



## *Safeguarding breastfeeding excellence in Sri Lanka* **‘Closing the Gap – Breastfeeding support for all!’**

### **National recommendations for breastfeeding**

- Early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth.
- Exclusive breastfeeding on demand during the first 6 months of life.
- Continuing breastfeeding for 2 years and beyond as appropriate for age, with introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary food (solid) at 6 months and continued age-appropriately.

### **Action required**

There is an urgent need to ensure actions to enable all parents receive the required support for breastfeeding, considering the deficits and inequalities that exist in the current breastfeeding support systems:

**Investment in breastfeeding**  
to address these inequalities is vital and  
can help alleviate the social inequalities.



### **For all breastfeeding mothers and families (with special emphasis on reaching the vulnerable groups) -**

- Correct knowledge, guidance and support for breastfeeding from before delivery (during pregnancy) continuing through the immediate postpartum period and beyond to
  - o have firmly established intention to breastfeed successfully
  - o have knowledge/support-based strength to resist contradictory influences
- Trained and skilled guidance and support to initiate and continue breastfeeding the newborn from the time of delivery at the labour room/operation theatre and afterwards in the post-natal facilities
- Post-natal support to breastfeeding mothers to continue breastfeeding through;
  - o Quality post-natal home visits by PHMs
  - o Post-natal clinics in hospitals (both government and private) and MOH clinics where breastfeeding status is assessed and supported adequately
- Correct information and guidance on starting complementary food at the end of the period of exclusive breastfeeding while sustaining breastfeeding for two years and beyond

**Breastfeeding can act as an equaliser**  
in our society and efforts must be made to  
ensure everyone especially the vulnerable  
group has access to breastfeeding support  
and opportunities.



### **Special support for working parents;**

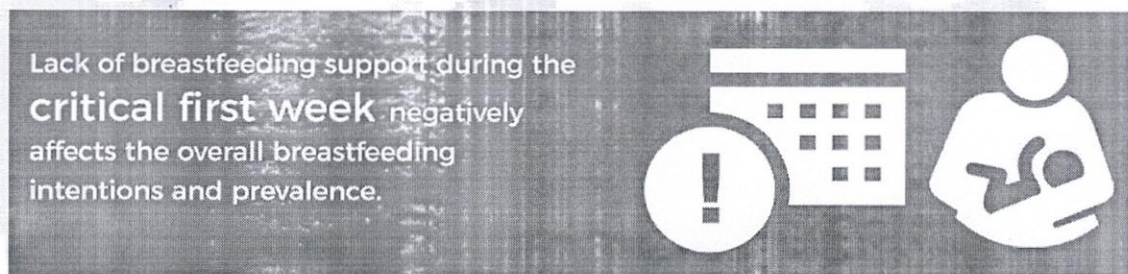
- Weekend clinic services/awareness sessions for working parents
- When employed mothers are returning to work, support to continue breastfeeding successfully with expressed breast milk to achieve exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and to sustain breastfeeding along with complementary feeding afterwards
  - o Training and providing the skills to mother and family from trained health staff to express breastmilk, store and feed the infant
  - o Support from family, employers, work place colleagues to achieve the breastfeeding intentions of the parents

- Work place requirements - Providing employees the benefit of paid maternity/paternity leave, parent-friendly workplace policies, facilities for breastfeeding/expressing breastmilk (e.g. creches, breastfeeding rooms), paid breastfeeding breaks and flexible working arrangements to support breastfeeding

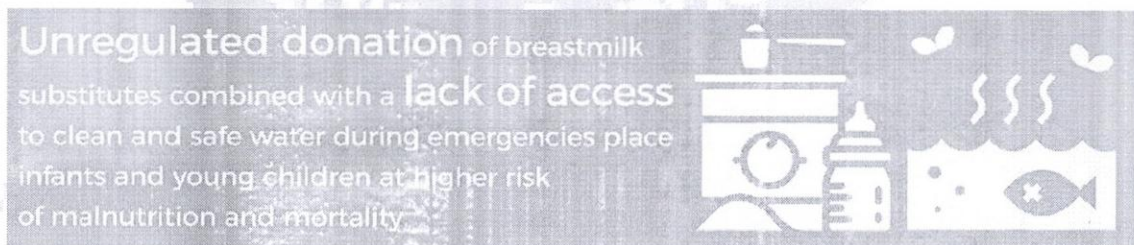
Improving maternity/paternity protection and breastfeeding support at the workplace is a means to achieve social justice. National policies and programmes should emphasize the need for workers working in both the formal and informal sectors to have access to paid maternity and paternity leave as per ILO recommendations. There is still a substantial gap to close to ensure that all workers' rights are protected



**Special requirements of the private sector hospitals** – trained and skilled staff to offer correct breastfeeding support to all parents/families starting from pre-conception care continuing into antenatal period and skilled practical support during postnatal period and afterwards is an essential requirement. Strict adherence to the Sri Lanka Code for the Promotion, Protection and Support of Breastfeeding and Marketing of Designated Products (2002) also is a must to safeguard parents and families from commercial influences of milk food industry.



**Special support for parents/families affected by natural disasters and crisis situations** – emergency need assessment, breastfeeding friendly health and other services, ensuring breastfeeding during emergencies, monitoring donations and guiding the donors, access to clean and safe water and food, correct information on how to ensure good nutrition through breastfeeding and locally available and low-cost healthy food are some of the key elements. It must be mentioned that strict adherence to Ministry of Health instructions and guidance, including national recommendations for infant and young child feeding, is essential while providing this support.



**We call upon the government policy makers, employers (both government and private sector), trade unions, civil society organizations and communities to commit to reducing the inequalities in breastfeeding support for all.**

**Identify your role in offering breastfeeding support within your scope and**

**Join our National Breastfeeding Month 2024 campaign and act to close the gaps and ensure breastfeeding support for all.**