



Photo by Richard Lord

SUCCESS STORY: **LESOTHO**

Helping babies grow up healthy and strong

When Mamorena Namane gave birth to her first child in rural Lesotho, her husband's parents encouraged her to delay breastfeeding until the baby's umbilical cord fell off—a common cultural practice. Mamorena fed the child only water for the first seven days of his life, eventually adding breastmilk and soft porridge to his diet.

The little boy was frequently ill as an infant—but it wasn't until Mamorena volunteered as a community health worker that she learned non-exclusive breastfeeding may have been the cause.

International recommendations advise beginning breastfeeding in the first hour after a baby's birth. The tradition of delaying breastfeeding is common throughout Lesotho, but for newborn babies, the results can be life-threatening. When infants are not exclusively breastfed, the foods and liquids—even water—they consume put them at risk of illness, infection, stunted growth, and death. Breastmilk is the perfect food for babies because it is the safest way to feed infants in the first six months and gives them the critical nutrients, antibodies, and fluids they need to stay healthy.



Photo by Makatleho Masobabi

Exclusive breastfeeding helped Mamorena's second baby (above) grow healthy and strong.

Improving nutrition for young children

In Lesotho, where nearly half of infants receive liquid and solid foods prematurely, the Infant and Young Child Nutrition (IYCN) Project is boosting awareness among families and communities about healthy and safe feeding practices for young children. IYCN staff train community health workers to support mothers in optimal and safe breastfeeding practices, including exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months and optimal and safe feeding practices for infants and young children ages 6 to 24 months. For HIV-positive mothers, the IYCN Project is improving counseling to assist mothers with safe and optimal feeding practices that help ensure HIV-free survival for infants and young children.

Malnutrition contributes to more than one-third of child deaths in poor countries. The IYCN Project focuses on improving nutrition during the critical time period from a mother's pregnancy until her child is 2 years old. Through the project, mothers learn how to keep their young infants and children healthy and well-nourished.

For Mamorena, a thriving son

It was during her second pregnancy that Mamorena participated in an IYCN training workshop and learned the benefits of breastfeeding—breastmilk helps babies build immunity and protects them from illness. Mamorena told her husband about the importance of early breastfeeding, and he in turn shared the information with his parents. When Mamorena and her husband welcomed their second son, her in-laws urged her to start breastfeeding immediately.

Now, Mamorena proudly describes how big and healthy her younger boy is, and how her entire family has supported optimal feeding practices for her baby. As a community health worker, she's sharing what she learned with people throughout her village to help women overcome cultural barriers to early and exclusive breastfeeding—and to be sure every baby has a chance to grow up healthy and strong.

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Learn more about the
IYCN Project at www.iycn.org

ABOUT THE INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD NUTRITION PROJECT

The Infant and Young Child Nutrition Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The project is led by PATH and includes three partners: CARE, the Manoff Group, and University Research Co., LLC. For more information, please contact info@iycn.org.



Photos from left to right: PATH/Mike Wang; PATH; Philippe Blanc; Aurelio Ayala III