

**The Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding in the Community:
The Gambia's Baby-friendly Community Initiative**

Every village should have an enabling environment for mothers to practice optimal breastfeeding. Therefore, a trained Village Support Group on infant feeding:

1. Informs and advises all pregnant and lactating women and their spouses on the importance of an adequate maternal diet using locally available foods by explaining the benefits to both maternal and infant health.
2. Informs all pregnant women and their spouses about the benefits of breast milk including colostrum.
3. Advises and encourages mothers to initiate breastfeeding within an hour after birth and not to give any prelacteal feeds unless on the advice of a medical personnel.
4. Informs both mothers and fathers about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and encourages all mothers of healthy newborns to breastfeed exclusively for six months.
5. Informs both mothers and fathers about the hazards and cost of bottle-feeding, the use of formula and the use of pacifiers (comforters).
6. Ensures that orphans get breast milk by encouraging the traditional practice of wet nursing for babies who have lost their mothers at birth.
7. Advises and encourages mothers to introduce locally available complementary foods when the infant is six months of age.
8. Advises and encourages all mothers to use fermented cereal in the preparation of the complementary feeding by telling them about the benefits.
9. Teaches all mothers and caregivers about the benefits of adequate personal hygiene and environmental sanitation to infant health, including the basic principles for the preparation of safe foods for infants and young children.
10. Encourages mothers to support each other to practice optimal breastfeeding by forming their own informal support groups on infant feeding.