

# Utilizing ICTs in Breastfeeding and Nutrition Promotion

Christine Namatovu  
Communications Director  
Lifecare Initiatives  
Plot 822 Rubaga Road  
Tel: +256784568737

[cnamatovu@lifecareinitiatives.org](mailto:cnamatovu@lifecareinitiatives.org)

[www.lifecareinitiatives.org](http://www.lifecareinitiatives.org)



**Breastfeeding Support Centre**

# Background on Lifecare Initiatives

- Local Ugandan organization
- We work on positioning breastfeeding as being “cool and good”; best for mother and best for the baby and the natural way to feed new born babies
- Conduct nutritional programs to enhance healthy living in communities
- Utilize ICTs in all our operations
- We promote a family approach to nutrition and food security

# What is food security?

- Food security means having enough food to maintain a healthy and productive life today and in the future.
- Communities enjoy food security when all individuals in all households have access to food –
  - adequate in quantity and quality,
  - affordable, acceptable, appropriate
  - readily available
  - from local sources on a continuing basis

# Breastfeeding passes the test

- Breast milk is a readily available, affordable and nutritious complete food for infants up to six months of age
- It equips the growing child with essential nutrients and energy, helping to prevent malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies
- Breast milk is the only safe and reliable source of food for infants even in an emergency
- Since breastfed babies have higher IQs, communities benefit immensely
- Breastfeeding is the best way to increase child survival

**Why focus on  
breastfeeding?**

**Because women give  
birth all the year around**

**THUS**

**Food security for newborn  
babies = BREASTFEEDING**

**OUR STRATEGY**

# Strategic approach

- Our goal is not only to educate mothers to increase their knowledge and skills but also to influence their attitudes towards breastfeeding
- Through counseling, Lifecare helps mothers to appreciate the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life
- We also believe in feeding the mother so she can feed her child/children
- We promote appropriate nutrition for the entire household



# Integrated Approach

- One-one breastfeeding counseling sessions
- Telephone calls, SMS, email, Skype
- Video and recordings that mothers share and discuss
- Share recipes for complementary and weaning foods
- Utilizing males as critical ambassadors and champions
- Conceptualize food security to begin at conception
- Demonstrations for illustration purposes

# Demonstrating the difference in breast milk



**Fore milk**

**Hind milk**

**Whom do we  
work with?**

# Pen portrait of the Clientele



Patricia Asio is 36 years old.

- A mother of three months' old Paul and lives with her husband in Ntinda, one of the high end suburbs in the country
- She works as an Accountant with one of the banks in Kampala
- Her need is to see her child grow up healthy and strong
- She is determined to exclusively breastfeed
- Her joy is to see her baby thrive
- She owns a mobile phone, has access to email and the Internet
- She is on twitter and has a facebook account

*There are other women like Patricia who are juggling work, breastfeeding and child care*

# Defining features of Patricia's generation

- It is a generation that, across socioeconomic boundaries, shares one great, defining characteristic: they're always online
- They're wired, connected, jacked-in
- They're on computers, tablets, smart phones—sometimes, for some of them, on all three at once—tapping and thumbing away to stay constantly “in the loop”
- For them, image isn't everything; the app is everything

# Defining features cont'd

- This generation is cause and concept oriented
- Prefer to leverage their relationships, and their savvy, through social networks and social media
- Their most trusted sources, and resources, are their “friends” —not just as we traditionally define them, but also as they have redefined them: as the people and organizations within their online and social media networks

# Features cont'd

- This generation is suspicious of any information from any source they've not already preauthorized with a Like, a Follow, a Feed, or a Circle
- Their most valuable information, and the most critical calls to action come from within(network)
- They are online (all the time) and (intimately) connected
- For most of this generation, an hour without their smart phones hits them harder than a month without almost anything else

# Who are their friends

- This Generation has redefined the notion of a “friend” “Friends” certainly include their friends from school, Church and from work. They also include their family members
- “Friends” also includes the “friends” of their “friends,” as well as their favorite bands, artists, actors, athletes, and social/cultural organizations
- They can have a trusted “friend” across town or across the globe
- They have “friends” they’ve never met, whose faces they’ve never seen and whose voices they’ve never heard
- They trust the opinion of their friends and easily follow the advice of their “friends”
- They are easily influenced and swayed in a particular direction



# Our Social Media Approach

# How we do start

- We build and arm the communities with a little bit of knowledge, a little less fear and enough of the right set of mind to promote breastfeeding
- Using social media we promote and support breastfeeding and appropriate nutritional practices
- We promote a family approach ensuring that every household member's food security needs are catered for

# How do we keep it rolling?

- We go small in a big way –with a click of **POST** or **SEND** button we literally reach thousands of individuals and “friends”
- We share information and “dish” out advice about nutrition and child care
- Informed friends chime in wherever they, whenever they want with whatever they know
- We manage the communities as the discussion rolls on paying attention to accuracy, timeliness and consistency!

# How we do maintain interest?

- As breastfeeding advocates, we are always looking to have our message heard, our expertise trusted, and our cause picked up and carried from one person to another
- We get out of our own bubbles and our own networks and get ourselves into the bubbles and networks and daily social media lives of our members and individuals that follow them

# We keep in touch our members

- We PUSH and show up in their Facebook feeds between their friends, their family members, their co-workers, and their favorite interests
- We are constantly present, as a trusted source in their digital lives thus we and our message continue to exist and be relevant
- We meet effort with effort; we respond to the members, we get inside their world and we take their feedback seriously

**AN UPHILL TASK**

# Challenges members report

- Some find expressing breast milk difficult, time-consuming and distasteful
- Others say that when they report to work from maternity leave breastfeeding is difficult
- Some mothers feel that waiting until six months before giving the baby solids goes against their intuition
- Negative attitudes towards nutritious foods considered to be for low class e.g. silver fish

# What we have learnt

- The support received through a combination of the face to face interfaces and utilization of ICTs is critical in re-assuring the mothers that they can sustain breast feeding if they take it **one day at a time**
- Continuous support is pivotal in helping mothers believe in the efficacy of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and complementary feeding afterwards



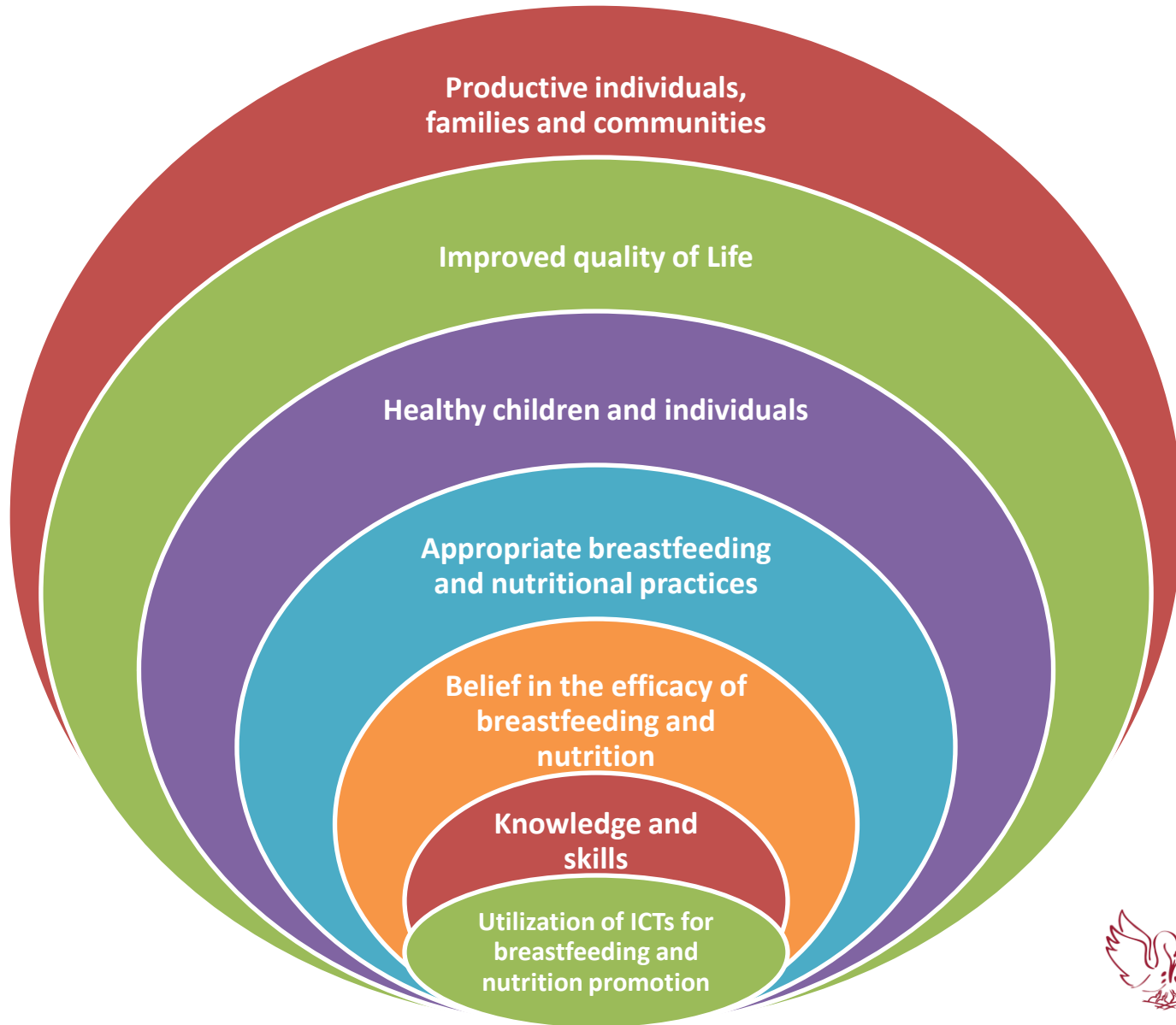
# What we have learnt cont'd

- Influencing individual attitudes towards breastfeeding requires influencing environments and communities
- Milk banking and storage is a critical factor in helping mothers breastfeed longer
- Video taping cooking demonstrations and sharing them helps families to get the best out of foods
- Nutritional profiling supports families
- Meal planning is fundamental in family nutrition
- Spousal and family support is phenomenal

# Recommendations

- There is need to address the underlying issues that prevent women from breastfeeding
- Providing timely, complete, accurate and consistent information; communities must sort and sieve through myths, misinformation, and mixed messages about breastfeeding
- Media advocacy and agenda setting is critical
- ICTs can be harnessed in the quest for breastfeeding promotion and food security

# Bigger picture



**THANK YOU**