

Improving early initiation of breastfeeding among mothers accessing maternity services at private health facilities: A case study of Nakasero Hospital, Kampala, Uganda

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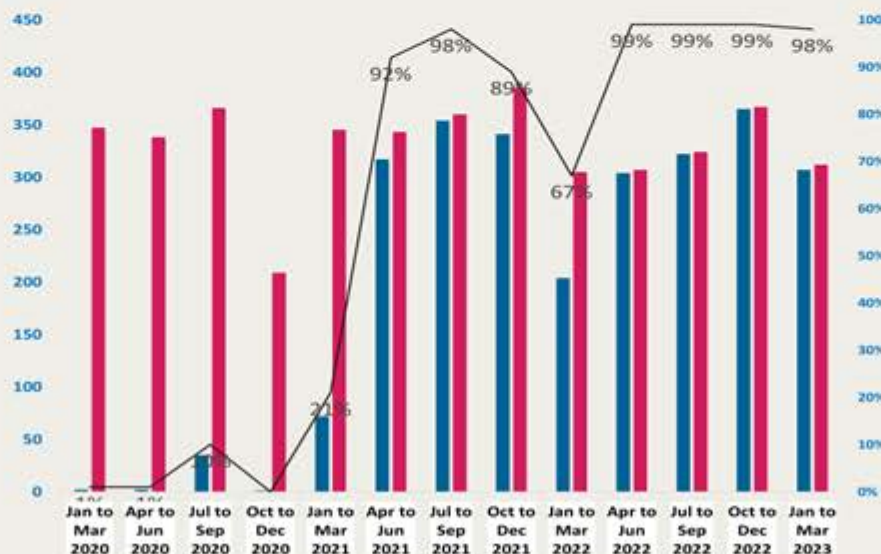
Background

In 2021, Uganda updated and aligned the Baby Friendly Health Facility Initiative implementation guidelines to the WHO/UNICEF 2018 guidance to focus on increasing newborns' access to breastfeeding in all facilities - the foundation of infant health, development, and survival. Most facilities in Kampala are private-for-profit (89%, 1,601/1,797); thus, there is an opportunity to promote optimal breastfeeding practices in the population by engaging private facilities in the initiative. In 2020, Nakasero Hospital, a private for-profit facility, had not integrated breastfeeding services in maternal and child health services.

Methodology

USAID's MCHN Activity worked with the hospital management and nutritionist using root cause analysis and identified gaps that hindered early initiation of breastfeeding. The health workers had limited knowledge on the importance of early initiation of babies to the breast within the first hour of birth and inadequate skills to support mothers to breastfeed. Interventions implemented included: 1) hands-on training of health workers on attachment and positioning of babies to the breast; 2) continued education on breastfeeding for mothers during antenatal care; 3) availed job aids and 4) monthly performance review meetings.

Initiation of breastfeeding in the first hour of birth promotes immunity, and the development of the baby's microbiome reduces newborn mortality and promotes emotional bonding with the mother. Increasing newborn access to breastfeeding in all facilities is the foundation of infant health, development, and survival.



■ No. of mothers who initiated breastfeeding within the 1st hour after delivery

■ Total deliveries in unit -Live births

—% of mothers who initiated breastfeeding within the 1st hour after delivery

Results

Breastfeeding within the first hour of birth improved from 1% to above 95% (DHIS2, 2020 and 2023). Key enablers included engagement of management in performance review meetings, use of audio-visual information, education and communication messages on breastfeeding, and presence of professional nutritionist.

Conclusion

Continuous hands-on skilling of health workers, and use of audiovisual messages on good breastfeeding practices to pregnant mothers increases the number of mothers who initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth.