

# WAY FORWARD

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There are gaps in almost all ten indicators of policies and programmes of the 84 -country reports. Country groups making use of WBTi results for advocacy to impact policies over these years has been a positive development as well when one looks at the change that has come in many countries.

However, despite the overwhelming evidence that breastfeeding works, contributes to child survival and development, the rates of infant and young child feeding practices specially exclusive breastfeeding have been stagnant. The World Health Assembly has set a target for 2025 to increase exclusive breastfeeding rates from 37 % to at least 50% that means up by 13% in the worldwide average. The World Bank has estimated that it would cost \$ 4.7 per birth for investing on core set of interventions including nutritional counseling, media promotion and development of appropriate policies and legislations to protect breastfeeding in low and middle income countries to achieve this target in next 10 years. (Total spending required amounts to about \$5.7 Billion). This is likely to increase 105 million more babies exclusively breastfed, and save 520,000 lives. According to World Bank estimates, it has very high economic returns and benefits of investing in increasing exclusive breastfeeding are very high; \$ 35 for every dollar invested. And it lays the foundation for development. However, this does not include maternity benefits, which would require additional \$24 billion from other sectors.

Countries should invest not just to fulfill their obligations to WHA targets, they should look at the benefits breastfeeding interventions provide both in short and long term to their populations. Victora (2016) and Rollins (2016) have clearly documented these benefits in the Lancet Series.

We also know that global strategy need to be implemented comprehensively to achieve high breastfeeding rates in order to achieve gains in child health, nutrition and development. All countries should think in this direction. Such an investment in breastfeeding policies and programmes goes a long way.

However, till the resources are available prioritization could be done based on gaps. Moving from Red to Yellow codes or Yellow to Blue could be one way to go to reach the Green.

The report makes a point that overall national planning and coordination is lacking. But this should be a priority. From the Indicator number 1, which is kind of overarching all others, if there is no plan or there is a plan and no budget attached to it, nothing will happen or ad-hoc actions will be happening. That's not what we want.

How this could be achieved. It requires two- prong approach, internationally and nationally.

At the international level, WHA resolution should be adopted to call upon Member States for action on this specific recommendation such as “budget line” for breastfeeding /IYCF interventions in the child health and/or nutrition budgets and

put a time line to it should then be reported every two years.

Secondly, there should be a mechanism to monitor the Global Strategy on a regular basis at national level. WHA resolution should also include recommendations to institutionalize the process of monitoring the Global Strategy and study of gaps every 3-5 years, and this should be reported at WHA.

At national level, every country should create a budget line for breastfeeding/IYCF interventions and develop an institutional mechanism to

monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Global Strategy by involving academia, civil society and other public interest relevant partners.

Finally, it is possible to increase breastfeeding if we invest in interventions to support women. This is essential, given all the evidence at hand and economic as well developmental benefits that it provides, we should invest in breastfeeding with an urgency and priority to create enabling environments for women fulfilling their and children's rights to health and nutrition.

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***Political support and financial investment are needed to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding to realise its advantages to children, women, and society***

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