

TRACK 2: SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING FAR AND WIDE

Reaching the most vulnerable in Africa: An experience of breastfeeding in Uganda

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OBJECTIVES

- To share my experience of ILCA partner program and breastfeeding in a developing country - Uganda.
- To illustrate how promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding has contributed to sustainable livelihoods.

ABSTRACT/OUTLINE

In 2008, I became an ILCA member through the partner program sponsored by WALC. Emerging from a developing country – Uganda, with no lactation consultants, ILCA membership has gained me expertise to formation and strengthening of mother support groups. An array of activities among others to support breastfeeding are conducted; home visits, peer counseling, community dialogues, referrals. Through sharing lactation information, our relationship with the local community hospital especially with the midwife has become stronger making it easier for enrollment, breastfeeding follow up to the mothers in groups as they come for ante- and post natal care.

Like for many mothers from diverse cultures, breastfeeding and childbirth are universal whilst others are diverse. Ugandan women too share similar questions with mothers in the developed world in the first few days after child birth. Questions about; my baby is too sleepy to latch on, producing enough milk, colic and use of local herbs as treatment, breastfeed or not when living with HIV/AIDs. A Life- threatening experience to babies born to mothers living with HIV/AIDS and contradictory information on optimal infant feeding. Unfortunate options taken not considering the AFASS: Acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable and safe. My presentation will focus on the 3 years membership with ILCA, its great transformation towards; breastfeeding, establishment of sustainable livelihoods through mother support groups and children's support to breastfeeding in Uganda.

- Introduction to Uganda.
- Who is Children In Africa.
- Practices, policies and programmes of Infant and Young Child Feeding.
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Vulnerability of babies, girls and mothers
- Vulnerability at community level
- The value of ILCA membership!
- The strength of ILCA – Sustainable livelihoods.
- ILCA and Established sustainable livelihoods
- Conclusion.

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Reaching Vulnerable Babies, Girls and Women in Africa- An experience of Uganda

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This presentation on Uganda covers:

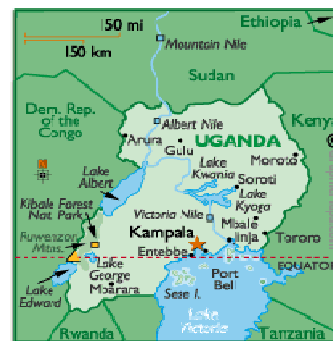
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Introduction to Uganda



Uganda –The Pearl of Africa-located in East Africa,

- Is a land locked country astride the equator. With : A strong culture heritage
- An estimated population of about 31 million people.
- Source of the longest river in Africa- River Nile.
- The second largest fresh water lake in the world - Lake Victoria.
- Half of the entire world's population mountain Gorillas estimated at 720.



Who is Children In Africa(CHIA)?



- Community Based Mother to Mother Support Group Initiative established in December 2005.
- Located in Central Uganda.
- Aim of protecting promoting and supporting breastfeeding
- 350 mothers registered in mother support groups.
- Over 500 moms not registered.
- Works closely with a local hospital – Nkokonjeru.

Practices of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) and vulnerability

- 42% of babies are breastfed within 1 hour of birth.
- 60.1% of babies less than 6 months of age are exclusively breastfed in the last 24 hours.
- Babies are breastfed for a median duration of 20.4 months.
- 11.4% of babies less than 6 months old are receiving other foods or drinks from bottles.
- 77.3% of breastfed babies are receiving complementary foods at 6 to 9 months.

Policies, programmes and vulnerability.

- There is no standard Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) in place .
- No practical training given to doctors, nurses, and clinical Officers on IYCF in pre- service training.
- No policy Framework and legislation for protecting and supporting breastfeeding in private and informal sector.
- IYCF is not included in emergency Action plans.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - Vulnerability of babies, girls and mothers

- Uganda has made remarkable progress to achieving MDGs.
- Insufficient progress to reducing Child and Maternal Mortality.
- Infant Mortality Rate is 78 per 1000 live births = 7.8%.
- Under five Mortality Rate is 134 /1000 live = 13.4%.
- Maternal mortality is 550 per 100,000 live births.

Vulnerability in
community at large

**A mother returns home
with her children from
the garden**



• Many mothers live below 1\$ per day- the poverty levels are high.

- **Breastfeeding questions:** my baby is too sleepy to latch on, producing enough milk, colic and use of local herbs?
- Expressing and storage of breast milk?
- Women work long hours between 12 and 18 hours a day pursuing livelihoods.
- Long distance on bad roads from home to maternity - six to twelve+ kilometers.
- No established mother to mothers support groups.
- Traditional /cultural beliefs and family pressures on breastfeeding.

Vulnerability Cont.....

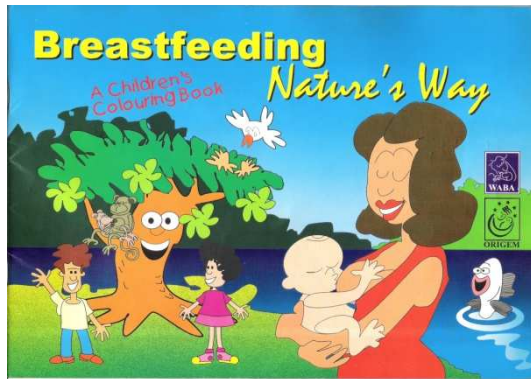
- No specialized equipment e.g. incubator for premature babies at the local hospital.
- Lack of proper information and support to breastfeeding in the health facilities:
 - Use of Kangaroo mother care
 - Reference to outdated information
- General lack of consent of mothers living with HIV/AIDs on feeding options regardless being or not being Acceptable Feasible Affordable, Sustainable and Safe (AFASS).

The value of ILCA membership!

- Registered with ILCA in March 2008
 - with support from Winesconsin Association of Lactation consultants(WALC).
- Have established mother support groups.
- Training pregnant and breastfeeding mothers on the art of breastfeeding.
- Training peer counselors in Infant and Young Child Feeding and conducting home visits.
- Behavioral change approach:
 - working with older women and sharing my experience as a successful breastfeeding working mother.

The strength of ILCA – sustainable livelihoods.

- Launched children's participation in breastfeeding:
 - Children's coloring book- Breastfeeding nature's way.
 - Seven Acts of Kindness



- Strengthened relationship with the local hospital
- Sharing up to date information on breastfeeding:
 - Planning to establish a breastfeeding resource centre.

ILCA and established sustainable livelihoods.

- Communal gardening. Mothers take days to dig each members land reducing on the burden and expenditure on labour. Strengthens social network.
- Establishment of Income generating activities for self sustainability:
 - Mothers are able to get enough for feeding at home and sell.
 - Animal and birds rearing husbandry: cattle, goats, piggery and poultry.
 - Hand Crafts- bags, baskets dresses, jewelry.....
 - Vegetable and Fruit growing:
cabbage, avocado, and carrots, goose berries respectively.

ILCA and established sustainable Livelihoods Cont.....

- Sale of silver fish as a source food and income.
- Establishment of savings and credit scheme from the income obtained animal and crop husbandry.
- Growing and distribution of herbs to support breastfeeding mothers:
 - Fenugreek.
 - Lemon Grass and
 - Moringa as a medicinal and nutritional plant.

ILCA and supportive environments to breastfeeding - Mother support groups in action

- One of the young mothers breastfeeding her baby



- Josephine training mothers in the mother support groups on complementary feeding.



Conclusion

- ILCA partner programme makes a difference in the lives of Ugandan breastfeeding mothers.
- Community support system is fundamental in protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding
- HIV/AIDS poses a great challenge to Breastfeeding and we still have a long way.

Thank you!



- I'm profoundly grateful to the following people; ILCA,WALC,WABA, IBFAN-Uganda, ERGO BABY carrier, LLLI, Nouris-International, Breastfeeding you can do it, my two daughters and the mothers in Uganda, for it would almost be impossible to make this presentation without your support.