



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Joint press release: Aga Khan University and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

Karachi and Zug, 5 June 2018

Saving lives of babies living through conflict via better breastfeeding support

New research aims to save the lives of babies living through conflict and in refugee situations by helping their mothers continue breastfeeding.

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF) is financing the research, which is being conducted by the Aga Khan University in Pakistan and the Hospital for Sick Children in Canada, to identify the most effective measures to help mothers breastfeed during protracted crises.

“Acute malnutrition is one of the main reasons infants die during violent conflicts and when families are displaced for long periods of time,” says global health expert and lead researcher Zulfiqar Bhutta. “Interrupted breastfeeding is one of the main causes of this malnutrition. Many women stop breastfeeding when they are forced to flee their homes, while influxes of donated formula also discourage breastfeeding.”

Breastfeeding provides nutritional, immunological and developmental benefits that formula does not provide. In addition, clean water, which is essential for safe formula feeding, is often unavailable in conflict settings, increasing the risk of diarrhea among already vulnerable babies.

Most humanitarian agencies already promote appropriate infant and young child feeding as a part of relief efforts. Innovative techniques are also being employed to encourage breastfeeding in emergencies. This project will study these practices to provide research-based evidence on which interventions work best in conflict settings, particularly in the context of displaced populations. The project will synthesize existing information and collect new data to plug information gaps.

“We hope this research will contribute to new international standards that help UN agencies and NGOs provide the best possible support to breastfeeding mothers who are living through violent conflict and displacement,” says FLRF Chairman Göran Larsson.

“We must help ensure that even children who start their lives in the worst possible circumstances get the best possible start through the benefits of breastfeeding,” adds FLRF Managing Director Katharina Lichtner.

Findings from the study are expected to be published in early 2019. This research forms part of a larger project investigating how to best deliver reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition interventions in conflict settings.

Aga Khan University

Chartered in 1983, the Aga Khan University is a private university that promotes human welfare through research, teaching and community service. Based on the principles of quality, access, impact and relevance, the University has campuses and programmes in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and the United Kingdom. It comprises teaching hospitals, Faculties of Health Sciences, Institutes for Educational Development, the AKU Examination Board, the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, the Graduate School of Media and Communications, the East Africa Institute and the Institute for Human Development. Faculties of Arts and Sciences are to be established in Pakistan and East Africa. The University imbues promising future leaders and thinkers with an ethic of service and the skills to help communities solve their most pressing challenges. Admission to AKU is merit-based and need-blind. AKU is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network, a group of private development agencies with mandates ranging from health and education to architecture, culture, microfinance, rural development, disaster reduction, the promotion of private-sector enterprise and the revitalisation of historic cities.

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Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation is one of the first foundations in the world with a prime focus on promoting and supporting breast milk and breastfeeding. Based in Zug, Switzerland, it was founded in 2013 with the aim of promoting the scientific and public recognition of breastfeeding and human milk as – given the current state of science – the best nutrition for newborns and infants. It considers itself as an instigator and promoter of new knowledge. The Foundation invests globally in projects and scientific research in breastfeeding and breast milk. It places high value on multidisciplinary collaboration and supports projects with a sustainable impact on the well-being of mother and child.

www.larsson-rosenquist.org

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