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**Topic:** Malnutrition treatment and prevention

**Title:** Improved Breastfeeding Support to Treat Acute Malnutrition amongst Infants under 6 months (IBAMI)

**Presentation Type:** Oral

Globally, 4.7 million infants suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Recent data suggests that survival of these infants during and after admission is very poor: In a recently completed clinical trial (<https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT00934492>) mortality during 1 year follow up is 31 per 100 child years and weight gain during 1 year of follow up was poor. Breastfeeding is the main thrust of the WHO updated treatment guidelines and hence interventions within this age group are anchored on improving breastfeeding, however no studies have tested optimization of breastfeeding in this context, thus key questions still remain unanswered: is successful re-establishing exclusive breastfeeding during inpatient treatment maintained after discharge and result in nutritional recovery and survival?

We proposed conducting a prospective cohort study involving 90 infants aged 4 weeks to 4 months admitted with SAM at the Kilifi County Hospital (KCH). Study participants will be managed as per the WHO treatment guidelines and followed up at 1, 2, 4 and 8 weeks. Anthropometry, breastfeeding status, morbidity and mortality will be collected. Views on challenges and drivers of breastfeeding retention will also be collected, and a package of support designed.

The primary outcome is the proportion of infants under 6 months exclusively breastfeeding 4 weeks after discharge. The findings will provide baseline data on breastfeeding retention rate in the absence of an intervention. This data will directly inform sample size estimation and design for a clinical trial testing breastfeeding support packages for infants discharged from SAM treatment.