



CHALLENGES FACE BY BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS IN HONG KONG



#SayYesToBreastfeeding

1. Background

1. The dropping of breastfeeding rates of newborns upon discharge from the hospital from 2022 to 2023:

- Breastfeeding rate on discharge decreased from 84.71% to 83.58%
- Exclusive breastfeeding rate dropped from 15.3% to 13.86%

2. Advantages of breastfeeding:

- Breast milk provides comprehensive nutrition and protects the immune system for infants
- · Health benefits for mother: faster recovery, lower disease risk
- · Boosts bonding between mother and baby

3. Why does it matter (relates to SDG3)?

- · Improves maternal and child health
- · Promotes affordable, accessible healthcare

2. Current Challenges

1. Stigma:

 Mothers reported they have been verbally harassed, refused and being stared when breastfeeding in the public space (EOC, 2024)

2. Insufficient breastfeeding facilities in workplaces and public premises:

 Absence of adequate breastfeeding facilities, with unstable quality, unsanitary conditions, unfavourable positioning of facilities and long waiting times

3. Unsupportive workplace policy:

- Feel pressure and a lack of understanding from their supervisors and colleagues
- · Dual duties: incompatible with professional life
- · Lack of time allowances for lactation breaks

4. Health care system:

- Keep healthy babies in nurseries which making responsive feeding difficult (BFHI, 2024)
- Ineffective breastfeeding assistance to sustain breastfeeding due to the busyness of nurses (Kwan et al., 2022)(DH, 2024)

5. Low prevalence rate of exclusive breastfeeding:

 New mothers lack of adequate knowledge and skills in breastfeeding or infant feeding which hindered their ability to adopt exclusive breastfeeding

4. Limitations

1. Workplace:

 Employees aware of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) but they did not know about the specifics (EOC, 2024).

2. Short maternity leave:

 After extension, maternal mental health status is still worrying in Hong Kong with 31.5% of the women still suffering in postnatal depression (Andres et al., 2024).

3. Inadequate Facilities:

 Public and workplace breastfeeding facilities remain insufficient and substandard in quality

6. References

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3. What is UNICEF doing?

1. Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI):

 Remove breastfeeding barriers in health facilities by implementing the 'Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding'

2. 'Say Yes to Breastfeeding' Campaign:

- Engaged with over 2,800 corporations and outlets to create breastfeeding-friendly premises and workplaces.
- Raising public awareness about the needs of breastfeeding mothers

3. Advocacy for Policy Changes:

- Extended maternity leave and legislative amendments to protect breastfeeding mothers
- Urges tighter regulations on the marketing of formula milk

5. Suggestions

Government:

1. Amend the SDO and explanation:

- To incorporate specific standards and regulations for facilities in breastfeeding lactation rooms (BLRs)
- Educate both property management companies and corporates about the provisions of the SDO

2. Enhance the societal acceptance of breastfeeding to create a more inclusive and supportive environment

· Implement educational initiatives

3. Develop a babycare and lactation room award scheme:

 To encourage government departments and developers to provide high-quality BLRs, to address service gaps and improving quantum

The Department of Health

1. Train all healthcare staff

• Increase the hours of training

2. The DH can hold more antenatal education on breastfeeding

 To inform pregnant women about the benefits and management of breastfeeding to encourage them to adopt an exclusive breastfeeding

<u>Corporates:</u>

- Implement clear guidelines and policies for accommodating breastfeeding in public areas
- · Adopt flexible policies that allow breastfeeding or expressing milk

NGOs:

- Provide peer support service to new mothers in order to relieve their pressure and provide emotional support
- Raise Public Awareness & Normalize Breastfeeding: community events and public education campaigns

