Breastfeeding is one of the best investments in saving lives and improving the health, social and economic development of individuals and nations, although global breastfeeding initiatives are relatively high and despite international recommendations, only 40% of all babies worldwide are exclusively breastfed and 50% of combined breastfeeding up to 24 months. Additionally, there is a large regional and country variation in breastfeeding rates. Scaling up optimal breastfeeding according to the recommendations could prevent more than 103 800 and 66 100 maternal deaths each year. Breast breastfeeding involves the mother and the closest supporter. Support that breastfeeding interventions are successful. Breastfeeding is also breastfed, especially if it is breastfed, or if health workers provide guidance and support. In countries where breastfeeding is encouraged, breastfeeding rates are high and breastfeeding is associated with higher breast milk production and breastfeeding success. Breastfeeding is a team effort. It also requires evidence-based unbiased information and a warm chain of support to create an enabling environment that encourages mothers to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is higher in the domain of women, with lower breastfeeding rates from poor breastfeeding practices. Gender-equitable parental social protection that includes maternal as well as parental support is needed to support breastfeeding in the context of both formal and informal work sectors.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create a warm chain of support for breastfeeding by linking community, employer, and professional providers.
2. Showcase successful policy models that promote gender-equitable parenting and breastfeeding.
3. Work with governments to review and improve national laws that cover maternity and parental social protection.
4. Use the media and community platforms to raise awareness on ways a woman can combine productive and reproductive work, including care work.
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6. Monitor relevant policies, develop and implement action plans to include informal workers in maternity protection policies that support breastfeeding.
7. Foster and promote the ILO C180 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2005 and ILO C100 - Maternity Protection, 1952 in all standards.
8. Advocate for workplace support on issues such as breastfeeding facilities, paid breastfeeding breaks, and flexible work hours.

TAKE ACTION

Let us all create the supportive environment that empowers parents and enables breastfeeding.

Now and for the future!

Empower parents, enable breastfeeding,
now and for the future!

Let us work together to ensure that breastfeeding is recognized as a human right and an essential component of health care for women, children, and families.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Breastfeeding is a team effort. It also requires evidence-based unbiased information and a warm chain of support to create an enabling environment that encourages mothers to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is the norm of women, with lower breastfeeding rates from poor breastfeeding practices. Gender-equitable parental social protection that includes maternal and parental support is needed to support breastfeeding in the context of both formal and informal work sectors.

Research shows that paid maternity leave policies could help reduce infant mortality by 15% for each additional month of maternity leave. Real paid work ensures women are physically secure from childbirth before returning to work and benefits their physical, mental, and emotional health in the short and long term. Fathers that participate in paid leave or their equivalent should not return to work until they return to work and benefits of breastfeeding.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), more than 80 million women workers do not have adequate maternity protection. Of approximately 170 countries studied, parental and personal leave are available in only 70 and 49 countries respectively. Most countries offer at least some paid maternity leave, however, they are not always available to all women. Maternity protection also needs to be improved. Violations of paid leave and other parental rights are common. Parental leave does not mean the same as parental leave. Preproductive and reproductive work, including care work.

Parents

Support families in choosing the right breastfeeding or breast pump for their needs. Ensure that parental and paternity leave do not compromise existing maternity leave benefits or availability. Rather, these policies should enable fathers/partners to produce family-related benefits for those who want to work and benefits their physical, mental, and emotional health in the short and long term. Fathers that participate in paid leave or their equivalent should not return to work until they return to work and benefits of breastfeeding.

Some of the ways to do that are:

1. Seek information on optimal breastfeeding from the local midwife, doctor or lactation consultant during the antenatal period.
2. Advocate successfully policies that promote gender-equitable parenting and breastfeeding.
3. Work with governments to review and improve national laws that cover maternity and parental social protection.
4. Use the media and community platforms to raise awareness on ways a woman can combine productive and reproductive work, including care work.
5. Advocate for workplace support on issues such as breastfeeding facilities, paid breastfeeding breaks, and flexible work hours.
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Let us work together to ensure that breastfeeding is recognized as a human right and an essential component of health care for women, children, and families.
FACTS

- Only about 10% of countries in the Americas, East Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa provide child benefits.
- When men take paternity leave, their infants are likely to be breastfed for 2.6 months longer than if their mothers took the leave.
- In 2020, almost 8% of employed women in the informal economy received paid maternity leave.

FORMAL SECTOR

- Flexible workplace policies that enable breastfeeding and parenting, as well as state-supported cash transfer programmes for leave for both parents, can help both women and their partners to balance care with other work.
- Family-friendly workplaces improve breastfeeding rates and other health outcomes, including economic improvement and a decrease in infant mortality.

INFORMAL SECTOR

- Breastfeeding is the mother’s domain. When fathers/partners support breastfeeding and have responsive relationships with their infants, there is an improvement in breastfeeding practices and parental relationships.
- In almost 80% of women employed in the informal economy, making about breastfeeding and supporting breastfeeding is beneficial to businesses, workers and their families.

Facts on work-life balance for children, families, employers, and governments

- Many of the world’s leading companies are adopting more equitable, gender-sensitive policies for reproductive and family rights.
- In Africa, about 60% of employed women work in the informal economy, and in the informal sector, the overall rate of breastfeeding at 6 weeks is 63.8%.
- In Vietnam, an intervention taught couples to work co-operatively, making decisions and supporting breastfeeding, and delivering the best nourishment and care for their child. As a result, 87% of infants in the intervention group were exclusively breastfed for one month compared to 64% of those whose fathers were not involved.

PARENTAL SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- Current PSP policies and their implementation in cases where these policies are available must target barriers to primary identification with the assurance of females as the sole caregivers. This ensures the burden of unpaid care work for women. Therefore, the introduction of a GSD (Guaranteed Sherman's maternity leave) is necessary to improve women’s access to health services, enhance their health status, understanding of breastfeeding norms, and engage men and boys to support women’s needs and rights.

- Supporting parents at work through the provision of paid public-funded maternity, paternity, parental or family leave is a prerequisite for optimal breastfeeding. To transform social norms, it is necessary to employ women’s access to health services, enhance women’s understanding of breastfeeding norms, and engage men and boys to support women’s needs and rights.

- Policies that protect maternity rights, while allowing for a more equal distribution of the burden of care, are integral to achieving gender equality and empowerment. A gender-equal division of labour should be recognized as an equal opportunity for women to breastfeed and work. Fathers/partners should be responsible for a share of care of their children on an equal basis.

- In ten employed women in Africa and Asia, only one in ten (10%) are able to return to work after childbirth. It is also a general lack of knowledge on how supporting breastfeeding is beneficial for businesses, workers and their families.

- In Vietnam, an intervention taught couples to work collaboratively, making decisions and supporting breastfeeding, and delivering the best nourishment and care for their child. As a result, 87% of infants in the intervention group were exclusively breastfed for one month compared to 64% of those whose fathers were not involved.

- In Canada, a parenting intervention taught couples to work collaboratively, making joint-decisions about breastfeeding and supporting breastfeeding practices resulted in 60% of the infants being exclusively breastfed, compared to the control group (39%).

- In China, an intervention in which fathers were taught to be involved with decisions-making about breastfeeding and supporting breastfeeding practices resulted in 60% of the infants being exclusively breastfed, compared to the control group (39%).

- More than half (52%) of the global workforce make a living in the informal economy, and as a result, a majority of working-age women are not able to share the responsibility of caring for their children and unpaid care work. The distribution of the burden of care, are integral to achieving gender equality and empowerment. A gender-equal division of labour should be recognized as an equal opportunity for women to breastfeed and work. Fathers/partners should be responsible for a share of care of their children on an equal basis.

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FORMAL INFORMAL

- PARENT-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES IN BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS

- PARENT-FRIENDLY VALUES AND GENDER-EQUITABLE SOCIAL NORMS

- Many of the world’s leading companies are adopting more equitable, gender-sensitive policies for reproductive and family rights.
- In developing countries with struggling economies, private companies can become more supportive by engaging in national maternity protection programmes.
- In Africa, almost 60% of employed women work in the informal economy, and in the informal sector, the overall rate of breastfeeding at 6 weeks is 63.8%.
- There are few low-cost ways of supporting pregnant women and mothers. In countries, such as mining areas, where working hours and working conditions are tough, and congregations exist, there is a general lack of knowledge on how supporting breastfeeding is beneficial to businesses, workers and their families.

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