

WABA Press Release

22 Years of World Breastfeeding Week!



'BREASTFEEDING: A Winning Goal - for Life!'



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Breastfeeding Action

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Adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000, the eight global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set in 1990 by governments and the United Nations to fight poverty and promote healthy and sustainable development by 2015. Breastfeeding is linked to them all.

This year the WABA Coordinated World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) theme responds to the current MDG countdown process by asserting the importance of increasing and sustaining the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in the post 2015 agenda and beyond, and by engaging as many groups, and people of various ages as possible on this issue.

Between 1-7 August this year, WABA and breastfeeding advocates in over 175 countries worldwide will be celebrating the WBW theme **'BREASTFEEDING: A Winning Goal - for Life!'** highlighting that achieving the Millennium Development Goals (especially MDGs 4 and 5¹) requires more early, exclusive and continued breastfeeding. Breastfeeding needs to be protected, promoted and supported by ALL. As such, we need to build on the successes and address the shortcomings of the MDG process.

"By protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding we can all contribute to each of the MDGs in a substantial way. Exclusive breastfeeding and adequate appropriate complementary feeding are key interventions for improving child survival, potentially reducing deaths among children under five 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," notes WABA Chairperson, Dr. Felicity Savage.

Amal Omer-Salim, Senior Technical Advisor to WABA and key writer for the WBW 2014 Action Folder, asserts that, *"Breastfeeding is key to the MDGs! For example, in terms of MDG 1 which focuses on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, 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"*. The Action Folder goes on to make the links between all eight MDGs and breastfeeding. (See: <http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org/downloads.shtml>)

"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" argues Omer-Salim, citing UNICEF's report 'Tracking Progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition: A survival and development priority'².



OBJECTIVES OF WBW 2014

- To inform people about the MDGs and how they relate to breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).
- To showcase the progress made so far and the key gaps in improving breastfeeding and IYCF.
- To call attention to the importance of STEPPING UP actions to protect, promote and support breastfeeding as a key intervention in the MDGs AND in the post -2015 era.
- To stimulate interest amongst young people of both genders to see the relevance of breastfeeding in today's changing world.

“Over the past 5–10 years, for example, 23 countries have recorded gains of 20 percentage points or more in exclusive breastfeeding rates. The implementation of large-scale programmes in these countries were based on national policies, and were often guided by the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, a joint initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, which promotes the adoption and implementation of national legislation on the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and maternity protection for working women”, notes Omer-Salim of findings in the UNICEF report. “The Strategy also includes ensuring that breastfeeding is initiated in maternity facilities (and that no infant formula is used), building health-worker capacity to offer counselling on infant and young child feeding, and mother-to-mother support groups in the community, accompanied by communication strategies to promote breastfeeding, using multiple channels and messages tailored to the local context”, she adds.

She concludes by stressing that, *“Although much progress has taken place concerning the MDGs, there is still a lot of ‘unfinished business’ that requires urgent attention by governments now. The aforementioned strategies would be vital for action by any government wanting to achieve healthy and sustainable development in a comprehensive way beyond 2015”.*

Twenty two years ago the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) launched the World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) campaign to focus and facilitate actions to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Since then, each year, WBW has put the spotlight on various breastfeeding issues by not only coordinating the campaign but also producing a wealth of materials for people to use to take action.

WBW 2014 Action Folder provides a variety of information on the issue of breastfeeding: from how it is linked to each of the MDGs; where we are today in terms of achieving the MDGs; why achieving the MDGs (Goals 4 and 5 especially) requires more early, exclusive and continued breastfeeding; the links to larger global development issues; and what people can do to promote, protect and support breastfeeding in relation to the MDGs. Once again WABA has also created a special Website to coordinate and link people on the theme (see: <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>). This website is a one stop centre where celebrants will be able to download WBW 2014 materials such as the Action Folder and related Poster, and translations of these materials. WABA encourages all celebrants to utilise this site and make pledges for their events so that we will be able to share their activities with the world!

WABA looks forward to collaborating with celebrants around the world to make World Breastfeeding Week 2014 a success in Protecting, Promoting, Supporting Breastfeeding, and asserting this as a key strategy for sustainable, healthy and just development in the MDGs assessment, and for the Post 2015 agenda!

Note:

1. MDG 4 - Reduce Child Mortality; MDG 5 - Improve Maternal Health. See: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
2. ‘Tracking Progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition: A survival and development priority’, UNICEF, 2009. See: http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_51656.html

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Past WBWs site: <http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.net/>

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. WABA action is based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF & an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).