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## **Yale School of Public Health and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation continue their partnership with a global project to promote breastfeeding, now expanding to Great Britain, Germany, Myanmar and Samoa**

Becoming Breastfeeding Friendly (BBF): A Guide to Global Scale-Up, the evidence-based programme developed to increase breastfeeding rates globally and pretested in Ghana and Mexico, is expanding to include England, Scotland and Wales (Great Britain) plus Germany, Myanmar and Samoa.

The Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, with support from the Swiss-based Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF), developed the BBF programme to help increase breastfeeding rates around the world. The evidence-based framework guides countries in assessing their readiness to scale up breastfeeding. Its goal: sustainably improve the effectiveness of in-country initiatives that protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

The FLRF recently allocated an additional USD 1.5 million toward the BBF programme's global dissemination, strengthening its close partnership with the YSPH and world-renowned Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, Rafael Pérez-Escamilla. The BBF programme involves a five-step process, including application of a suite of benchmarks to accurately assess roadblocks to successful breastfeeding on a country-wide level. It also provides case studies to assist decision-makers in implementing it most effectively. The BBF programme helps countries identify gaps in their own breastfeeding programmes, thus enabling focused resource allocation, ultimately leading to improved breastfeeding results.

"Because breastfeeding is so crucial for maximizing the health and development of mothers and children, the BBF programme is designed to lead to significant healthcare cost savings for countries that implement it," said Pérez-Escamilla. This objective aligns with recent statements by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, identifying breastfeeding as one of the most cost-effective health interventions a nation can make.

Breastfeeding bestows a wide range of health benefits to infants, including transmission of essential nutrients for growth and development, and improved protection against many common childhood illnesses. Moreover, scaling up breastfeeding is estimated to prevent over 820,000 child deaths per year, globally. Breastfeeding also has a wide range of health benefits for mothers, including reducing the risks of developing breast and ovarian cancer, and chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

Breastfeeding rates must improve around the world to meet the WHO's 2025 global target of increasing the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months to at least 50%<sup>2</sup>. Great Britain, Germany, Myanmar and Samoa, along with pioneers Mexico and Ghana, have accepted the challenge to reach this target by implementing the BBF programme.

Dr. Katharina Lichtner, Managing Director of FLRF, said the YSPH team has been highly effective in pretesting the BBF programme in Mexico and Ghana, and that enrolling six additional countries in this second stage is a remarkable achievement. "Seeing countries from such diverse regions committing to the BBF programme is testament to the quality of the programme and YSPH's work," she added.

The BBF programme also has the potential to improve infant and maternal health in areas beyond breastfeeding. YSPH Associate Research Scientist Amber Hromi-Fiedler believes it could be adapted to benefit other maternal-child health and nutrition programmes, such as pre-conception nutrition, complementary feeding and early child development.

Göran Larsson, Chairman of the FLRF's Board, concludes that the success of the BBF programme is central to the Foundation's mission to empower countries to scale up their own breastfeeding programmes. "This is indeed a very complex task and we are extremely pleased that Professor Pérez-Escamilla and his YSPH team are meeting the challenge," he said.



Learn more about the project: <http://www.bbf.yale.edu/>

1. Rollins N C, Bhandari N, Hajeebhoy N, Horton S, Lutter C K, Martines J C, Piwoz E G, Richter L M, Victora C G, 'Why invest, and what it will take to improve breastfeeding practices?' *www.thelancet.com* Vol 387 January 30, 2016

2. WHO. Global Targets 2025: <http://www.who.int/nutrition/global-target-2025> (accessed January 2018)

### **Yale School of Public Health**

The Yale School of Public Health is one of the first accredited schools of public health in the United States. Each M.P.H. class has around 200 students, a size that fosters close ties with classmates and faculty, who in turn form the foundation of their career network upon graduation. Students have ample opportunity to meet and work directly with YSPH faculty, 75 of whom teach as well as do research. Formal relationships are forged through academic advising, internship planning and the thesis project. The YSPH provides leadership to protect and improve the health of the public. Through innovative research, policy analysis, and education that draws upon multidisciplinary scholarship from across the graduate and professional programmes at Yale, the school serves communities from the local to the global level with its knowledge and expertise. Learn more: [www.publichealth.yale.edu](http://www.publichealth.yale.edu).

### **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. Learn more: [www.larsson-rosenquist.org](http://www.larsson-rosenquist.org)

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