Breastfeeding and COVID 19 - UNICEF India initiatives

Gayatri Singh
UNICEF, New Delhi

June 2020
Breastfeeding status

57%  Breastfed within 1 hour of birth

58%  Exclusively breastfed

Source: CNNS 2016-18
What was required?

- Equipping health facility and community health workers with correct information
- Allay the fears and address misconceptions among caregivers
- Support mothers suspected/confirmed to have COVID to safely breastfeed
- Rethink communication and counselling in the context of COVID
- Protect breastfeeding from commercial influence
The approach

- Scientific evidence evolving – start with current knowledge
- Partners coordinate for complementarity and reach - common packages for training and communication
- Integrate sensitization into risk communication orientation and other training
- Integrate delivery of messages through various contact points and channels
- Harness the potential and creativity of frontline functionaries
- Mobilize community influencers for support
Key initiatives

- Partners’ coordination
- Development of tool kits
- Joint guidance for functionaries, food businesses and NGOs
- Sensitization of officials to frontline functionaries on COVID 19 and infant feeding
- Messaging through home visits and Village Health and Nutrition Day, WhatsApp, telephone, videos, GRAMSAT, Facebook, tweeter etc.
- Counselling and support to mothers
- Sensitization on IMS Act and advocacy to support breastfeeding from commercial influence
Gains

- Standard tool kits available
- Frontline functionaries better equipped – key messages
- Continuity of communication and counselling in the process of being restored
COVID 19 has refocused attention and emphasis on protecting, promoting and support breastfeeding
Multiple channels and contacts are being used for communication and counselling. It is important to assess coverage and quality.
Thank you.