

BREASTFEEDING ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

A Call to Action



Breastfeeding gives all children the healthiest start in life. Breastmilk acts as a baby's first vaccine, stimulates brain development, and protects a woman's health. When mothers breastfeed, everyone benefits. Breastfeeding leads to lower health care costs, healthier families, and a smarter workforce. Yet, fewer than 40% of children under six months of age are fed only breastmilk.

UNICEF and WHO are leading a global Breastfeeding Advocacy Initiative to increase political commitment for breastfeeding—one of the smartest investments a country can make.

We call upon governments, donors and development partners to:

1. **Increase funding to reach the 2025 World Health global target:** raise the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months to at least 50 per cent.
2. **Fully implement the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes** and relevant World Health Assembly resolutions through strong legal measures that

are enforced and independently monitored by organizations free from conflicts of interest.

3. **Enact family leave and workplace breastfeeding policies**, building on the International Labour Organization's maternity protection guidelines as a minimum requirement, including provisions for the informal sector.
4. **Implement the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding** in maternity facilities, including providing breastmilk for sick and vulnerable newborns.
5. **Improve access to skilled lactation counselling** as part of comprehensive breastfeeding policies and programmes in health facilities.
6. **Strengthen links between health facilities and communities**, and encourage community networks that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.
7. **Create monitoring systems** that track the progress of policies, programmes, and funding towards achieving both national and global breastfeeding targets.

BREASTFEEDING FACTS

- Increasing rates of breastfeeding could save the lives of more than 820,000 children under age five.
- Increasing breastfeeding could also prevent 20,000 breast cancer deaths.
- Breastfeeding is associated with an IQ increase of 3 to 4 points.
- Increased rates of breastfeeding could save hundreds of millions of dollars in health care costs.
- Increasing breastfeeding could generate US \$302 billion annually in additional income—nearly 0.5 per cent of the world GNI.
- Only 37 per cent of children younger than six months are exclusively breastfed.

Sources:

Victora CG, Aluisio JD, Barros AJD, et al. Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. *Lancet* 2016; 387: 475-90.

Rollins NC, Bhandari N, Hajeebhoy N et al. Why invest, and what it will take to improve breastfeeding practices? *Lancet* 2016; 387: 491-507.

ABOUT THE BREASTFEEDING ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

The Breastfeeding Advocacy Initiative is a partnership of non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and donors, led by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Initiative's vision is a world in which all mothers have the technical; financial; emotional; and public support they need to start breastfeeding within an hour of a child's birth, to breastfeed exclusively for six months, and to continue breastfeeding—with complementary foods—for two years or beyond. The Initiative's mission is to rally political; legal; financial; and public support, so rates of breastfeeding increase, which will benefit mothers, children, and society.

Breastfeeding Advocacy Initiative Partners:

1000 Days, Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, Action Against Hunger, Alive and Thrive, A Promise Renewed, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Concern Worldwide, Helen Keller International, International Baby Food Action Network, International Lactation Consultant Association, Just Actions, New Partnership for Africa's Development, Save the Children, UNICEF, United States Agency for International Development, WHO, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action and World Vision International

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO JOIN THE INITIATIVE:

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