

PRESS RELEASE

Breastfeeding can save 1.3 million babies lives yearly - world celebrates breastfeeding week, supports UN Millenium Development Goals



United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has said that by expanding the number of women who exclusively breastfeed during their child's first six months, at least 1.3 million infant lives can be saved in a year. The Lancet, in its Child Survival series, has also stated that exclusive breastfeeding and improved complementary feeding practices, would reduce under-5 mortality by 19%, far more than any other intervention. The World Health Organisation (WHO), commissioned a systematic review of more than 3000 published scientific literature and the findings confirmed that exclusive breastfeeding meets all nutritional needs of a baby for the first six months of life.

Breastfeeding together with Complementary Feeding is one of the most effective cross-cutting components that helps to achieve all eight Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). It is exactly for these reasons that this year's World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) theme focusses on the importance of continued breastfeeding and complementary feeding. Into it's 14th year, the annual World Breastfeeding Week which is celebrated in more than 120 countries around the world, is promoting the slogan "Breastfeeding and Family Foods : Loving and Healthy. Feeding other foods while breastfeeding is continued".

For the very best start in life, WHO, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and other health agencies worldwide recommend that mothers breastfeed their babies exclusively for the first six months and continue breastfeeding together with giving other foods and drinks up to two years or more. It is this vital factor that will improve young child feeding practices and ultimately meet all eight Millenium Development Goals to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

GOAL 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and food hunger :

Breastfeeding provides a safe and secure food source and exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding for two years is associated with reduction in underweight and is an excellent source of high calories for energy. Breastfeeding provides breastmilk, serving as low-cost, high quality, locally produced food and sustainable food security for the child.

GOAL 2 Achieve universal primary education :

Breastfeeding and adequate complementary are prerequisites for readiness to learn. Breastfeeding and quality complementary feeding significantly contribute to cognitive development and capacity.

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International, Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) and LINKAGES. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) • WABA, PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia • Tel: 60-4-6584 816 • Fax: 60-4-6572 655 • Email: waba@streamyx.com • Website: www.waba.org.my

☑ **GOAL 3 Promote gender equality and empower women :**

Optimal feeding gives the best start in life for infants and young children, both for boys and girls.

☑ **GOAL 4 Reduce child mortality :**

By reducing infectious disease incidence, breastfeeding and improved complementary feeding could readily reduce child mortality by 19%, more than any other single health intervention.

☑ **GOAL 5 Improve maternal health :**

Breastfeeding plays a major part in safe childbearing and aids in child-spacing. It contributes to women's health by reducing blood loss, anaemia and the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

☑ **GOAL 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:**

Breastfeeding helps the child's developing immune system to resist infection such as diarrhoea and exclusive breastfeeding leads to lower HIV transmissions rates than other forms of breastfeeding.

☑ **GOAL 7 Ensure environmental sustainability:**

Unlike replacement products, breastfeeding is an environmentally sustainable source of food for infants and young children.

☑ **GOAL 8 Developing a global partnership for development :**

The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding fosters multi-sectoral collaborations and can build upon the extent partnerships for support and development through breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

Breastfeeding has a key role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and international and national health programs should monitor the rate of breastfeeding at six months as an indicator of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

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