

Workplace Breastfeeding and Lactation Support Programme in Nigeria

BABIES OF TODAY ARE THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW



Context

Optimal infant feeding is a building block for human capital development and essential to child survival, health, and development¹, while poor Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices are a major contributor to the high burden of infant and childhood morbidity and mortality. Scientific evidence reported in the 2016 Lancet Breastfeeding series confirmed that the benefits of breastfeeding include fewer childhood infections, increased intelligence, probable protection against overweight and diabetes, and cancer prevention for mothers.

Working mothers in Nigeria often struggle to breastfeed according to recommendations due to lack of support and weak protective environment. Workplaces may have strict laws and codes of conduct that make it challenging for nursing mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding. Inconsistent breastfeeding is common because of work constraints, including insufficient break time and privacy to breastfeed in the workplace. Studies reveal that nursing mothers who work as government workers/civil servants practice exclusive breastfeeding more than any other occupational group but often discontinue midway because of work demands². Some mothers discontinue exclusive breastfeeding at the end of their maternity leave, which is currently 16 weeks at the national level and 12 weeks in most states. The only states that implement the WHO-recommended six-month maternity leave policy are Lagos, Kaduna, Ekiti and Oyo. But there are signs of recognition that supporting mothers to breastfeed is important. In November 2022, for example, the government commenced 14-working-day paternity leave for federal civil servants.

¹ Bhutta, Z. A., Das, J. K., Rizvi, A., Gaffey, M. F., Walker, N., Horton, S., ... & Maternal and Child Nutrition Study Group. (2013). Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: what can be done and at what cost? *The Lancet*, 382(9890), 452-477.

² Nwankwo, Benjamin & Brieger, William. (2002). Exclusive breastfeeding is undermined by use of other liquids in rural southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Tropical Pediatrics*. 48. 109-12. 10.1093/tropej/48.2.109

Replicating Models of Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace

In 2018, through a partnership between Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) and Vietnam's government and National Women Congress (NWC), a team of Nigerian officials and stakeholders toured Vietnam to study the country's workplace breastfeeding support models. With this experience, the government of Nigeria collaborated with Alive & Thrive and stakeholders to develop a plan to document best practices for workplace lactation support, and to use lessons learned to institute and scale these innovations across Nigeria.

This Workplace Breastfeeding/Lactation support toolkit was developed based on lessons learned from a pilot workplace breastfeeding/lactation support programme with the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) Network of Entrepreneurial Women (NNEW) and other breastfeeding initiatives in Nigeria. This toolkit provides a guideline for private companies, public organizations and key institutions interested in establishing workplace lactation programmes for their workers.

Expected Benefits Of Workplace Breastfeeding Support Environment For Workers

A well established and managed breastfeeding support or lactation programme in the workplace will benefit society as a whole and the following groups:

Entity	Benefits
Government/ Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower health care costs for women and children. • Lower costs for the health care system. • Compliance with international and national recommendations. • Investment in a well-nourished future labour force. • Improved productivity of female employees.
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the labour law. • Positive public perception as a family-friendly work environment. • Cost-effective investment in workforce. • Lower absenteeism often associated with caring for a sick child. • Boosting employee morale and loyalty. • Retention of female employees. • Lower recruitment and training costs with less staff turnover. • Extra incentives to offer to potential employees. • Investment in the future workforce. • Improved productivity of female employees.
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced absence from work to take care of sick children. • Lower health care costs for both mother and child. • Adherence to best practices recommended for the healthy growth and development of children. • Higher commitment to the company/organization and better employee morale. • Feel recognized and supported as a mother. • Ability to return to work after maternity leave and combine work with motherhood.

How To Establish A Workplace Lactation/Breastfeeding Space

Step 1

BREASTFEEDING SPACE

Initiate discussions with the organization's leadership and workers union

- Recommend the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between employer and representatives of the workers union on the rules and modalities for running the programme. MOU should also ensure that the operation of the site is compliant with the most recent National Regulations on the Marketing of Infant and Young Children Food and other Designated Products Regulations.

Identify appropriate spaces in the workplace

- Suitable spaces could include old unused spaces that can be conveniently converted for this purpose. Spaces should be adequate to accommodate simple equipment/furniture such as comfortable chairs, table, refrigerator, colourful baby mats, and baby cots, and provide sufficient privacy to the breastfeeding mother.
- Agreements with employer and representatives of workers union to commit resources for equipment, operation, and maintenance of the lactation rooms. Equipment can also be donated by staff members.

Step 2

COMMUNICATION AND MATERIALS

Provide orientation and communication materials

- Contact the State Ministry of Health (SMoH) for resource persons to provide short orientation sessions to interested staff to improve staff knowledge and awareness on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and the maternity rights highlighted in the national/state labour policy.
- Distribute breastfeeding education materials to all employees.
- Advertising and promotion for formula or breastmilk substitutes shall be prohibited in the workplace, including the lactation/breastfeeding space.

Step 3

OPERATION/IMPLEMENTATION

Activating the breastfeeding/lactation programme

- If many breastfeeding employees will use the room, employers should consider scheduling usage of the room or using more than one room where space is available.
- The lactation room/s should be locked between uses to safeguard equipment, supplies and breastmilk stored in the refrigerator.
- Companies may issue a key to each woman enrolled in the lactation support programme. Keys may also be retained by the health staff, or any other designated individual.
- This space should be available for mothers who want to express breastmilk. Mothers should be encouraged to bring their own breast pumps.

Establishing policies to keep the room clean

- Breastfeeding/lactation programme policies should stipulate that individual users take responsibility for keeping the room clean.
- Wastebaskets should be emptied daily. If a cleaning team is not available, consider a schedule that assigns users to conduct routine inspection and cleaning of the room.

Step 4

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Maintain and review a record book managed by an assigned person and filled in by lactation room users
- Track use of the room and inspect it regularly.
- Conduct informal discussions with lactating mothers about satisfaction and how to improve the space.

Key Elements For Success

Employers and employees must play their roles effectively to ensure a successful workplace programme. Some of the key elements of successes are mentioned below:

Employers	Employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comply with the law and allow paid breaks for breastfeeding and expressing milk• Provide adequate facilities• Assign staff to be a focal point for the programme• Monitor the programme and develop an organizational breastfeeding policy• Encourage mothers to use all their maternity leave days• Ensure non-discriminatory hiring practices• Commit to investing in human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees motivated to breastfeed infants, use all maternity leave days• Follow guidelines on optimal breastfeeding practices• Make full use of and maintain the breastfeeding room facilities• Comply with the breastfeeding/lactation room policy• Provide personal equipment (breast pumps, etc.)

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

- Poor support from organizations' leadership.
- Some organizations (e.g., companies, banks) are situated in high-rent buildings where it may be more difficult to find space for a breastfeeding room.
- Employers with many female employees may not be able to find adequate room space.
- Inadequate maintenance of the rooms, except if employers recruit cleaners to ensure the continued maintenance of hygienic condition of the room/s.

ANNEXES

The toolkit contains annexes which include the following:

- Different options to support breastfeeding in a workplace
- Sample of an agreement on setting up a breastfeeding/lactation room in the workplace
- Requirements for a standard breastfeeding/lactation room
- Workplace policy regulating the operation and use of the facility



ANNEX 1: DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING IN A WORKPLACE

Lactation Room	Basic	Advanced	Comprehensive
Equipment	Electrical outlet	Electrical outlet	Electrical outlet
	Room with a curtain	Room with a lock	Room with a lock
	Refrigerator	Refrigerator	Refrigerator
	Comfortable chairs	Comfortable chairs	Comfortable chairs
	Table	Table	Table
	Tissue	Tissue	Tissue
		Wipes	Wipes
	Paper towels	Paper towels	Paper Towels
	Clean room	Clean room	Clean room
	Clean water running in the vicinity with soap available	Sink and clean water supply with soap available	Sink and clean water supply with soap available
Facilities	Room located in any available clean, unused space/room	Room located in any available clean, unused space/room	Room located in health department or near canteen of company
	Employees bring their own breast pump/breast milk containers	Employer provides manual/multiuser electric pump and/or breast milk containers	Employer provides manual/multiuser electric pump and/or breast milk containers
	Ceiling or standing fan	Ceiling or standing fan	Air conditioner
	Boiler	Sterilizer	Sterilizer
Breastfeeding education	Pregnancy and breastfeeding pamphlets and books	Pregnancy and breastfeeding pamphlets, books, and videos	Pregnancy and breastfeeding pamphlets, books, and videos
	Videos and DVD player	Videos and DVD player	Videos and DVD player
		Bulletin board for posting baby photos and notes of support	Bulletin board for posting baby photos and notes of support
Lactation timing	Lactating staff may take extra time as part of flexible schedule	Lactating staff may take extra time as part of flexible schedule	Lactating staff may take extra time as part of flexible schedule

ANNEX 2: SAMPLE OF AN AGREEMENT ON SETTING UP A BREASTFEEDING/LACTATION ROOM IN THE WORKPLACE (FOR REFERENCE)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING on setting up a breastfeeding/lactation room in the workplace

This MOU is made on this day of [] and entered into by []

PARTY A (for example workers union):

(COMPANY)

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Represented by (for example human resource):

Title:

PARTY B:

(COMPANY)

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Represented by:

Title:

It is mutually agreed between the above parties that they will cooperate in setting up breastfeeding/lactation room/s in the workplace for female workers who are breastfeeding. The objectives of the MOU and the responsibilities of each party are set forth below:

Objectives of the cooperation

- To provide information, especially to female workers who are breastfeeding their babies, and to workers in general, on the benefits of breast milk. Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for the first six months of a baby's life and continuation of breast milk in addition to complementary feeding from 6 months until 23 months of age. Babies 0 – 6 months should not be fed breastmilk substitutes.
- To set up lactation room/s to enable female workers to express their milk and breastfeed their babies exclusively for the first six months, even if they have to return to work earlier; and to continue to breastfeed their babies until 23 months and beyond.
- To encourage lactating female workers to take up appropriate breastfeeding practices and to encourage them to breastfeed, express and store breast milk during working hours to maintain their breast milk production.

ANNEX 3: REQUIREMENTS FOR A STANDARD BREASTFEEDING/LACTATION ROOM

Items	Employees	Specifications	Compulsory	Optional	Supplier
Space		Minimum 4m ²	x		
Partition		2-2.5m height	x		
Table and Chair	Set as needed		x		
Capacity					
Refrigerator	1		x		
BF Posters on messages	2		x		
Leaflet on BF	As needed		x		
Communication materials on complementary feeding	As needed		x		
3D video clip on breastfeeding	1			x	
TV	1			x	
Video players	1			x	
Colourful infant mats			x		
Computer	1			x	
Monitoring book	1		x		

COMMITMENT

Both parties shall commit to following the agreement. In the event of a dispute or problem, both parties shall work together to find a solution and realize the objectives set forth in this memorandum. Four copies of this MOU shall be signed and have equal validity for two years. Each party shall retain two copies.

FOR PARTY A

Representative

FOR PARTY B

Representative

ANNEX 4: TEMPLATE OF A COMPANY LACTATION POLICY/REGULATIONS ON USE OF THE BREASTFEEDING/LACTATION ROOM

Name of the company:

PURPOSE: To manage the operation and use of the breastfeeding/lactation room

SCOPE: These regulations are applicable to all female staff who have returned from maternity leave and have been granted access to the breastfeeding/lactation room by the administration.

1 Access to the lactation room:

- Staff can access the breastfeeding/lactation room if they have registered with administration and have been granted permission or issued a room access key.
- Staff can access the room during designated breaks.
- Staff are required to keep the breastfeeding/lactation room quiet and clean.

2 Use of equipment in the lactation room:

- Mothers and carers should not eat in the breastfeeding room.
- The refrigerator should be opened and closed with care and no adult food should be stored there.
- The wash hand basin should be kept clean. If running water stops flowing, mothers should inform management of the breastfeeding/lactation room.
- Mothers are not permitted to bring and store infant formula in the refrigerator.
- Babies should not be fed with infant formula nor bottles in the breastfeeding room.

All staff should strictly adhere to these regulations. Defaulters i.e. those who do not adhere to these regulations will be denied access to the breastfeeding/lactation room.

Management

