when they started eating themselves without any external help. 7th Participant: I have not heard that there had to be any difference between breastfeeding of boys and girls. [Group # 1]

C. Exclusive Breastfeeding

Many participants believe that exclusive breastfeeding does not mean at all that a baby should not be fed with anything else. Thus, according to these participants, a baby may be given some boiled water and in some cases juices.

¹ In this group five female participants were dressed in a religious manner – they had scarves on their heads; the scarves were hiding their faces. These were the very women that were referring to the Koran when various issues were discussed.

Moderator: What do people mean when they talk about exclusive breastfeeding of babies? Some participants: Exclusive breastfeeding does not mean that it is necessary to feed babies only with breast milk. [Group # 1]

Moderator: Till what age is it necessary to feed a child exclusively with breast milk? All the participants: till the age of six months. 10th Participant: After the age of six months a baby cannot be sated if she/he is fed exclusively with breast milk. The baby will be hungry. After babies reach the age of six months it is necessary to supplement breastfeeding with some additional food. [Group # 2]

On the other hand, some participants are confused by contradictory pieces of advice that, on the one hand, they receive from doctors, and, on the other hand, they receive while watching TV programs.

I have heard in some TV programs the following: even if a baby under the age of 6 months is thirsty, a mother should not give water to such a baby. The baby has to be fed exclusively with mother's milk. Yesterday I went to see a doctor. My doctor says that I have to give some boiled water to my baby every time after breastfeeding. So now I am surprised, and I cannot understand whom I should trust – the television or doctors? The title of the TV program was "School for Young Mothers." [Group # 2]

All the participants believe that the age of six months is a critical age for a baby. Babies should not be fed with anything except mother's milk till the age of six months. The only issue they argued about was whether additional liquids (boiled water and juices) should necessarily supplement breastfeeding of babies who are under six months of age.

Till the age of six month babies should be fed exclusively with breast milk. If a baby is exclusively breastfed till the age of six months, such a baby will grow up healthy. [Group # 1]

2nd Participant: There is no need to supplement breastfeeding with anything. In breast milk there is also some liquid. 6th Participant: Adults also may be thirsty even if they eat liquid food. It is necessary to give babies some boiled water. 2nd Participant: It is necessary to give babies some liquid, but in a small amount. Mother's milk contains everything: water, fats, and all the rest. Up till the age of six months it is all right to supplement breastfeeding with juices. [Group # 1]

In TV programs about mothers and children they say that till the age of six months children should be breastfed, and after the age of six months they should be fed with pap "Nestle" or "Malysh." [Group # 3]

Many mothers face problems with breastfeeding not because they doubt whether they should breastfeed their babies, but because they do not have enough breast milk or their breast milk is of poor quality. According to the participants, in such cases they have to supplement breastfeeding with pap or cow's milk regardless of the age of their babies.

If mother's milk is enough for the baby, the mother should not feed her baby with any other food. If the baby is not sated with mother's milk, then the mother should supplement breastfeeding with some additional food – cookies, pap, "Nestle." [Group # 3]

All mothers have different breast milk: in some cases their milk is thick and fat; in other cases it is watery. If the mother's milk is fat, there is no need to feed babies with cookies. However, if the mother's milk is watery, then it is necessary to supplement it with cookies and pap. Watery milk is removed from the body with urine. The baby is not sated and starts crying. The mother breastfeeds her baby with watery milk, but such milk is immediately removed from the body with urine. That is why such a mother has to supplement breastfeeding with cookies or pap "Malysh." [Group # 3]

There is widespread feeding of babies with cookies steeped in water or in cow's milk. Many mothers admit that doctors do not recommend doing so. However, mothers have to use steeped cookies, because pap is expensive, and they do not have enough breast milk.

For instance, nowadays my sister-in-law is feeding her three-month old baby with cookies. It is all right to feed babies of such age with cookies. What can a mother do if she does not have any breast milk? Her baby is hungry and the mother should feed her baby. [Group # 1]

I faced serious difficulties because my first baby did not suck. Once I gave him cookies, and the baby felt bad and had diarrhea. After this, the baby had health problems. That is why I breastfed my second child till she reached the age of one year and a half. At the age of one year and a half, already, my daughter could not be sated with mother's milk. It was a big problem for me. I lost weight. I had to switch to supplementary food. [Group # 2]

8th Participant: Doctors told us that we had to feed babies with grated apples and juices. Doctors did not tell us anything about cookies. They said that it was necessary to give babies boiled water instead of tea. 6th Participant: When I was in the polyclinic they told me that my baby did not eat to satiety. My husband told me to ask the doctors to write a prescription. The doctors wrote a prescription to feed the baby with "Laktogen," nobody told us anything about cookies. We made the decision to feed the baby with cookies ourselves. Sometimes we prescribe treatment ourselves, and as a result children get ill. In any case eventually we have to go to see doctors, and they criticize us for making our own decisions. 8th Participant: Doctors prohibit feeding babies with cookies. All the participants: We feed our babies with cookies because the babies are not sated when they are exclusively breastfed. 3rd Participant: The main reason why we feed babies with cookies is that nowadays pap is very expensive. Many mothers do not have enough breast milk. The child allowance is only enough to purchase 1-2 boxes of pap. [Group # 3]

One box is not enough even for one week. Nowadays, everything rests on lack of money. In addition to pap, it is also necessary to buy a baby clothes and footwear. That is why everybody gives babies cookies and food cooked for the adult members of the family. Nowadays nobody thinks about the health of children. [Group # 3]

D. Drinks and Food with which Breastfeeding Should be Supplemented

According to most participants, it is necessary to supplement breastfeeding with other drinks and food regardless of the age of the child. When babies are under six months, mothers have to do so, because oftentimes babies cannot be sated with breast milk. Mothers understand that what they are doing is not quite right. However, the alternative for them is to let their babies starve. That is why they have to violate the rules of appropriate nourishment of babies.

Most participants believe that it is necessary to supplement with some additional food breastfed babies that are six months old. All mothers start feeding their children with additional food when the children reach various ages: from 7-8 months till two years. As supplements to breastfeeding the following products were mentioned by mothers: pap, mashed potatoes, soups, grated fruits, and, again, cookies steeped in water or milk. At the same time, there were some other opinions as well. Thus, one of the participants firmly stated that there was not any need to supplement breastfeeding with any other food if mothers had enough breast milk.

2nd Participant: I started supplementing breastfeeding with other food after my children had reached the age of one year. 7th Participant: I started supplementing breastfeeding with some additional food after my children had reached the age of seven-eight months. [Group # 1]

I started supplementing breastfeeding with additional food after my child had reached the age of one year and a half. Before that age I exclusively breastfed my child, plus I supplemented breastfeeding with water. [Group # 3]

I mentioned already that I breastfed my daughter until she reached the age of 17 months. I believe that such an approach was the right one because mother's milk was sufficient for my daughter. If I had supplemented breastfeeding with additional food, what would I have done with my own breast milk? Would I have had to strain it off? If mothers have enough breast milk, they may start supplementing breastfeeding with additional food after their children become two years old. [Group # 2]

E. Knowledge about First Breastfeeding of Babies after Delivery

There were different opinions regarding the time when mothers had to breastfeed their babies for the first time. Some participants were absolutely sure that it is necessary to start breastfeeding babies shortly after delivery, whereas others thought that it is necessary to wait for a certain period of time – for one day, or even more.

It is necessary to breastfeed a baby for the first time within the first few hours after delivery. When I gave birth to my baby, they gave me my baby for breastfeeding for the first time immediately after delivery. When I asked doctors why they did so, they said that this way a mother and her baby could become attached to each other; besides, the baby probably was hungry. Immediately after delivery my son started crying badly. That is why they brought me my baby for breastfeeding immediately. In fact, as soon as I had breastfed my baby, the baby calmed down and fell asleep. I believe that it is necessary to bring a baby for breastfeeding shortly after delivery. [Group # 1]

Nowadays in villages they bring babies to mothers immediately after mothers have delivered. This is also the right approach. If a baby is born healthy, then it is necessary to start breastfeeding such a baby shortly after delivery. [Group # 1]

[It is necessary to bring babies to mothers] one day after delivery. In maternity hospitals they allow bringing babies to their mothers for breastfeeding one day after delivery. For instance, a mother has given birth to her baby in the evening, and they bring her the baby for the first breast-feeding next morning. They say that it is necessary to breastfeed a baby for the first time after delivery, after the baby has cried enough to develop the muscles. One day after delivery a baby will be able to suck the mother's breast, because the muscles of the baby will be developed enough by that time. It is good for a baby to cry immediately after delivery. When I gave birth to my second baby, I told a doctor in the maternity hospital that my baby was crying. The doctor said that it was all right that the baby was crying, and that I did not have to worry. She said that it was not bad for my baby that the baby was crying. To the contrary it was good for the health of my baby. [Group # 1]

Moderator: How soon after delivery of a baby is it necessary to breastfeed the baby for the first time? 2nd and 8th Participants: Within two hours after delivery of the baby. Other participants: Within such a short period of time after delivery mothers will not be able to recover. 9th Participant: It is necessary to breastfeed a baby for the first time at least one day after delivery, not earlier. [Group # 2]

Supporters of the idea of feeding babies for the first time soon after delivery present the following argument: if mothers do not start breastfeeding their babies shortly after delivery, then in the maternity hospital their babies will be given for breastfeeding to other women who are in the same maternity hospital. This will have a negative impact on the health of the babies. Group participants have a rather stable opinion that doctors at maternity hospitals give newborns to other women for breastfeeding.

All the participants: During the first day after delivery doctors at maternity hospitals feed babies with glucose or mother's milk of other mothers. 7th Participant: Yes, in maternity hospitals they are gathering excess mother's milk from other mothers and feed other babies with this milk. [SHE SPEAKS ABOUT THIS FACT WITH DISGUST]. I do not like this. [Group # 2]

3rd Participant: When a baby is brought to a mother for the first breastfeeding 2-3 days after delivery, this means that within this period of time after delivery they were feeding the baby with mother's milk of other women. This fact has a negative impact on such a baby. It is more convenient when they bring a baby to a mother every three hours. During this period a mother may feed her baby with colostrum. It is necessary to start breastfeeding shortly after delivery. 10th participant: It is necessary to start breastfeeding the baby shortly after delivery. A baby should not be fed with mother's milk of another woman. All the participants: If they do not bring us our babies, then they feed them with mother's milk of other women. In the maternity hospitals they also told us to strain off milk for other women. [Group # 3]

There was an opinion that it is necessary to pay attention to the behavior of the baby: if the baby was crying, it meant that the baby wanted to eat. Before such a moment it was not necessary to start breastfeeding the baby.

In the past they said that it was necessary to start breastfeeding the baby immediately after the baby starts crying. I have heard about this at home. [Group # 1]

Participants believe that when breastfeeding babies it is necessary to follow strict hygienic rules to avoid the risk of infecting the babies. Besides, it is necessary to hold babies appropriately when breastfeeding them. Otherwise, babies may swallow the mother's milk in the wrong way, especially when mothers have plenty of milk.

It is necessary to be careful when breastfeeding a baby. First, it is necessary to wash the hands thoroughly before breastfeeding. Second, it is necessary to wash the breasts. It is necessary to breastfeed babies carefully to ensure that they do not pant. [Group # 1]

If a mother does not hold her breast while breastfeeding her baby, then the baby may swallow the mother's milk in the wrong way. [Group # 2]

3rd Participant: Mothers that have plenty of mother's milk face the following problem: their milk squirts or leaks and it may spill. That is why it is necessary to hold the breast in the right way when breastfeeding to ensure that the baby does not swallow in the wrong way. 7th Participant: While breastfeeding a baby it is necessary to raise the breast a little to ensure that it is convenient for the baby to suck. If a baby is breastfed in the wrong way, then the baby may pant. [Group # 2]

F. Frequency of Breastfeeding

The most common opinion regarding the frequency of breastfeeding is that it is necessary to breastfeed babies not according to a schedule, but whenever they want. Mothers can guess whether their babies are hungry by their cries. Mothers should pay attention whenever their babies start crying.

We do not pay attention to hours when we are breastfeeding babies. We breastfeed babies, when they are crying. Babies are crying when they are hungry. [Group # 1]

Mothers should breastfeed their babies only when the babies are crying because otherwise mothers may overfeed their babies. [Group # 1]

When I was breastfeeding my four babies I never had exact hours for breastfeeding. I breastfed my babies whenever they started crying. My babies did not cry for 3-4 hours. I breastfed them often. [Group # 2]

8th Participant: It is necessary to breastfeed babies as soon as the babies get hungry. Babies cry when they get hungry. 7th Participant: It depends on the baby's needs. It is necessary to breastfeed a baby when the baby asks for it. There is no need to breastfeed babies according to a schedule. 6th Participant: Babies that are bottle-fed should be fed according to a schedule. Babies that are breastfed may be fed without following any schedule. [Group # 2]

I breastfed my baby whenever the baby cries. I do not pay attention to the time of feeding. [Group # 3]

When a baby is not hungry the baby sleeps, plays, and does not cry. Babies are asking me themselves for feeding, and I feed them. Nobody told me to do so. I decided to do so myself. It is impossible to feed babies according to a schedule. Babies sleep for 4-5 hours. If their mothers decide to feed the babies every 3 hours, they will have to wake their babies up. That is why it is necessary to feed babies when they start crying. [Group # 3]

Some participants believe that feeding according to schedule is appropriate when babies are bottle-fed, whereas if babies are breastfed, they should be fed whenever they ask for it. The moderator asked participants whether it was good for the health of babies to feed them not according to schedule, but when babies ask for feeding. The group participants said that they did not consider it to be unhealthy at all.

However, there were a small number of participants who believed that it was still better to feed babies according to schedule. The younger the baby the more often it is necessary to feed the baby.

5th Participant: Until my baby reached the age of three-four months, I fed my baby every hour. Then I started feeding the baby less often. The doctor told me that it was necessary to feed babies every hour till the age of 3-4 months, and that then till the age of 7-8 months it was necessary to feed babies every two hours. 2nd Participant: My mother-in-law told me that it was necessary to feed a baby every hour. She had brought up her own children and she has experience. [Group # 1]

Finally, some participants believed that the more often babies were fed the better it was for them.

The more often babies are fed the faster they will grow up and grow stronger. [Group # 1]

If a baby is breastfed often, then breast milk does not spoil. That is why it is necessary to breastfeed babies often. [Group # 1]

Thus, the following opinion prevailed: when breastfeeding babies, it is necessary to pay attention to the wishes of the babies; there is no need to impose any specific schedule of feeding based on the principle of certain hours or certain times per day.

III. CAN BABIES BE SATIATED WHEN EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFED?

A. Ideas about Sufficiency and Quality of Mother's Milk

Participants had varying opinions about the sufficiency of mother's milk. Certainly, the opinions of the participants were based only on their own experiences. Those participants who had had positive experiences believed that the majority of other women also had sufficient amounts of mother's milk.

Moderator: Let's assume that the women of your age, with babies, and living in the same area total 100%. What is the rough percentage of women who have mother's milk in sufficient amounts?

5th Participant: 99% of women have enough milk. [Group # 1]

70%. We stay together – six daughters-in-law. Only one of us has mother's milk of poor quality. She has plenty of milk. However, the milk is watery, and her baby does not eat to satiety. [Group # 2]

On the other hand, some women state that nowadays many mothers do not have enough mother's milk. Such mothers have to supplement breastfeeding with bottle-feeding. When comparing the current situation with the situation in the past these participants spoke in favor of the situation in the past.

There are a big number of sick women who do not have enough milk. About 50% of women can breastfeed their babies to satiety, whereas the remaining 50% cannot do so. Nowadays, many women are supplementing breastfeeding with some additional food. At present women have become weak; they are not healthy enough to breastfeed their babies. One may assume that out of six mothers, two are bottle-feeding their babies. [Group # 1]

Nowadays, in comparison with the situation in the past, perhaps the number of such women has increased. The financial well being of people has worsened. Women get vitamins in smaller quantities. As a result, at present mothers have less milk, and their milk is watery. In the past, mothers had healthy and strong children. Nowadays, children are weak; they often get ill. [Group # 2]

B. Why Do Mothers Not Have Enough Breast Milk?

Most participants believe that the amount of milk depends directly on the health condition of a woman. Healthy women have plenty of milk; sick and weak women do not have enough milk. Thus, if a mother has anemia or some other disease, then she will not have enough milk or her milk will be of poor quality.

2nd Participant: Healthy and sound women have more milk than all the other women. Moderator: What kind of woman has less milk than all the others? 3rd, 5th and 4th Participants: Women that have anemia or other diseases. Moderator: What should a woman do to increase the amount of milk? 2nd, 3rd and 5th Participants: She has to eat well; she has to drink sweet tea. [Group # 1]

It seems that anemia has an impact on the milk. When I delivered my younger son, I had anemia. As a result, I did not have milk at first. After delivering my younger son, I was told by a midwife that I did not have to give birth to babies any more, because I had anemia. The delivery of my younger son was very difficult. My baby had a cerebral hemorrhage. The doctor thought that there was a risk that the baby would not survive. [Group # 2]

On the other hand, some participants said that based on their own experience they could state that the health condition of women did not have any direct impact on the amount and quality of milk.

Moderator: What kind of woman has more milk? 10th Participant: Loving women. 6th Participant: It does not matter. For instance, I was big and stout. However, I did not have milk. [Group # 2]

For example, I am small, and I have anemia. However, I always had enough milk when I was breastfeeding all my children. [Group # 2]

Participants were asked whether the work of mothers, especially in the field, had any impact on the amount of their breast milk. Many participants answered that the amount and the quality of breast milk did not depend at all on whether mothers were working or not. According to these participants, the health condition of women does not depend at all on whether women work or not. A woman who stays at home can take better care of her child. However, this fact does not have any impact on the amount of mother's milk.

Moderator: Do you think that the women who are working in the field have enough milk for breastfeeding? 2nd Participant: The amount of milk does not depend on whether a mother works in a field or not. If a woman is healthy, and she is working, she will have enough milk. [Group # 1]

At present our women may stay at home for two years while on maternity leave. There are practically no women at all that go to work during the period when they are breastfeeding their children. The state has created such good conditions for us. The state provides us with allowances to help us to take care of our children. [Group # 1]

Moderator: Let's compare a woman who stays at home all the time with a woman who works in the field. Which of the two women has more milk? 2nd and 8th Participants: It does not matter whether a woman works or not. 1st Participant: It depends only on the health condition of the woman. 5th Participant: A woman who stays at home does the same work as the woman who works in the field. We do not take rest at home. We are constantly doing something. That is why everything depends on the health condition of the woman. [Group # 1]

Everything depends on the health condition of the woman. Women who stay at home, perhaps, are weaker than those who work. Milk depends on the health condition of the mother. [Group # 2]

6th Participant: Certainly, there is a difference between the women who work and the women who do not work. The women who stay at home eat well. 10th Participant: Housewives spend more time with their children. 6th Participant: The women who work leave their homes in the morning and come back home during lunch time and late in the evening. Moderator: Do the women who work have less milk? Many participants: No, the amount of milk does not depend on this. [Group # 3]

10th Participant: I work in the field. I weaned my baby when my baby reached the age of 9 months. In February I started working in the field, but I stopped breastfeeding only in May. I was coming back home late in the evening. For the whole day long I was not breastfeeding my baby. I had very little milk. I had enough milk just to breastfeed my baby once in the evening. Then I did not have milk till the next morning. Moderator: Why did you not have enough milk? Was it due to the fact that you were working? 10th Participant: No. I did not have enough milk from the very beginning. [Group # 3]

I have a similar situation. I breastfeed my baby once in the morning. In the evening I have hardly enough milk for the next breastfeeding. I do not work anywhere; I stay at home all the time. [Group # 3]

Based on the experience of the participants, the amount of breast milk does not depend on good nutrition. Thus, there are women who eat well, but the amount of their breast milk does not increase. On the other side, there are women do not eat well at all. However, they have an excess of breast milk. Some participants believe that it does not matter how much mothers eat. What really matters is the schedule of eating and consumption of certain food products. Thus, some participants believe that it is just necessary to eat more often. Others think that in order to increase the amount of breast milk it is very good to eat a lot of onions.

10th Participant: It is necessary to drink hot tea and tea with honey. It is necessary to eat a lot of almonds and nuts. 2nd Participant: On leaving the maternity hospital I was eating a lot of nuts. As a result I had an ache in my tongue. It is not good to eat a lot of nuts. I did not have more milk after I ate a lot of nuts. [Group # 2]

Moderator: Shahlo, why is your baby is not sated with breast milk? 6th Participant: Who knows? My mother-in-law says that I have to eat more. I eat a lot, but the amount of milk is not increasing. They say that my milk is watery. After breastfeeding my baby retches, and then the baby becomes hungry again. [Group # 3]

Moderator: Shahlo says that in her case the amount of breast milk is not increasing, even if she eats a lot. What do you think is necessary to do to increase the amount of breast milk? 2nd Participant: Mothers should eat more than three times a day. 9th Participant: It is necessary to have soups, hot milk, and hot

tea. Elderly people say that it is necessary to eat first courses to ensure an increase in the amount of breast milk. Many participants: It is necessary to eat meals in which there are plenty of onions. We do so ourselves, and the amount of milk is increasing. [Group # 3]

Some participants believe that the following factor is important for mothers: mothers need peace of mind; they should not experience any nervous shocks.

At home there should be a good atmosphere. To have milk a mother should not experience any nervous shocks. If a woman does everything in the right way, but she feels nervous, then she will not have milk or her milk will be watery. If women are feeling nervous while expecting their babies, they deliver crybabies. Nervous shocks have negative impacts in many ways. [Group # 2]

Thus, the participants had very contradictory ideas as to why women could have little or plenty of breast milk. The prevailing idea is that neither the work of women nor the amount of food products consumed by women have any direct impact on the amount and quality of breast milk.

IV. PROBLEMS RELATED TO BREASTFEEDING

A. Watery Breast Milk

According to group participants, breast milk that is too watery is a common problem. Many women either have heard about this problem or they themselves had watery breast milk. Many participants said that breast milk that is too watery usually has a characteristic bluish color.

...I have heard that there were women that had plenty of milk, but the milk was like water. Many women have such milk. [Group # 1]

I also had watery breast milk. Within the first 40 days after the delivery of my of my daughter, I had very watery and bluish breast milk. When I gave birth to my son, I had good thick milk. Since my breast milk was watery, my daughter grew up slowly without putting on weight. When she was born she weighed 1 kilogram 900 grams. Because of the poor quality of the milk she grew slowly. My breast milk was watery and bluish. I was told at home that to increase the amount of breast milk it was necessary to put hot bread on the breasts. This is a tradition. I did so. [Group # 1]

Some mothers have thick white milk. As for me, my milk was like water; it had a bluish color. [Group # 2]

Most participants do not know why breast milk may become too watery. As a rule, they just face the fact, but they do not have much information about the causes. Many women believe that even if breast milk is watery, mothers should breastfeed their babies, because bottle-feeding is worse than breastfeeding in any case.

Moderator: Is it good for a baby to be breastfed if the mother's milk is watery? Isn't it better to shift to bottle-feeding? 2nd Participant: If a mother does not breastfeed her baby, it will create problems for the baby. In any case, mothers should breastfeed their babies. It is difficult for babies to get used to bottle-feeding. That is why it is necessary to breastfeed babies, even if a mother's milk has a bluish color. [Group # 2]

10th Participant: This milk is not extremely good, but still it is rather good for health. 8th Participant: In thick milk there is 100% of vitamins, and in watery milk there is 70% of vitamins. There are no cases when there are no vitamins in breast milk at all. [Group # 2]

10th Participant: Watery milk makes some babies sick and some of them as a result have diarrhea. In such cases it is necessary to stop breastfeeding. 6th Participant: I was breastfeeding my baby even though I had watery breast milk. I was supplementing breastfeeding with "Malysh" pap. My daughter did not have any diarrhea due to the fact that I had watery breast milk. However, she was never sated when I was breastfeeding her. [Group # 3]

B. Expectant Mothers Stop Breastfeeding

With regard to this issue, participants also had different opinions. Most of them believe that when a woman becomes pregnant, she must compulsorily stop breastfeeding her baby. In their opinion, if a pregnant mother continues breastfeeding her baby, then this baby will grow up more slowly and the baby will fall ill. Some of the participants from this group supported their opinion by cases from their own experience. On the other hand, many participants believe that a mother has to stop breastfeeding her baby, only if she has decided not to have abortion. However, if a mother who is breastfeeding her baby is going to have an abortion, then she does not need to stop breastfeeding her baby.

I also became pregnant while I was breastfeeding my baby. That is why I had to stop breastfeeding. My doctors told me to do so. They said that if a baby is breastfed during the period when the mother is pregnant, then this baby will fall ill. [Group # 1]

It is necessary to stop breastfeeding. The breast milk of expectant mothers has a bitter taste. [Group # 2]

If a woman is going to deliver a baby, then she should stop breastfeeding. If a woman has an abortion, then she may continue breastfeeding. [Group # 2]

As I already mentioned before, I became pregnant; and I had to stop breastfeeding. I had an abortion. However, doctors told me not to breastfeed my baby within the period till I had the abortion. I trust doctors. They have appropriate education. Besides, my mother-in-law told me the same. [Group # 1]

If a woman is going to deliver a baby, then she should stop breastfeeding. If she has an abortion then there is no need to stop breastfeeding. I have heard about this from other people. [Group # 1]

No. In any case mothers who are pregnant should not breastfeed their babies. This will have an impact on the babies that they are breastfeeding. [Group # 2]

Moderator: Who told you that mothers who are pregnant should not breastfeed their babies? 7th and 10th Participants: Elderly people say so. They say that if a mother keeps breastfeeding her baby after she has become pregnant with another baby, the baby that she is currently breastfeeding may get “sut aryk” [disordered stomach caused by milk – comment of a moderator]. [Group # 3]

I also became pregnant when my daughter was one year old. I was breastfeeding my daughter and I did not have menses. I stopped breastfeeding my daughter. However, I still did not have menses. I went to see a doctor. My doctor told me that I was pregnant. By that time I was pregnant for more than one month. I was pregnant for a relatively long period of time. However, I did not know that I was pregnant. I kept breastfeeding my daughter while I was pregnant. This fact had a negative impact on her health. We had serious problems. We are still facing the consequences of that impact. My daughter is short and slim. At present she is 6 years old. However, she does not look her age. She does not have a good appetite. [Group # 3]

Participants from the second, smaller, group stated that their own experience showed that it was all right for mothers to breastfeed their babies when the mothers became pregnant. They believed that it was not dangerous for the health of the babies that were breastfed by their pregnant mothers.

[When I was pregnant] I was breastfeeding my baby for three and a half months. I did not have any problems. My mother-in-law was breastfeeding all her children even while she was pregnant. [Group # 2]

I became pregnant when my younger son was six months old. I stopped breastfeeding my baby boy. I had an abortion. After the abortion I continued breastfeeding my baby boy. It turned out that by the time I had the abortion, I had been pregnant for three months. I did not know that I was pregnant; that is why I was breastfeeding my baby boy within this whole period of pregnancy. This fact did not have any negative impact on the health of my baby boy. [Group # 2]

9th Participant: I kept breastfeeding. It did not have any impact. I did not know that I was pregnant. That is why I continued to breastfeed. 6th Participant: I also became pregnant when I was breastfeeding my son. I kept breastfeeding him within the four month period of my pregnancy. This fact did not have any negative impact on the health of my son. Then they told me at home that due to this fact my son could fall ill. So I stopped breastfeeding my son. [Group # 3]

None of the participants made any serious assumptions that on becoming pregnant mothers had to stop breastfeeding their babies. Many participants just mentioned that it was unhealthy. For most of the participants the main sources of information with regard to this issue, and similarly to other issues, were elder women from their families who had had long experience. More rarely the participants referred to medical professionals. It is interesting that some participants believe in the following: to ensure that breastfeeding is not bad for its health, the baby that is at present breastfed by the mother and the baby that is in the mother's womb should be of the same sex. Otherwise, breastfeeding will have a negative impact on the health of the baby that is currently breastfed. So it has to be stopped. At the same time, some participants had the opposite opinion: breastfeeding may be continued if both the babies are of different sexes.

If you are breastfeeding a boy, and within the same period of time you have become an expectant mother who is going to give birth also to a baby boy, then the pregnancy will not have any negative impact on the baby boy that you are currently breastfeeding. However, if the baby that you are breastfeeding and the baby that you are pregnant with are of different sexes, then the baby that is breastfed will dislike your milk. The baby that is breastfed will have diarrhea and retching. [Group # 2]

Many people say that if a baby that is breastfed and the baby that is in the mother's womb are of different sexes, then breastfeeding will not have any negative impact on the baby that is breastfed. However, if they are of the same sex, then the baby that is breastfed may have diarrhea. [Group # 3]

C. Complete Stoppage of Breast Milk Lactation

Many participants in the discussions did not have any doubts that breast milk may disappear completely. In their opinion the main reason for such a situation may be the accumulated stress on a mother that is breastfeeding her baby.

10th Participant: They tell me at home not to be nervous, but to take care of the children. Nervous shocks have a negative impact. 2nd Participant: A woman should not cry during the period when she is breastfeeding her baby. Otherwise, her breast milk lactation may stop. At home they say that I should not cry because, as a result, my breast milk lactation may decrease. [Group # 3]

Lactation of breast milk may stop due to a fright. I stopped breastfeeding my first baby when the baby was six months old. I was worried. I was frightened. As a result, my "milk has boiled over." [Group # 1]

6th Participant: Breast milk lactation may stop due to a fright. People say so. 7th Participant: Breast milk lactation may stop when a woman is ill. It happened to me once. I did not have breast milk for three days while I was in the reanimation department of the hospital. When I was breastfeeding my other children I always had plenty of breast milk, whereas this time the lactation stopped when I was ill. After my recovery the breast milk lactation recommenced. [Group # 2]

Breast milk lactation stops when a mother has been badly frightened or when she is ill. If in such a case the mother stops breastfeeding for 2-3 days, then breast milk lactation may stop completely. That is why, even if breast milk lactation has stopped for 2-3 days, it is necessary to keep breastfeeding a baby to ensure that lactation does not stop completely. [Group # 2]

Some participants mentioned the so-called "chillya" rule. A woman has to compulsorily follow this rule to prevent loss of breast milk. The discussion showed that relatively many women believe in this rule.² Usually women receive information about this rule from the elders in their families. Oftentimes, women unconditionally trust this information, and they follow the advice of their elders. Sometimes this trust is bigger than the trust of women to doctors.

3rd Participant: During the "chillya" period a woman should be especially careful. She should not violate the rules of "chillya." 2nd Participant: Violation of the rules of the "chillya" period may result in complete ceasing of lactation.. There should be certain reasons why people are following the rules of the "chillya" period. During this period somebody may put the evil eye on a mother. Elderly people say so. [Group # 1]

Moderator: Do you trust your family members? All the participants: Yes. 7th Participant: All of them also had many children. They also often were getting medical treatment at hospitals. They are very experienced. They know not less than doctors do. 10th Participant: Our elders at home say that they also experienced similar situations, and they have the appropriate problem solving experience. That is why we trust them. [Group # 3]

² «Chillya» rule means that within the forty-day period after delivery of a baby, the baby should not be shown to outsiders, to ensure that they do not "put the evil eye on the baby." During this period a mother should also try not to leave the house so that other people cannot see her. There is a superstition that other people may put the evil eye on mothers. - Comment of a moderator.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In this report there are presented the ideas of young mothers under the age of 30 about breastfeeding as well their personal experience of breastfeeding their own children. The survey shows that young women from the surveyed sites of the Ferghana Oblast have a very positive attitude towards breastfeeding. During the discussions the young mothers did not present any arguments against breastfeeding, except for the cases when breast milk was of poor quality. However, even in such a case women are going to breastfeed their babies because they believe that mother's milk of poor quality is still better than bottle-feeding.

Such an attitude towards breastfeeding is based on two groups of factors. The main group of factors includes every day life and family traditions, religious norms, and medical information. It is well known that bottle-feeding of children, as a rule, has become widespread in countries where modernization has resulted in more active participation of women in the public sphere. As a result, due to the fact that women cannot leave their work for long periods of time, in the market there have been presented various substitutes for mother's milk, and there has been formed a positive attitude towards bottle-feeding of babies. In our particular case, we are facing a slightly different situation. First, young mothers are mainly housewives. Second, the pap available in the market is extremely expensive for the majority of the population. This situation results in non-recognition of bottle-feeding and in a very positive attitude towards breastfeeding.

The main breastfeeding problem is not the unwillingness of mothers to breastfeed their children, but the shortage or complete lack of breast milk. When facing this problem, women have to switch to bottle-feeding which, according to these women, oftentimes results in a negative impact on the health of children. Women breastfeeding their babies also often face problems with their breasts (chaps on nipples). In general, it is most likely that breastfeeding causes many difficulties for mothers. However, due to the above-mentioned reasons, women do not want to substitute bottle-feeding for breastfeeding.

Young mothers have an unusual idea about the breastfeeding of boys and girls. There is a widespread opinion that boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time than girls. Young mothers support their views both on "physiological" and "religious-legal" grounds. People consider that since boys are stronger than girls, boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time than girls. By the way, such an approach is used among adults as well. People consider that a woman should eat less than a man, and, in general, she should be always behind him. Young mothers are referring also to traditions and the Koran. According to the women, in the Koran it is written that boys should be breastfed for a longer period of time than girls. Such opinions clearly show that the modern Uzbek society is a patriarchal society.

Some young mothers believe that at present many women who are breastfeeding their babies do not have enough breast milk. Besides, often breast milk is of such poor quality that babies cannot be sated. Still the prevailing opinion among young mothers is the following: neither employment of a woman, nor (however strange it is) her nutrition has any decisive impact on the amount of breast milk. What is much more important is the peace of mind of the mother breastfeeding her baby as well as the condition of her health before she delivered the baby.

Thus, along with quite sound and well-grounded opinions based on great personal experience and experience of other mothers, the young mothers also expressed and presented some fallacious opinions, cultural-psychological stereotypes, and wrong information that may cause problems for the breastfeeding of babies.

ATTACHMENTS

Moderator's Guide for Focus Group Discussions (in Russian)

Вступительное слово (5 минут)

- А. *Вступительное слово.* Здравствуйте. Меня зовут _____ и я работаю в Центре социальных исследований “Эксперт” в Ташкенте. Я думаю, что большинство из вас раньше не участвовали в такой беседе как та, которую мы будем проводить. Я хочу поблагодарить вас за то, что вы нашли время для этой беседы. Сегодня мы будем говорить о некоторых вопросах, связанных с планированием семьи.
- В. *Цель дискуссии.* Нашей главной целью является узнать, что ЛИЧНО ВЫ думаете и знаете по тем вопросам, которые мы будем обсуждать. Я не буду выступать как эксперт и учить вас чему-нибудь, а наоборот – ВЫ САМИ будете говорить все, что вы знаете или думаете. Кроме вашей группы у нас будет еще несколько групп из разных районов. Результаты этих бесед будут использованы для того, чтобы помочь людям правильнее подходить к планированию семьи.
- С. *Методика проведения дискуссии.* Вот несколько основных правил нашей дискуссии.
- Наша дискуссия продлится приблизительно полтора часа, и будет записываться на диктофон. Некоторые записи будет делать также моя помощница. Все это делается для того, чтобы мы не упустили ни одной вашей мысли или идеи. Я хочу заверить вас, что никто, кроме исследовательской группы не услышит того, о чем вы сегодня будете говорить. Ваши фамилии и имена нигде в отчетах упоминаться не будут.
 - Во время нашей беседы не может быть правильных или неправильных ответов. Мы хотим услышать все, что вы думаете, основываясь на ваших убеждениях и опыте. Можно не соглашаться друг с другом, высказывать положительные и отрицательные замечания. Если вы не согласны с кем-либо из говорящих, пожалуйста, высказывайтесь. Чувствуйте себя совершенно свободно.
 - Важно, чтобы мы слышали каждого, так что, пожалуйста, говорите громко, когда у вас есть, что сказать. Так как мы ведем запись, пожалуйста, постарайтесь говорить по очереди, потому что только так мы сможем услышать каждого говорящего. Постарайтесь, чтобы ваши ответы были краткими. Наша задача в этой беседе – собрать разные мнения.
 - Я не буду высказывать своего мнения. Моя роль – направлять беседу таким образом, чтобы каждый получил шанс говорить и быть услышанным. Если я прерву вас и перейду на другую тему, пожалуйста, не обижайтесь. У нас много тем для обсуждения и мне иногда нужно быстро переходить с одной на другую. Мы можем больше поговорить после дискуссии, если вы чувствуете, что что-нибудь было упущено.
 - (УБЕДИТЕСЬ, ЧТО КАЖДЫЙ ЗНАЕТ, ГДЕ НАХОДИТСЯ ТУАЛЕТ И Т.Д.) Если вам необходимо выйти во время дискуссии, не стесняйтесь сказать об этом.
 - Есть ли у вас какие-нибудь вопросы?
- Д. *Представление участников.* Я хотел бы начать по кругу и пусть каждый из присутствующих представит себя сам, назовет свое имя, чем он занимается, расскажет немного о своей семье и так далее. Пожалуйста, начнем с ...

1. Грудное вскармливание: установки (20 минут)

- А. Мы собрались сегодня здесь, чтобы обсудить вопросы, касающиеся грудного вскармливания детей. Как вы, в целом, относитесь к вскармливанию детей грудью? Считаете ли вы, что это необходимо или можно обойтись и без грудного вскармливания?
- **ДЛЯ ТЕХ, КТО СЧИТАЕТ, ЧТО ЭТО НЕОБХОДИМО:** Почему вы считаете, что грудное вскармливание необходимо? От кого вы узнали об этом? Где вы слышали или читали об этом? Доверяете ли вы тому источнику, из которого узнали об этом? Почему вы ему доверяете?
 - **ДЛЯ ТЕХ, КТО СЧИТАЕТ, ЧТО МОЖНО ОБОЙТИСЬ БЕЗ ГРУДНОГО ВСКАРМЛИВАНИЯ:** Почему вы считаете, что можно обойтись без грудного вскармливания? От кого вы узнали об этом? Где вы слышали или читали об этом? Доверяете ли вы тому источнику, из которого узнали об этом? Почему вы ему доверяете?
- В. Вскармливали ли вы раньше или вскармливаете и в настоящее время своих детей грудью? Кто из вас кормил или кормит сейчас своих детей грудью?
- **ДЛЯ КОРМИВШИХ ИЛИ КОРМЯЩИХ:** Не возникает ли у вас каких-либо проблем, связанных с кормлением своих детей грудью? Какие проблемы у вас возникают? Как вы решаете эти проблемы? Кто помогает вам в решении этих проблем? Почему вы доверяете именно этим людям?
 - **ДЛЯ НЕ КОРМИВШИХ И НЕ КОРМЯЩИХ:** Почему вы не кормите своих детей грудью? Чем вы заменяете грудное молоко? Устраивает ли вас такая замена? Давал ли вам лично кто-либо советы относительно такого кормления своих детей? Кто именно давал вам такие советы? Почему вы ему доверяете? Не возникает ли каких-либо проблем в связи с таким вскармливанием своих детей? Если да, то какие проблемы возникают и как вы их решаете?
- С. Знаете ли вы, что такое молозиво? Откуда вы о нем знаете? Какого цвета бывает молозиво?
- Говорил ли вам кто-нибудь о том, какие свойства имеет молозиво? Если да, то можете ли вы назвать эти свойства? Кто говорил вам об этом?
 - Чем особенно богато молозиво? Какие функции выполняет молозиво? Кто говорил вам об этом?
 - Есть ли у вас собственный опыт, связанный с молозивом? Какой это опыт? Расскажите подробнее.

2. Грудное вскармливание: правила и действия (30 минут)

- А. Давайте теперь немного поговорим о правилах, которых нужно придерживаться при вскармливании ребенка грудью. По вашему мнению, до какого возраста ребенка следует кормить молоком матери?
- Почему вы так считаете? От кого, из каких источников вы узнали о том, что детей следует кормить грудью именно до этого возраста? Вы доверяете тому источнику, из которого узнали об этом? Почему вы ему доверяете?
 - А вы сами до какого возраста кормили своих детей грудью? Почему именно до этого возраста? Почему вы оторвали ребенка от груди?

- В. Есть ли разница между грудным кормлением мальчиков и девочек? До какого возраста следует кормить мальчиков, а до какого – девочек?
- Почему вы так считаете? Где вы об этом узнали? Доверяете ли вы тому источнику, из которого об этом узнали?
 - Какие из этих методов, по вашему мнению, являются наиболее эффективными? Откуда вы знаете об этом?
- С. Что для вас означает, когда говорят о кормлении ребенка исключительно грудным молоком? Значит ли это, что ребенку не следует давать ничего, кроме грудного молока?
- Если нет, то что можно давать ребенку, кроме грудного молока? Из каких источников вы узнали об этом? Доверяете ли вы этим источниками и почему?
 - До какого возраста ребенку следует давать исключительно грудное молоко? Почему вы так думаете? Из каких источников вы об этом узнали? Доверяете ли вы этим источникам и почему?
- Д. Какие напитки кроме грудного молока следует получать ребенку в возрасте до 6 месяцев? От кого, из каких источников вы узнали об этом? Вы доверяете тому источнику, из которого узнали об этом? Почему вы ему доверяете?
- Какую еду кроме грудного молока следует получать ребенку в возрасте до 6 месяцев? От кого, из каких источников вы узнали об этом? Вы доверяете тому источнику, из которого узнали об этом? Почему вы ему доверяете?
 - С какого возраста ребенку следует давать дополнительную пищу и напитки? Почему вы так думаете? Из каких источников вы узнали об этом? Вы доверяете тому источнику, из которого узнали об этом? Почему вы ему доверяете?
 - А как вы сами кормили своих детей? Почему именно так?
- Е. Как скоро после рождения ребенка следует приложить к груди? Почему не раньше и не позже? Откуда вы об этом знаете?
- Когда вы прикладывали своих детей к груди после рождения? Почему именно в это время? Кто рекомендовал вам поступать именно так?
 - А как скоро после рождения ребенка появляется материнское молоко у женщины? Когда у вас самих появилось молоко?
- Ф. Как часто следует кормить грудным молоком детей до 6 месяцев? Из какого источника информации вы об этом знаете? Насколько вы доверяете этому источнику информации?
- Расскажите о своем собственном опыте. Как часто вы кормили или кормите грудью своих детей в возрасте до 6 месяцев? Насколько такая частота кормления, по вашему мнению, правильна? Кто рекомендовал вам кормить ребенка грудью именно с такой частотой?
- Г. Важно или не важно правильно прикладывать ребенка к груди во время кормления? Почему это важно или не важно? Откуда вы об этом знаете?
- Что будет, если вы будете неправильно прикладывать ребенка к груди во время кормления? Откуда вы об этом знаете?

3. Удовлетворенность детей грудным кормлением (20 минут)

- A. Теперь немного поговорим относительно того, насколько удовлетворяет детей в настоящее время грудное вскармливание. Как вы считаете, достаточно ли у большинства матерей грудного молока, чтобы удовлетворить потребности своего ребенка?
- Почему достаточно или не достаточно? Что в вашем собственном опыте говорит о том или другом?
- B. Кто из матерей, по вашему мнению, имеет меньше молока? Почему? А кто из матерей имеет больше молока и почему?
- Что женщина должна делать, чтобы у нее было достаточно молока для кормления своего ребенка? Почему?
 - По вашему мнению, у работающих матерей (особенно у тех, которые работают в поле) достаточно грудного молока? Если нет, то почему? Считаете ли вы, что работа женщины может повлиять на количество и качество грудного молока? Как работа может повлиять на это? Почему вы так считаете?
- C. Почему дети могут быть не удовлетворены количеством материнского молока? Могут ли дети быть не удовлетворены качеством материнского молока? Почему? Откуда вы знаете об этом – из собственного опыта или из рассказов других людей?

4. Нарушения в грудном кормлении (20 минут)

- A. Наконец, немного поговорим о нарушениях грудного кормления. Считаете ли вы, что мать может иметь слишком жидкое грудное молоко? Если да, то что означает, что молоко матери слишком жидкое?
- Каковы причины, по которым молоко матери может быть слишком жидким? Откуда вы знаете об этом – из собственного опыта или из рассказов других людей?
 - Нужно ли кормить ребенка грудным молоком, если оно слишком жидкое? Почему да или почему нет?
- B. Если кормящая грудью мать снова забеременеет, то что ей следует делать? Должна ли она прекратить грудное кормление? Почему да или почему нет? Из какого источника информации вы знаете об этом? Доверяете ли вы этому источнику информации?
- C. Может ли кормящая мать совсем потерять грудное молоко? Почему да или почему нет? Откуда вы знаете об этом – из собственного опыта или из рассказов других людей?
- Что, по вашему мнению, может стать причиной такой потери грудного молока? Откуда вы об этом знаете?

Заключение

Это все, о чем я хотела бы с вами поговорить. Есть ли у вас какие-нибудь вопросы? Благодарю вас за участие в нашей беседе.