

IDEAS for ACTION

Researchers

- Conduct rapid assessments of the extent of exclusive breastfeeding and of the main obstacles to it in your country.

The Government

Incorporate the Global Strategy and six-months exclusive breastfeeding into policy and programmes. Specifically:

- Improve breastfeeding training for health workers and offer to arrange a talk or discussion for relevant groups
- Take action for Maternity Leave legislation that facilitates exclusive breastfeeding
- Take action to adopt and implement the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions.
- Ask if there are any statistics available about rates of exclusive breastfeeding in part or all of the country, or any research studies (check the resources listed and the internet).
- Support the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI).
- Support the development and sustainable funding of a national authority to provide oversight and quality assurance for national activities.

Health Professionals

- Re-examine and update your knowledge, practical skills and attitudes to provide the leadership and technical support needed to make exclusive breastfeeding possible. Make sure that your hospital is Baby-Friendly and practises the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*¹⁰. Do not use posters or “educational” material from manufacturers or distributors of breastmilk substitutes.
- Have your colleagues heard about the Global Strategy? How can it be implemented in their work? Hold a discussion with hospital staff including from Special Baby Care Units, outpatient clinics, and workers such as cleaners who may talk to mothers and influence them.
- Approach traditional birth attendants and midwives and help them to include in the training or updates ideas about exclusive breastfeeding, early initiation of breastfeeding, attachment and positioning.
- Ask mothers in your care how they feed their babies, and how they fed earlier ones – did they breastfeed exclusively, mix feed, or feed artificially? Try to learn why.
- Compare exclusive breastfeeding rates from baby-friendly and non-baby-friendly hospitals.
- Discuss exclusive breastfeeding at antenatal or postnatal classes and clinics. Explain to mothers how they can do it, and how they can have more breastmilk.



Employed women

- Make contact with pregnant and breastfeeding women and supportive men at your workplace and community. Ask them for their experiences, what were their choices, successes and difficulties with their own children and expressing breastmilk.
- Raise the issue of exclusive breastfeeding with your human resources manager, and discuss alternative means of support such as breastfeeding breaks, crèches, and breastfeeding rooms. Try to establish a breastfeeding policy.

Community groups, mother support groups, and organisations

- Exchange views with men, fathers and grandparents. Develop parent-to-parent and grandparent-to-grandparent support groups and enhance their skills so that they can find ways to better support mothers to exclusively breastfeed.
- “Rate” the maternal and child care facilities in your locality, including lactation consultants, with respect to their support of exclusive breastfeeding. Publicise the facilities that provide good support.
- Organise public awareness campaigns and exhibitions about your group and exclusive breastfeeding. Plan an entertainment to promote exclusive breastfeeding: either songs, skits, or a dances.
- Arrange graduation ceremonies for babies who breastfed exclusively for six months. Showcase examples of families who successfully breastfeed exclusively for six months, even for tandem nursing.
- Notice if there are advertisements for breastmilk substitutes on the mass media or in your local health centres. Find out if there is a law to regulate this.
- Ask women what kind of support they had and would like from the baby’s father, other family members, friends, the community, and how this affected their decisions.
- Share information through the internet and create an online discussion group.

Educators and teachers

- Inspire health and biology teachers to teach about exclusive breastfeeding. Give them a copy of this action folder.
- Talk to students, employees, religious groups and women’s groups. Take a mother and baby along to show them breastfeeding and discuss the value and the practicalities of exclusive breastfeeding.
- Involve staff and students in designing posters and handouts to promote exclusive breastfeeding. Display and distribute them in your college, school or other learning institutions.