Challenges & Support Needed for Breastfeeding during ONGOING CARE

To MAINTAIN breastfeeding, parents need breastfeeding counselling contacts for at least the first year, and if possible longer. For this, families can be referred to appropriate health centres or clinics, and to breastfeeding counsellors and peer support groups.

Challenges:
- A lack of awareness among healthcare providers & the community about the value of continued breastfeeding for two years & beyond
- Lack of support from the father/partner, extended family & community can cause the mother to lose motivation & lack the emotional & physical support she needs
- Mothers not having adequate maternity/parental leave & returning to work before they are ready
- Workplaces not supporting breastfeeding or providing the time & space that women need for it
- A lack of practical knowledge about ensuring timely complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding

How to improve support:
- Advocate for health & community services to include breastfeeding counselling at contacts with mothers & babies
- Provide counselling about breastfeeding difficulties, managing infant behaviours & avoiding unnecessary use of breastmilk substitutes
- Include fathers/partners & other family members at contacts
- Refer families to breastfeeding counsellors & peer support groups for further support beyond the health system
- Ensure that counsellors & support groups are trained to provide updated information about breastfeeding
- Encourage employer to provide breastfeeding room, paid maternity/parental leave & flexible working hours
- The community and society at large must advocate normalising breastfeeding & breastfeeding-friendly environments