



**World Health  
Organization**

Statement by the Assistant Director-General  
29 July 2011

## **Talk to Me! Breastfeeding - a 3D experience?**

### **WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK 2011**

The World Health Organization (WHO) is pleased to join the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and many other partners in celebrating World Breastfeeding Week from 1 to 7 August 2011. This year's theme emphasizes the importance of communication and the fact that talking about why breastfeeding matters and exchanging information and experiences is one way of protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

Exclusive breastfeeding has been recognized as the single most effective intervention to reduce under-five mortality; optimal feeding practices - including early initiation, exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding while providing safe and appropriate complementary foods - could reduce mortality among children by one fifth. Breastfeeding also helps mother and child to establish a close and loving relationship.

Communication and advocacy for active involvement in protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding at all levels is important to increase the percentage of exclusively breastfed infants. Currently less than 40% of infants less than six months of age are exclusively breastfed worldwide. Protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding is important because, even though breastfeeding is natural, it is also a learned behaviour.

This decade is one of unprecedented opportunity for improving the health of women and children. In 2010, the UN Secretary General launched the *Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health* aimed at saving 16 million women and children under five years of age in the 49 lowest income countries by 2015. The Strategy is widely endorsed by governments and partners and over 40 billion dollars in commitments have been made towards its implementation. It is accompanied by a Framework for Accountability that includes exclusive breastfeeding as one of 11 core indicators for tracking progress. Moreover, at the 63rd World Health Assembly held in May 2010, a resolution was adopted on infant and young child nutrition which urges Member States to strengthen and expedite the sustainable implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding and implement plans of action to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

Communication is key to attain progress. This year's theme for the World Breastfeeding Week highlights the opportunity of new communication technologies for making qualified support accessible to health care providers, mothers and families. The World Health Organization is working towards a broader use of various technologies for capacity building and access to updated information in many health related areas, including nutrition.

While there is evidence that breastfeeding practices are improving in many countries, much more can be done to unleash the full benefits of optimal breastfeeding for children's and women's health. Let this year's World Breastfeeding Week mark the next step that we take together towards meeting those goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Flavia Bustreo'.

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Family, Women's and Children's Health