

ENABLING BREASTFEEDING

making a difference for working parents

Dr. Binyerem C. Ukaire
Director/Head of Nutrition
FMOH

1st August, 2023

INTRODUCTION

A nursing mother is a woman who is breastfeeding her baby i.e. feeding her baby with her own breastmilk.

Breastfeeding has numerous benefits:

- Children who are breastfed exclusively for the first 6 months have fewer ear infections, respiratory illnesses, diarrhea and have fewer hospitalizations. Long term benefits include healthy weights and higher intelligence later in life.
- Mothers who breastfeed have reduced incidence of postpartum depression and lower rates of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Introduction contd.

- Despite the immense benefits, as a nation, we have not been able to support mothers to breastfeed optimally.
- This is evidenced by our exclusive breastfeeding rate of only 29%¹, with early initiation rate of breastfeeding at 42%
- Many of our mothers initiate breastfeeding but do not continue to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months

National infant feeding recommendations

The Federal Ministry of Health recommends:

- early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth
- exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life; and
- continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond, with the introduction of appropriate complementary foods from six months of age.

Maternity entitlements

- Civil servants are entitled to 16 weeks paid maternity leave and when they return to work, they have two hours off a day to breastfeed.
- Under the Labour Act, mothers employed outside of the public sector are entitled to 12 weeks maternity leave. They are entitled to half pay if they've worked for their employer for at least six months.
- Efforts are in place (in collaboration with [ILO](#) and FMWA and FML&E) to ensure six months paid maternity leave to enable working mothers practice exclusive breastfeeding

Approval of paternity leave

- A period of 14 working days for serving male officer whose spouse delivers a baby



Civil service

- Civil service crèche at the Federal Secretariat;
- Wellness center recently commissioned



The National Zero Water Campaign

- A mass media campaign was launched in collaboration with Partners; with the aim of educating Nigerians on the need to give babies only breast milk, without water and other liquids in the first six months of life.
- The Campaign was launched to proffer solution to the findings that giving water in addition to breastmilk in the first six months of life is a barrier to exclusive breastfeeding practice in the country.

Training Package

- The Infant and Young Child Feeding Training Package developed in 2012 was recently reviewed and updated
- A module dedicated to Breastfeeding and a second module on actions to protect, promote and support breastfeeding
- A comprehensive tool to train all health workers to adequately support mothers to practice optimal breastfeeding
- Training of trainers has commenced – A first batch in Northern states

Baby Friendly Initiatives

- National Guidelines on BFI have been reviewed; now updated with BFWI and BFCI
- Will be revitalized across the nation



Benefits to the Nation

- **More productive workforce:** Mothers miss less work to care for sick children; and healthier, better-educated children become a better-equipped workforce
- **Improved national economy** as a result of saved cost of artificial feeding ; as well as saved health costs from reduced incidence of childhood illnesses and hospitalizations
- **Longer retention of women in the workforce,**
- **Greater loyalty to government and employers.**
- **Alleviates poverty:** Food security in the first 6 months; breastfed babies have higher IQ and grow to be more productive adults
- **Reduced inequalities:** Gives every child a fair start in life
- **Protects the environment;** there is less trash and plastic waste compared to that produced by formula containers and bottle supplies

CONCLUSION

- With the significant proven benefits of breastfeeding to infants, mothers, communities, workplaces and the country, it is vital that we provide **enabling environment** for working women to breastfeed.
- It is everyone's responsibility to ensure children are breastfed, as it benefits the whole of society.
- The Government will continue to



“When we support mothers to breastfeed, we are contributing to reduced child mortality and a strong future workforce for our great nation.”

THANK YOU