



## STRONGER WITH BREASTMILK ONLY

no water until 6 months  
for a healthier baby



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# Increase Funding for Breastfeeding

The *Stronger With Breastmilk Only* campaign promotes giving babies breastmilk only, on demand (day and night), and stopping the practice of giving water (and other liquids and foods), from the moment of birth through the first six months of life. It aims for all countries in West and Central Africa to achieve the global exclusive breastfeeding target of 50 per cent by 2025.

*Stronger With Breastmilk Only* echoes the call to action of the Global Breastfeeding Collective, a partnership of more than 20 international organizations, with the goal of increasing investment and policy change to support breastfeeding worldwide. This goal requires advocacy at the global, national and sub-national levels in order to meet the global breastfeeding target.

## INTRODUCTION

To realize its human and economic potential, Africa must invest in its children in many ways, one of the most important being their nutrition. The critical period for impact is during the first 1,000 days of life between pregnancy and the age of two.

Early childhood nutrition is a crucial foundation for health and productivity later in life, and investing in it yields some of the highest returns in the development field. The benefits of investing in exclusive breastfeeding, meaning giving infants breastmilk only, on demand (day and night), no water, other liquids or foods, from the moment of birth and for the first six months of life, include strengthening human capital to maximize a nation's 'grey matter infrastructure'. The World Bank found that every dollar invested in supporting breastfeeding generates US\$35 in economic returns.

Although the majority of women in West and Central Africa breastfeed their babies, only three out of 10 of infants receive only breastmilk in the first

six months of life. Seven out of 10 are given other liquids and foods. In most cases, water is given. Adequate resources, including funding, are urgently needed to scale up programmes that protect, promote and support exclusive breastfeeding so that lifelong benefits can be enjoyed by children, mothers, families, communities and nations.

## THE PROBLEM

**DESPITE PROVEN BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING, RESOURCES REMAIN INADEQUATE TO IMPROVE EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING RATES**

The global target of improving rates of exclusive breastfeeding to 50 per cent by 2025 will require at least US\$5.7 billion in additional funding.

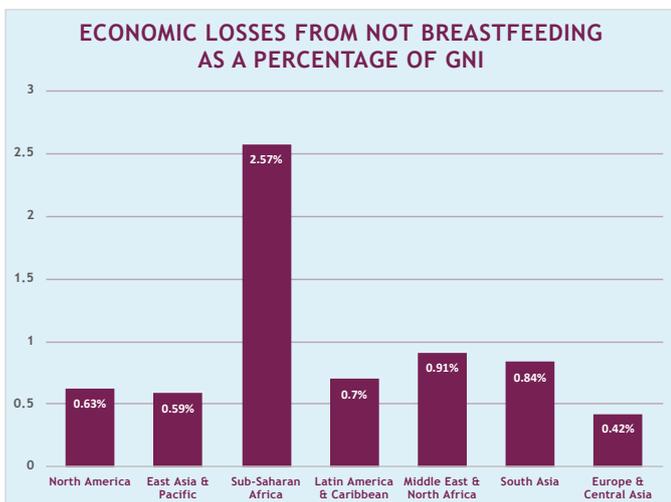
**The cost of inaction is steep.** Alive & Thrive's Cost of Not Breastfeeding Tool estimates that globally each year, close to 600,000 childhood deaths and an additional 98,243 deaths of mothers from cancers and type 2 diabetes are attributed to not breastfeeding.

## ADVOCACY GUIDANCE

Global economic losses due to not breastfeeding are estimated to be between US\$257 billion and US\$341 billion annually, or between 0.37 per cent and 0.70 per cent of global Gross National Income (GNI). These losses reflect an estimated:

- \$285.39 billion in costs of cognitive losses.
- \$53.7 billion in costs due to child mortality.
- \$1.26 billion in costs due to maternal mortality.
- \$1.1 billion in health care treatment for childhood diarrhoea and pneumonia, and women's type 2 diabetes.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the cost of not breastfeeding is even higher, with economic losses representing 2.57 per cent of GNI.



Source: Alive & Thrive, The Cost of Not Breastfeeding Tool, 2019.

## THE SOLUTION

### INVEST IN POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES THAT PROTECT, PROMOTE AND SUPPORT EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

Increasing rates of exclusive breastfeeding saves lives and has the potential to add an estimated US\$300 billion in additional economic gains. It can be done by implementing a comprehensive breastfeeding strategy that incorporates high-impact interventions proven to be scalable. An investment of an additional US\$4.70 per newborn in low- and middle-income countries is needed to ensure that 50 per cent of the world's children are exclusively breastfed by 2025.

Investments in the following interventions have proven to help mothers and their families decide to give breastmilk only - no water, other liquids or foods, in the first six months of life. To reap the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding nationwide, a country's policy makers can take these actions:

- ✓ **Enact and fully implement the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes** and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions.
- ✓ **Incorporate breastfeeding support** in guidelines for antenatal, delivery, postnatal and newborn care services, and ensure that support is offered as part of basic health packages.
- ✓ **Make maternity and newborn care facilities breastfeeding-friendly** by implementing the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative's (revised) Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding.
- ✓ **Ensure women receive breastfeeding support and counselling** from trained health providers.
- ✓ **Strengthen the links between health facilities and communities** to ensure that mothers receive breastfeeding support after discharge and throughout their child's infancy.
- ✓ **Provide adequate paid family leave and workplace policies** that support mothers to breastfeed.
- ✓ **Implement evidence-informed social and behavioural change strategies** that address barriers to giving babies younger than six months breastmilk only and drivers to giving water (and other liquids and foods) in the first six months of life.
- ✓ **Link social protection schemes** to social and behavioural change strategies that address barriers and motivators for improved breastfeeding practices.
- ✓ **Engage family members**, especially husbands and grandmothers, in counselling and supporting them to give breastmilk only, no water.
- ✓ **Monitor breastfeeding practices, policies and programmes** and apply knowledge for continual improvement.

## ACT NOW!

Breastfeeding is a smart investment that saves lives and benefits the economy. The current level of investment globally and in West and Central Africa is not enough to substantially increase and sustain exclusive breastfeeding rates.

Governments and political leaders should invest in comprehensive strategies founded on a solid understanding of the social, cultural and behavioural factors that influence infant feeding practices and social policies that protect, promote and support breastfeeding to ensure the health and prosperity of generations to come.



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## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

### ON ASSESSING COSTS OF NOT BREASTFEEDING:

#### ▶ **Alive & Thrive, 'The Cost of Not Breastfeeding Tool':**

This online tool enables a calculation of the cost of not breastfeeding in selected countries.

### ON INCREASING FUNDING AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE GLOBAL BREASTFEEDING RATES:

#### ▶ **WHO, 'Global Nutrition Targets 2025: Breastfeeding policy brief':**

This brief provides a framework for action to reach the global breastfeeding target.

#### ▶ **The World Bank, 'An Investment Framework for Nutrition: Reaching the Global Targets for Stunting, Anemia, Breastfeeding, and Wasting':**

This report provides the breakdown of how financial investments impact nutrition and breastfeeding.

#### ▶ **Global Breastfeeding Collective, 'Nurturing the Health and Wealth of Nations: The investment case for breastfeeding':**

This resource provides an overview of the evidence of costs and opportunities to invest in breastfeeding.

#### ▶ **World Bank Group, 'Unleashing Gains in Economic Productivity with Investments in Nutrition':**

This brief details the economic gains achieved by investing in nutrition, including breastfeeding.

#### ▶ **African Development Bank Group, 'Harnessing 'Grey Matter Infrastructure' to Unlock the Human and Economic Potential of Africa: Catalysing nutrition smart investments to support a 40 per cent stunting reduction in Africa by 2025':**

This document presents the Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan 2018-2025 developed by the African Development Bank.

## CALL TO ACTION

### ON STRENGTHENING NATIONAL GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY BY FUNDING, IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING BREASTFEEDING PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES:

#### IBFAN, 'The World Breastfeeding Costing Initiative (WBCi) Financial Planning Tool':

This toolkit provides information on the economic benefits and can serve as a financial planning guide for countries and donors.

#### Global Financing Facility, 'Incentive Mechanisms to Accelerate Improved Nutrition Outcomes and the Accompanying Practitioner's Compendium':

This resource provides guidance on cost-effective, multi-sectoral efforts to scale up nutrition programming by incentivizing nutrition interventions, including breastfeeding programmes.

#### WHO, 'WHO guidance on Budgeting for Health':

This outlines the overall budget process and discusses the specific role of ministry of health within it, and other health sector stakeholders.

### ADDITIONAL TOOLS FOR CREATING AN ADVOCACY STRATEGY:

#### UNICEF, 'UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives':

This toolkit provides practical tools for country leaders for building and carrying out an advocacy strategy.

#### Alive & Thrive, 'Guide for Public Health Advocacy: Tools and Lessons Learned from Successful IYCF Advocacy in Southeast Asia':

This guide can be used to develop a nutrition advocacy strategy through a four-step process for policy change.

#### The Global Breastfeeding Collective, 'Enabling women to breastfeed through better policies and programmes':

Tools and other resources for implementing key breastfeeding interventions to encourage countries to support breastfeeding.



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for a healthier baby

Protect, promote and support giving babies breastmilk  
only, no water for the first six months of life in  
West And Central Africa

*Consult the Stronger With Breastmilk Only Reference List for more information*