

## ADVOCACY GUIDANCE AND TOOLS

# 1. INCREASING FUNDING FOR BREASTFEEDING

Investing in breastfeeding benefits women and children and generates significant economic gains for communities and nations.<sup>1</sup> An analysis by the World Bank found that every dollar invested in supporting breastfeeding generates US \$35 in economic returns.<sup>2</sup>

Yet worldwide, only 41 per cent of children younger than six months of age are exclusively breastfed.<sup>3</sup> Breastfeeding is cost-effective, but it is not free: funding and resources are urgently needed to scale up breastfeeding support programmes.



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Led by UNICEF and WHO, the Global Breastfeeding Collective (the Collective) is a partnership of more than 20 international organizations with the goal of increasing investment and policy change to support breastfeeding worldwide, which requires advocacy at the global, national, and sub-national levels.

Developed by the Collective, this document is one of seven briefs that provide guidance and resources to stakeholders on how to advocate for adoption of these policy actions with government ministries, health care workers and managers, employers, donors, and other key decision-makers.

**GLOBAL BREASTFEEDING  
COLLECTIVE**



## THE PROBLEM

**Despite the proven benefits of breastfeeding, global funding remains inadequate.**

Current levels of investment in breastfeeding are insufficient. As of 2017, governments and donors are spending less than US\$ 350 million per year on breastfeeding in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>4</sup>

The global cost of inaction is steep. *The Lancet* estimates that optimal breastfeeding could help prevent more than 820,000 annual deaths among children under 5 years of age and 20,000 annual deaths among women due to breast cancer.<sup>1</sup> Low breastfeeding rates also contribute to higher health care costs and the loss of potential future wages, due to reduced cognitive capacity.<sup>5</sup> With these consequences, the estimated costs of not breastfeeding amount to roughly US\$ 300 billion per year globally (0.49 per cent of GNI).<sup>4</sup>

## THE SOLUTION

**Invest in programmes and policies that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.**

Increasing rates of exclusive breastfeeding saves lives and has the potential to add hundreds of billions of dollars to economies.<sup>1</sup> By implementing a comprehensive breastfeeding strategy that incorporates interventions proven to be effective and scalable, countries can increase their national breastfeeding rates. An investment of just US\$ 4.70 per newborn in low- and middle-income countries is needed to achieve the World Health Assembly's (WHAs) target rate of 50 per cent exclusive breastfeeding by 2025. In addition, this investment could save the lives of 520,000 children and yield a net benefit of US\$ 298 billion by preventing child mortality and cognitive losses.<sup>6</sup>

Investments in the following strategies have been proven to positively impact the social, economic, and cultural forces that affect a mother's decision to breastfeed:

- Providing adequate paid family leave and workplace policies that support mothers to breastfeed;
- Increasing access to skilled breastfeeding counselling;
- Making maternity and newborn care facilities breastfeeding-friendly by implementing the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding;
- Strengthening the links between health facilities and communities to ensure that mothers receive breastfeeding support after discharge and throughout their child's infancy;
- Fully implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions;
- Monitoring of breastfeeding practices, policies, and programmes.

Breastfeeding is an essential component of a country's universal health care policy. Countries can increase the proportion of women receiving breastfeeding support from trained health providers by including breastfeeding promotion and counselling as essential services in basic health packages and guidelines and ensuring sufficient financing for scale-up. When breastfeeding support is explicitly included in guidelines for antenatal, delivery, postnatal, and newborn care services, providers can be incentivized to deliver breastfeeding services by linking provision of these services to reimbursement.<sup>7</sup> Social protection schemes can also be linked to social and behaviour change strategies that address barriers and motivators to improved breastfeeding practices.<sup>7</sup>

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ADVOCACY FOR INCREASED FUNDING FOR BREASTFEEDING

On increasing funding and political commitment to improve global breastfeeding rates:

### [World Health Organization: Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Breastfeeding policy brief](#)

This brief provides a framework for action to reach the global breastfeeding target.

### [The World Bank: An Investment Framework for Nutrition](#)

This report provides the breakdown of how financial investments impact nutrition and breastfeeding.

### [Global Breastfeeding Collective: Nurturing the Health and Wealth of Nations: The investment case for breastfeeding](#)

This resource provides an overview of the evidence of costs and opportunities to invest in breastfeeding.

### [Unleashing the Gains in Economic Productivity with Investments in Nutrition](#)

This brief details the economic gains achieved by investing in nutrition, including breastfeeding.

On strengthening national government commitments and accountability by funding, implementing, and monitoring breastfeeding programmes and policies:

### [The World Breastfeeding Costing Initiative \(WBCi\) Financial Planning Tool](#)

This toolkit provides information on the economic benefits and can serve as a financial planning guide for countries and donors.

### [Incentive Mechanisms to Accelerate Improved Nutrition Outcomes and the accompanying Practitioner's Compendium](#)

This resource provides guidance on cost-effective, multi-sectoral efforts to scale up nutrition programming by incentivizing nutrition interventions, including breastfeeding programmes.

### [The WHO guidance on "Budgeting for Health"](#)

This outlines the overall budget process and discusses the specific role of ministry of health within it, and other health sector stakeholders.

Additional tools for creating an advocacy strategy:

### [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives](#)

This toolkit provides practical tools for country leaders for building and carrying out an advocacy strategy.

### [Alive & Thrive Guide for Public Health Advocacy: Tools and Lessons Learned from Successful IYCF Advocacy in Southeast Asia](#)

This guide can be used to develop a nutrition advocacy strategy through a four-step process for policy change.

### [Global Breastfeeding Scorecard](#)

This tool reviews national progress in implementing key breastfeeding interventions to encourage countries to support breastfeeding.

## CONCLUSION

Breastfeeding is a smart investment that saves lives and benefits the economy. The current global level of investment is not enough to substantially increase and sustain breastfeeding rates. Governments and political leaders should invest in comprehensive strategies and social policies that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding to ensure the health and prosperity of generations to come.

## SOURCES

- <sup>1</sup> Rollins N.C., et al., *The Lancet Breastfeeding Series* “Why invest, and what it will take to improve breastfeeding practices in less than a generation,” 2016.
- <sup>2</sup> Walters, D., Eberwein, J., Sullivan, L., & Shekar, M. (2017). Reaching the global target for breastfeeding. In M. Shekar, & Kakietek, J: Walters, D: Dayton Eberwein, J: (Eds.), *An investment framework for nutrition: Reaching the global targets for stunting, anemia, breastfeeding, and wasting. Directions in Development—Human Development*. Washington D.C: World Bank Group.
- <sup>3</sup> UNICEF. (2018). *Infant and young child feeding: Global Database*.
- <sup>4</sup> D’Alimonte, M., Rogers, H., & de Ferranti, D. (2017). Financing the global nutrition targets. In M. Shekar, J. Kakietek, J. Eberwein & D. Walters (Eds.), *An investment framework for nutrition: Reaching the global targets for stunting, anemia, breastfeeding, and wasting. (Directions in Development. ed., pp. 157-180)*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group.
- <sup>5</sup> Rollins et al. 2016; Horta, B. L., C. Loret de Mola, and C. G. Victora. 2015. “Breastfeeding and Intelligence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” *Acta Paediatrica* 104: 14–19.
- <sup>6</sup> Walters, D., Eberwein, J., Sullivan, L., & Shekar, M. (2017). Reaching the global target for breastfeeding. In M. Shekar, & Kakietek, J: Walters, D: Dayton Eberwein, J: (Eds.), *An investment framework for nutrition: Reaching the global targets for stunting, anemia, breastfeeding, and wasting. Directions in Development—Human Development*. Washington D.C: World Bank Group.
- <sup>7</sup> Lavolette, L., Gopalan, S., Elder, L. & Wouters, O. (2016). *Incentivizing Nutrition: Incentive Mechanisms to Accelerate Improved Nutrition outcomes*. Washington, D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank Group.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

[www.k4health.org/toolkits/breastfeeding-advocacy-toolkit](http://www.k4health.org/toolkits/breastfeeding-advocacy-toolkit) to view the **Breastfeeding Advocacy Toolkit**

and [www.unicef.org/breastfeeding](http://www.unicef.org/breastfeeding) for more information about the **Global Breastfeeding Collective**

**Global Breastfeeding Collective Partners: 1000 Days | Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine | Action Against Hunger | Alive and Thrive | Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation | CARE | Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute | Center for Women’s Health and Wellness | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | Concern Worldwide | Helen Keller International | International Baby Food Action Network | International Lactation Consultant Association | La Leche League International | New Partnership for Africa’s Development | Nutrition International | PATH | Save the Children | UNICEF | United States Agency for International Development | WHO | World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action | World Bank | World Vision International**

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