# **WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK 2020**

## Introduction

The importance of breastfeeding can never be overemphasized as it has been shown to be of great benefit to all – from the breastfeeding mother to the infant and the society at large. It’s for the same reason that a week has been designated each year since 1992 to raise awareness and galvanise on themes related to breastfeeding.

World breastfeeding day is celebrated globally every year from the 1st to 7th of August for the aforementioned reasons.

## Theme

There have been many themes set each year for this celebration and this year is no different. The theme for this year’s campaign is, “Support breastfeeding for a healthier planet”

## Focus

World Breastfeeding Day 2020 focuses on the impact of infant feeding on environmental/climate change and the imperative to protect, promote and support breastfeeding for the health of the planet and its people.

## Objectives

INFORM: people about the links between breastfeeding and environment/climate change

ANCHOR: breastfeeding as a climate-smart decision

ENGAGE: with individuals and organizations for greater impact

GALVANISE: action on improving the health of the planet and people through breastfeeding

## Informing People the Links Between Breastfeeding and Climate Change

While breastmilk is a natural, renewable food that is environmentally safe and green because it is produced and delivered to the consumer without pollution, packaging or waste, artificial feeding on the other hand leaves a major environmental footprint that contributes to the depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming and climate change.

It is estimated by the Imperial College of London that breastfeeding for six months instead of using formula could cut down carbon emissions by 153kg per baby – which is equivalent to driving a petrol car made in 2001.

During breastfeeding, ovulation is suppressed, helping reduces family size. While this helps keep families healthy, it can further protect the impact of humanity on the earth resources.

## Anchoring Breastfeeding as a Climate-Smart Decision

While a lot of people have some knowledge on the good effects of breastfeeding, very few have adequate knowledge to make them want to take action. Using social media as a platform to promote the theme of this year’s breastfeeding week could go a long way to promote breastfeeding as many people spend their time on social media.

Not everyone spends time on social media – some do not even have access to the internet where they live. The message can be sent to them using fun-filled television and radio programs that highlight the importance of breastfeeding to environmental protection.

For those who cannot access any of the above, education on theme during ANC and CWC visits can prove successful in anchoring the theme.

## Engaging with Individuals and Organisations for Greater Impact

Engaging with the people who are directly or indirectly involved in the mother-child relationship can have great impact on breastfeeding.

Fathers could be encouraged to come for CWC visits so they are educated on the need to support their partners during the critical period of breastfeeding. The should, as well as their partners be educated on how breastfeeding can help protect the environment/climate.

Physicians and midwives could also be better equipped with knowledge to help them better impact mothers and expecting mothers with adequate information on the subject.

Hospital management should be involved enough – for them to be willing to organize seminars and workshops for their staff on topics related to the theme as well as better ways to implement the “child friendly hospital” initiative.

Public health officials should also be better trained so when they go into the communities, they better educate the persons of interest on the theme.

While general nurses are not usually as directly involved the lives of the mother and baby as much as the aforementioned groups, they are also health workers so there is a high probability that they’ll come in contact with the persons of interest and when this happens, they should be well prepared to give information on the subject.

## Galvanising Action on Improving the Health of Planet Throughout Breastfeeding

Encouraging fathers to support their partners during breastfeeding period

Training physicians and health personnel to better understand and also educate mothers and expecting mothers on breastfeeding

Organizing fun-filled radio and television programs on breastfeeding which highlight the effect on the environment

## Conclusion

While some women cannot breastfeed due to conditions beyond their control, it’s important for stakeholders to encourage women who can breastfeed to exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months and then breastfeed with supplementary diet for another year or more through education.