

Community-based Breastfeeding Support Trilogy: *An Executive Summary*

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What is community-based breastfeeding support?

Community-based support is a manner of promoting breastfeeding that focuses on identifying and strengthening the skills and abilities of community members themselves as primary resources to resolve their community's maternal and infant health and nutrition problems. To have maximum effect, community-based support for breastfeeding should build a network of mothers, who are able to exchange and transfer breastfeeding knowledge and develop the skills necessary to reach out to others in their communities. This support may include individual peer counseling, mother-to-mother support groups, and a wide variety of community education activities.

Why was the "Community-based Breastfeeding Support Trilogy" developed?

In 1992 a workshop was held in Guatemala on strengthening community support for breastfeeding, with participation from Latin American Ministries of Health and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). During this workshop, participants expressed the need for guidelines on development of community-based breastfeeding support activities. Three specific topics were identified: planning and implementation; training on lactation management at the community and primary health care levels; and, counseling and facilitation.

In response to the growing need for materials to strengthen the promotion and support of breastfeeding at the community level, a series of documents was developed. The materials were designed as three separate documents, intended to guide the various stages of program development at the primary health care and community levels. These documents form a trilogy entitled "*Community-based Breastfeeding Support*," which includes the following:

- ▶ *A Planning Manual*
- ▶ *A Training Curriculum*
- ▶ *A Guide for Trainers and Supervisors*

What is the "Community-based Breastfeeding Support Trilogy"?

The documents in this trilogy were designed to complement each other as support for breastfeeding in the community unfolds. While each volume can stand on its own, the series is intended to support a comprehensive plan for initiating, implementing, and improving community-based breastfeeding support. *A Planning Manual* is designed to help managers in NGOs and planners in Ministries of Health to create new community-based activities in support of breastfeeding, as well as to monitor, expand, or improve the breastfeeding components of existing programs. *A Training Curriculum* contains the information needed, utilizing a participatory, hands-on approach, to train volunteers and other community-level workers in the fundamentals of breastfeeding management and support, with an integrated approach to maternal and child health and nutrition. It can be easily adapted for use in different settings. *A Guide for Trainers and Supervisors* provides a detailed discussion of interpersonal counseling and facilitation skills. It also contains sections on implementation of educational and promotional activities in community-based breastfeeding programs.



Community-based Breastfeeding Support: *A Planning Manual*

What information does this manual contain?

The main focus of this manual is breastfeeding support and program planning at the primary health care and community level. The manual is divided into three sections: an overview of breastfeeding; planning for breastfeeding support; and, implementing the workplan.

The first section provides background information on breastfeeding and discusses why breastfeeding support at the community level is critical to achievement of child survival, infant health and nutrition, and women's reproductive health care goals. The second and third sections are the "how to" parts of the manual. Section II describes the initial steps in planning a community-based program, which include: assessing breastfeeding practices and support activities in the community; engaging the community in the planning process; setting goals and objectives; developing a workplan; and, preparing a budget. Section III addresses managerial issues related to program implementation such as human resource development, training, supervision, project monitoring and evaluation, and sustainability.

Who can use *A Planning Manual*?

This manual is designed for any person interested in developing, implementing, or expanding community-based activities to improve breastfeeding practices. It is a particularly helpful resource for policy makers, program planners, program managers, project officers, administrators, health care workers, and community leaders interested in developing or expanding community activities to improve breastfeeding. These individuals may be found in a variety of organizations and institutions, such as: Maternal and Child Health or Nutrition Divisions within the Ministry of Health; NGOs or private voluntary organizations (PVOs) responsible for developing programs to improve breastfeeding and child survival; breastfeeding promotion organizations; health facilities with community outreach programs; and, women's, religious, and community development organizations.

Individuals new to the topic as well as those with experience in breastfeeding promotion will find this manual useful. Organizations that are familiar with breastfeeding promotion may use the manual as a guide for assessing current projects, expanding existing programs, or introducing new activities. NGOs already engaged in community-based projects will find this manual of use as they place greater emphasis on breastfeeding in child survival or related programs.

How can this manual be used?

The manual was designed to be used as:

- ▶ A "how to" guide in planning program activities;
- ▶ A community-level resource for training in breastfeeding promotion and other health related topics;
- ▶ A reference for field operations; and,
- ▶ An example of practical worksheets to assist in program design, monitoring, and evaluation.



Community-based Breastfeeding Support: *A Training Curriculum*

What information does this curriculum contain?

A Training Curriculum contains the information needed, utilizing a participatory, hands-on approach, to train volunteers and other community-level workers in the fundamentals of breastfeeding management and support, with an integrated view of maternal and child health and nutrition. The curriculum can be taught in modular form, taking about 40 hours in total. Modules include information on breastmilk production, components and protective factors in breastmilk, child spacing during breastfeeding, and other topics related to breastfeeding support.

Who can use *A Training Curriculum*?

This curriculum may be used to train community personnel in breastfeeding. The curriculum is designed for use by a facilitator in training auxiliary nurses, health promoters, and community volunteer personnel (midwives, counselors, health care workers, distributors of oral rehydration salts, family planning counselors, etc.). It can be used by a Ministry of Health, NGO, or other organization providing training for community personnel.

How can this curriculum be used?

The curriculum may be used in its entirety or some modules alone may be used to provide knowledge in certain aspects of breastfeeding promotion, such as in response to the specific needs of the agency that asks for training services. The curriculum uses a training methodology in which the participants are actively involved in the development of the course. The facilitator is responsible for creating conditions that foster group learning and participation. With this method, practice sessions are carried out to stimulate critical and reflective analysis and allow participants to search for the solution to problems themselves through sharing experiences of the group. These sessions may be supplemented by additional practicums in health centers or hospitals.

As a result of the training, the primary health care personnel become more conscious of the issues related to breastfeeding support and are able to provide assistance to community volunteers, once they receive follow-up training using the companion volume, *A Guide for Trainers and Supervisors*.



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Community-based Breastfeeding Support: *A Guide for Trainers and Supervisors*

What information does this guide contain?

This guide is designed to give practical tools to trainers and supervisors working with community-based counselors and promoters to enable them to help both paid and volunteer staff develop the necessary skills for providing community-based social support.

The guide is designed to follow the usual sequence of creating and implementing a community-based breastfeeding program and offers step-by-step instructions on how to initiate and conduct outreach and mother-to-mother support activities in a variety of situations. It addresses how to:

- ▶ communicate effectively;
- ▶ make individual contacts with mothers;
- ▶ establish and facilitate breastfeeding support groups;
- ▶ conduct community education activities to promote breastfeeding; and,
- ▶ provide support and supervision to breastfeeding counselors and promoters.

Who can use *A Guide for Trainers and Supervisors*?

This guide is designed for trainers and supervisors working in community-based mother support activities. It should also be useful for nurses and other health workers who counsel mothers on breastfeeding. The community-based activities it describes may be implemented by NGOs focused on breastfeeding promotion, other NGOs promoting maternal and child health, by churches or through hospitals, community clinics, and the Ministries of Health.

How can this guide be used?

While it may prove most useful to read the guide through in its entirety, each of the chapters can stand on its own as a guide to the specific activities described. The guide draws on the actual experience of many successful program models that already exist throughout the Latin American region, and uses specific examples wherever possible. It addresses common difficulties encountered in the process of implementing a community-based breastfeeding support program and potential solutions for such difficulties. It provides references to other excellent written materials for further information on existing training and program models.

The guide may be useful for:

- ▶ helping to plan start-up activities for a new project.
- ▶ serving as a resource for existing projects to compare their experiences with those of other NGOs throughout the region.
- ▶ assessing strengths and weaknesses of existing projects.
- ▶ planning and implementing new program components.

