

children under 5 by about 20%. Early and exclusive breastfeeding improves newborn care and reduces neonatal mortality, which contributes to the majority of infant deaths. Breastfeeding has been shown repeatedly to be the single most effective way to prevent infant death; it plays a major role in children's health and development, and significantly benefits the health of mothers".

From the larger social justice perspective, WABA has been instrumental in demonstrating how breastfeeding also contributes directly to MDG 1, which focuses on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. According to Amal Omer Salim, key writer of the WBW 2014 action folder, "exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond provide high quality nutrients and adequate energy, and can help prevent hunger and malnutrition. Breastfeeding is a natural and low-cost way of feeding babies and children. It is affordable for everyone and does not burden household budgets compared to artificial feeding".²⁹ "Evidence from a variety of countries indicates that marked improvements in exclusive breastfeeding are often associated with effective regulatory frameworks and guidelines, and when comprehensive programmatic approaches are at scale;" in other words, when governments are willing to invest in IYCF programming on a nationwide basis.

UNICEF's report *Tracking Progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition: A survival and development priority* reported that 23 countries recorded gains of 20 percentage points or more in exclusive breastfeeding rates over the past five to ten years when IYCF programming was scaled up. However, there is still unfinished business requiring urgent attention by governments especially if governments wished to achieve healthy and sustainable development in a comprehensive way beyond 2015. For instance, while global poverty has gone down, one in eight people still go to bed hungry. Meanwhile, under-nutrition affects about a quarter of all children globally. While child mortality has decreased by about 40% in the last two decades, still almost seven million children under-5 die each year, mainly from preventable diseases. As the overall rate of under-5 mortality has declined, the proportion of neonatal deaths (during the first month of life) comprises an increasing proportion of all child deaths. In addition, even though maternal mortality globally has declined from 400 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 210 in 2010, still fewer than half of women deliver in baby-friendly maternities. WABA's WBW materials drew attention to information by the UN's Scientific Committee on Nutrition which illustrated how breastfeeding is linked to each of the Millennium Development Goals and encouraged all WBW participants to continue advocating for optimal IYCF in every sector possible.

29. WBW 2014 Action Folder (See: <http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org/downloads.shtml>)