

# MDG-Fund Joint Programme on Ensuring Food Security and Nutrition for Children 0-24 Months Old in the Philippines

## The Challenge



For a poor family, feeding an infant with milk formula could mean cutting their spending on other basic needs. In the Philippines, as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>1</sup> a poor family (with an average income of Php7,280 for a family of five) needs to spend about 30 per cent of their income to milk formula to be able to feed an infant. It would be harder to provide the needs for the other members of the family if the milk formula eats too much of the family's budget.

Things are much harder for working mothers in the country as many of them feel the pressure returning to their jobs after giving birth due to financial reasons and concern for their job security.

Moreover, maternity leave in the country is only limited to 8.5 weeks (60 days). This is less than the 14 weeks maternity leave stated in the 2000 ILO Maternity Protection Convention No. 183, which the Philippines has yet to ratify.

As a result, most working mothers are forced to give up exclusively breastfeeding their children from 0 to 6 months and continued breastfeeding 6 months up to two years and beyond; and resort to feeding their infants with expensive infant formula. This deprives the children of optimum nutrition critical to their growth and development.

## The Response

The International Labour Organization (ILO), in partnership with other United Nations agencies, takes extra effort to promote maternity protection in the workplace. A Joint Programme through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Achievement Fund is deemed essential in promoting the advocacy and interventions to create an enabling environment and encourage women workers and nursing mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding in the formal and informal workplace. Particularly, the programme is being implemented in three Joint Programmes cities – Naga City, Iloilo City, and Zamboanga City.

This Joint Programme is geared towards contributing to the achievement of the MDG in addressing extreme poverty, hunger, and reducing child mortality rate by complementing the government's efforts of improving infant and young child feeding practices among children 0-24 months old.

Three urban and two rural sites were identified based on poverty levels, prevalence, and magnitude of undernutrition among young children. To ensure the sustainability of the Joint Programme, national government agencies, local government units, health partners managers, and constituents from the labour sector and other partners have been and will continue to get engaged in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the programme.

### Key Statistics

- The World Health Organization reported that poor breastfeeding practices in the Philippines have resulted to additional 1.2 million more cases of diarrhea and pneumonia. Nine out of 10 infants below 6 months old who died were not breastfed.
- Cases of improper feeding, which include lack or absence of breastfeeding, account for 16,000 out of 82,000 deaths for children 5 years old and below.
- In a national survey conducted last 2005, results showed that one-fourth of Filipino children between 0 and 5 years old were either stunted or underweight.

<sup>1</sup>As stated in the Joint Programme Document of the MDG Achievement Fund Programme on Ensuring Food Security and Nutrition for Children 0-24 Months in the Philippines.

## Objectives

- Increase exclusive breastfeeding rates in the project areas by 20 per cent annually.
- Reduce the prevalence of undernutrition by at least three per cent by 2011.
- Improve the capacities of national and local governments and stakeholders to promote and implement programmes on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

## Relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations

- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)

## Achievements

- Consulted labour sector stakeholders and constituents on the promotion of exclusive and continued breastfeeding in the workplace within the three project areas.
- Developed advocacy materials, strategies, and action plans in promoting and implementing exclusive and continued breastfeeding in the workplace together with national and local implementing partners.
- Developing baseline information on exclusive and continued breastfeeding in the workplace, maternity protection through studies, surveys, and gathering of good practices in the three project areas.
- Developed labour sector positions and inputs to the drafting of the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act 10028 or the Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act of 2009.
- Increased awareness and capacities of labour sector constituents and other implementing partners on the Family Welfare Programme, salient provisions of Republic Act 10028 or the Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act of 2009 and on the principles of the ILO Convention No. 183, Maternity Protection Convention, 2000.
- Through advocacy, awareness raising, and capacity-building, 22 companies in the three project areas have set-up breastfeeding in the workplace programmes and lactation facilities for nursing employees.
- Set-up Lactation Room at the ILO-CO Manila Office for the use of nursing employees and as a demonstration of model intervention on promoting exclusive breastfeeding in the workplace.
- Established partnerships with the local governments of the three project areas in promoting exclusive breastfeeding in the workplace and demonstrating model interventions on exclusive breastfeeding for workers in the informal economy through the setting-up of three public lactation stations in the project areas.
- Developed Monitoring and Evaluation Tools for Local Government Units for use of public lactation stations and exclusive breastfeeding programmes for workers in the informal economy.



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## Components

**Donor:** Government of Spain

**Start Date:** November 2009

**End Date:** April 2013

**Budget:** US\$287,332

**Partners:** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WHO, World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Philippine Government, and other Social Partners

**ILO Project Sites:** Naga City, Iloilo City, and Zamboanga City



**Updated: November 2012**