

commitment to the issue. Over the last decade, breastfeeding rates have been relatively stagnant, and given that the challenge of women's work continues to be a major obstacle, it was seen as a high priority. Several major highlights of the Symposium included the recognition among the UN bodies that there is a need for harmonising global policies across UN agencies that affect policies and practices around MP, as well as a call for greater attention to the economic arguments for breastfeeding:

"The Symposium explored and concluded that a mixture of public and private financing of MP is necessary, and that advocacy on this could be assisted through the use of cost-benefit analyses of breastfeeding (and unpaid care work) to companies' balance sheets and to the economy as a whole. In the informal sectors of the economy, some governments have begun services that succeed in reaching out to some women, but this is patchy and focuses less on support for optimal breastfeeding."⁵

Additionally, the Symposium strongly recognised the need for "an enhanced role for men and other partners of breastfeeding mothers. There was support to promote more gender-balance in both MP legislation, and in information and communication messages to encourage partners to be more engaged in enabling optimal breastfeeding practices. Terminology and imagery such as the dyad of mother and child needs to be changed to the triad of mother, partner and child, as well as gender equitable provisions for parental leave that can help to transform social norms into being more contemporary."⁶

WABA's new outreach partner, Men Care, has become a more active participant in breastfeeding advocacy. When one of its key actors was asked the following question: 'What has the experience of breastfeeding been like for you (the highs and lows)?' the response was very reassuring.

For me, participating in breastfeeding gave me an opportunity to bond with my babies and with my partner too. It also taught me other aspects of baby care, such as learning that a father's presence in a newborn child's life helps the baby grow. I've learnt that mothers need our support as men especially during this period. A low point for me is when I see a father who does not know what role to play in the process.'

– Thulani Velebayi, a MenCare Trainer

5. Stockholm Symposium Report, WABA 2016.

6. Stockholm Symposium Report, WABA 2016.