Breastfeeding

**Exclusive Breastfeeding is feeding nothing but breastmilk and prescribed medication for the 1st six months of life**

- Exclusively breastfed babies get the best start
- Exclusive breastfeeding provides the perfect nutrition and everything they need for healthy growth and brain development
- Pumping and expressing breastmilk and feeding from other devices other than the breast is also considered exclusive breastfeeding
- Protection from respiratory infections, diarrhoeal disease and other life-threatening ailments
- Protection against obesity and non communicable diseases such as asthma and diabetes

**Recommended Actions:**

**Support Mothers**

- Provide community-based strategies to support exclusive breastfeeding counselling for pregnant and lactating women
  - Peer-to-peer and group counselling to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates, including the implementation of communication campaigns tailored to the local context

**Workplace Support**

- Empower women to exclusively breastfeed
  - Enact six-months mandatory paid maternity leave and policies that encourage women to breastfeed in the workplace and in public
  - Create a breastfeeding friendly workplace environment to allow for breastmilk pumping and storage

**Strengthen Health Systems**

- Provide hospital and health facilities-based capacity to support exclusive breastfeeding
  - Expand and institutionalize the baby-friendly initiative in health systems

**Limit Formula Marketing**

- Significantly limit the marketing of breastmilk substitutes
  - Strengthen the monitoring, enforcement and legislation related to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes

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**SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**

- Globally, only **41% of infants** are exclusively breastfed
- Improper infant feeding practices contribute to more than **800,000 infant deaths**
- Countries lose more than **$300 billion** annually because of low breastfeeding rates

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**Source:** World Health Organization

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