



# WABA | WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK

# BREASTFEEDING

## A Key to Sustainable Development

1-7  
AUGUST  
2016



Jose Antonio © WABA 2013

## INTRODUCTION

Do you care about people, the planet, prosperity and peace? Join the many who believe in sustainable development - people who currently live in a way that does not harm the generations to come. This year's World Breastfeeding Week focuses on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that governments around the world have agreed to achieve by 2030.<sup>1</sup> The SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and cover a range of issues on ecology, economy and equity. The new SDGs aspire to tackle the root causes of poverty and offer a vision of development that works for all people, everywhere. World Breastfeeding Week 2016 marks a new start for us to work together and show how we can achieve sustainable development through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.

## Objectives of WABA | World Breastfeeding Week 2016

To inform people about the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how their achievement can be facilitated by improved breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

To firmly anchor breastfeeding as a key component of sustainable development.



### 3 GALVANISE

To galvanise a variety of actions at all levels on breastfeeding and IYCF in the new era of the SDGs.



### 4 ENGAGE

To engage and collaborate with a wider range of actors around the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

New evidence presented in the UK medical journal, the Lancet, confirms that optimal breastfeeding could save 823,000 child lives and add \$302 billion to the global economy annually.<sup>2</sup> Breastfeeding lays the foundation for good health for all children both in the short and long term, and also benefits mothers. However, global breastfeeding rates have remained stagnant for the past two decades. Less than 40 % of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed. In actual fact, women face many barriers to breastfeeding. They may receive inaccurate information from health providers, lack lactation support from male partners within the household, have no access to skilled breastfeeding counselling, face aggressive marketing of breastmilk substitutes or be forced to return to work soon after giving birth. These barriers make it exceedingly difficult for women to breastfeed exclusively for six months (with no additional liquids or food) and to continue breastfeeding for two years or longer, as recommended by the World Health Organization.<sup>3</sup> We know what needs to be done to support and enable mothers to breastfeed optimally, but we need to be more proactive and engage more people to make this a reality. Linking breastfeeding with the SDGs helps us to do this.

## HOW TO READ THE ACTION FOLDER

The action folder explains how breastfeeding is linked to each of the SDGs individually (see insert) and along four thematic areas. The thematic areas are interlinked SDGs, which represent the strongest links to breastfeeding. You will find the relevant SDGs at the top of each page. Each thematic area starts with a short imaginary scenario which illustrates the link between breastfeeding and the thematic SDG area. This is followed by some useful facts and figures that you may use for your advocacy campaign. Finally, there are some examples of actions that you may take up at whatever level you are working on. At the end of the action folder, you will find a section on ways of working to achieve the SDGs through sustainable partnerships and the rule of law. We hope you will enjoy reading the action folder and find it useful for your work.

[www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org](http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org)



**THE GLOBAL GOALS**  
For Sustainable Development



- References**
1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. WHA resolution 70/1. 2015
  2. Why invest, and what it will take to improve breastfeeding practices. Rollins, Nigel C et al. The Lancet, Volume 387, Issue 10017, 491-504
  3. Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. Victora, Cesar G. et al., The Lancet, Volume 387, Issue 10017, 475-490. 2016

# NUTRITION, FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION



## IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO

In an isolated land where famine is common, mothers are known to breastfeed their children until they become toddlers. These mothers know that breastfeeding is sustenance and food security for their young children. When famine strikes and hunger comes with a vengeance, they see that young children who are not breastfed are vulnerable, and are often the first to die. In low-income areas particularly, mothers commonly stop breastfeeding only when they feel that their child is big and strong enough to no longer need that protection. Discouraging mothers from continuing to breastfeed through the 2nd year of their child's life has a potential short term as well as lifelong consequences. Food security includes an invisible component—protection for an unknown future through breastfeeding. Breastmilk is an affordable form of nutrition and as such an important way of reducing the effects of poverty.



Chandan Dey © WABA 2008

### To think about:

What role does breastfeeding have in promoting good nutrition and food security in your community?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- Undernutrition, including sub-optimal breastfeeding, underlies 45% of all deaths of children under 5 annually.<sup>4</sup>
- The most prevalent form of malnutrition, nutritional stunting (low height for age), is already prevalent at birth and continues to increase sharply until 24 months of age. This window of opportunity for reducing stunting is the 1000 days from conception until 2 years of age.<sup>5</sup>
- Early investments in prevention of low birth weight, prevention of stunting, and early initiation of and exclusive breastfeeding, contribute to reducing the risk of later obesity and chronic diseases.<sup>6</sup>
- Not breastfeeding is associated with economic losses of about \$302 billion annually or 0.49% of world gross national income.<sup>7</sup>
- Families worldwide spend an estimated \$54 billion annually purchasing milk formula.<sup>7</sup>
- Adults who were breastfed as children were found to have higher incomes than those who were not breastfed.<sup>8</sup>

## ACTIONS

- 1 Check available local breastfeeding statistics with local health services. Talk to mothers about their experiences. Plan actions based on what you learn about the situation.
- 2 Engage fathers within the mother-to-mother breastfeeding groups and discuss the importance of their support for infant feeding, and how they can do this.
- 3 Help people in your community to see breastfeeding, timely complementary feeding and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years or beyond as normal. For example, boys and girls especially need to see women breastfeeding so that they learn about it.
- 4 Ensure that local health facilities, pharmacies and grocery stores adhere to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. Use the IBFAN monitoring kit to assess Code compliance.
- 5 Work with agricultural extension programmes to extend breastfeeding support to rural communities.

References 4. Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. Black RE, et al. The Lancet. 2013.

5. De Onis M, et al. The World Health Organization's Global Target for Reducing Childhood Stunting by 2025: Rationale and Proposed Actions, Maternal and Child Nutrition. 2013.

6. Christian, P et al. Risk of childhood undernutrition related to small-for-gestational age and preterm birth in low- and middle-income countries. International Journal of Epidemiology. 2013.

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8. Victora CG, Horta BL, de Mola CL, et al. Association between breastfeeding and intelligence, educational attainment, and income at 30 years of age: a prospective birth cohort study from Brazil. The Lancet. 2015.

# SURVIVAL, HEALTH, AND WELLBEING

1 NO  
POVERTY3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING4 QUALITY  
EDUCATION10 REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES

## IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO

Anna is born in a poor urban area. Anna's mother had seen milk powder widely advertised, but she and Anna's aunts always believed that mother's milk is best. As weeks go by, Anna is active and develops well. Her immunisations are completed on time and she has had no illness, so her mother is able to work. The community nurse is trained in breastfeeding support and praises Anna's mother, reminding her that breastfeeding also helps to protect mothers from diseases like breast cancer. At times, there is little money for food but Anna has had a nutrition cushion as she breastfed into her second year and eats family foods. The years pass and Anna goes to school. The teacher notices how quickly Anna learns, and informs her mother. Anna's mother knows her milk helped Anna's brain and eyes to develop well, and that having little illness meant Anna's energy was used to grow and learn. Anna is still young but her future is bright because she had a good start from her mother's milk, and that gift will be important throughout her life. Breastmilk can help children out of poverty by helping them to attain higher levels of education and income for a better future.



Telma Geovanini©WABA 2012

### To think about:

What does breastfeeding look like in your community? How many hospitals or maternity facilities are Baby-Friendly?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- The financial cost of a program to implement the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding in 214 countries is estimated at \$130 per live birth. "Investment in effective services to increase and sustain breastfeeding rates is likely to provide a return within a few years, possibly as little as one year."<sup>9</sup>
- On average, babies who are breastfed have a 2.6 point higher intelligence quotient than non-breastfed babies, with larger differences for longer durations of breastfeeding.<sup>10</sup>
- Breastfeeding provides the foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. Children and mothers who do not breastfeed are at greater risk for many conditions including acute and chronic illness for children, and breast and ovarian cancer for mothers.<sup>11</sup>
- 823,000 children die annually due to sub-optimal infant feeding practices.<sup>11</sup>
- 20,000 deaths due to breast cancer could be averted if mothers breastfed optimally.<sup>11</sup>

## ACTIONS

- 1 Talk to politicians and other leaders about the value of improving breastfeeding rates to achieve SDGs- keep breastfeeding on the agenda.
- 2 Work to ensure that all mothers in the community have access to skilled breastfeeding care.
- 3 Advocate for national health regulations which ensure that the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding are integrated into maternity care at all birthing facilities.  
  
See: <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/tenstps.htm>
- 4 Advocate for breastfeeding to be fully included in the curriculum for pre-service training of all physicians and nurses.

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

6 CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION7 AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES12 RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION13 CLIMATE  
ACTION14 LIFE BELOW  
WATER15 LIFE  
ON LAND

## IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO

In any journey, it is the first step that counts. Breastfeeding is the first practical step we can take to protect not only the health of babies and mothers but also the health of our planet — right from the start, by providing green and sustainable nourishment to babies. Artificial feeding contributes to global warming which is causing climate change, with catastrophic results. It is the most vulnerable populations that are worst affected by stronger and more frequent typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones. Amidst the devastation caused by natural disasters, artificial feeding is extra risky as lack of clean water and infrastructure make it difficult to ensure safe and efficient preparation of baby food without adequate refrigeration and clean boiled water; while breastfeeding safeguards children's health and provides comfort to them and their mothers, who may have lost everything. Breastfeeding counsellors can work with families to alleviate their suffering, helping to support traumatised mothers to find the confidence to maintain breastfeeding or to relactate.



Jaime © WBW 2015

### To think about:

What can you say to young people in your community about breastfeeding and the environment?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

Breastmilk is a “natural, renewable food” that is environmentally safe and produced and delivered to the consumer without pollution, packaging, or waste.”<sup>12</sup>

Formula production and use generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which accelerate global warming and also produce pollution and toxic emissions from garbage disposal. Although not yet quantifiable in monetary terms, there are environmental costs associated with not breastfeeding babies.<sup>13</sup>

720,450 tonnes of milk formula sold annually in 6 Asian countries generated almost 2.9 million tonnes of GHG. This is equivalent to nearly 7000 million miles driven by an average passenger vehicle or 1.03 million tonnes of waste sent to landfill sites.<sup>12</sup>

It is estimated that more than 4000 L of water are needed to produce 1 kg of breastmilk substitute powder.<sup>12</sup>

Breastfeeding means less GHG, environmental degradation and pollution.<sup>12</sup>

Breastfeeding helps the transition to a low-carbon economy from one based on fossil fuels. No electricity is needed to produce breastmilk and it requires no fuel for transport, thus reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas.<sup>12</sup>

## ACTIONS

- 1 Advocate with your government to include improvement of breastfeeding practices as part of their work for achieving the SDGs.
- 2 Encourage researchers to quantify the carbon footprint of formula feeding in your country.
- 3 Use this data to advocate your governments to allocate a budget for policies and programmes to increase breastfeeding alongside those allocated to reduce air pollution.
- 4 Include breastfeeding in any list of actions to reduce our carbon and water footprint, and include breastfeeding in publicity about climate change.

# WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT

1 NO  
POVERTY4 QUALITY  
EDUCATION5 GENDER  
EQUALITY8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE10 REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES

## IMAGINE THIS SCENARIO

**M**other's milk is an essential food resource which needs to be protected. About 830 million women, mainly in developing countries, lack social protection in their job situation. Women are often forced to accept poorly paid, low-quality jobs. When mothers return to work they have less time to care for their children. Breastfeeding may decline, children are ill more often, and school attainment stagnates. Productivity declines as employees need more time off for the care of their non-breastfed children. Family finances are worsened by higher food and medical expenses. Yet, around the world, governments are emphasising women's participation in the labour force as a solution for economic growth, gender equality, and poverty reduction. Women's unpaid caring activities in the household are important to the health, development and well-being of all family members, and must

be recognised in economic and social development strategies. To narrow the gender gap at work, women need support to combine their productive and reproductive roles including breastfeeding, such as paid maternity leave, paid breastfeeding breaks, flexible working arrangements and lactation rooms.



Sonia Puri ©WBW 2010

### To think about:

What support do women receive for breastfeeding once they return to work in your community?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- Maternal employment results in decreased breastfeeding rates with all the known health consequences.<sup>14</sup>
- Every additional month of paid maternity leave decreases the infant mortality rates by 13 %.<sup>15</sup>
- Only 53% of countries meet the ILO 14 week minimum standard for maternity leave.<sup>16</sup>
- Maternity leave policies are effective in increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates.<sup>17</sup>
- Lactation rooms and paid breastfeeding breaks can increase breastfeeding at 6 months.<sup>18</sup>

## ACTIONS

- 1 Find out your country's policy for maternity protection. Also, find out where you live, the type of leave and workplace facilities local employers are providing.
- 2 Advocate at all levels and between sectors for the needs and rights of maternity protection of workers in both the formal and informal sectors.
- 3 Encourage politicians and officials in your country to assess the status of their current maternity and parental protection entitlements and to identify gaps in provision, using existing tools such as the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi).
- 4 Promote paid parental protection policies that are gender equitable, encompassing the care triad and which support co-parenting and breastfeeding.
- 5 Talk to some local employers about how they could make their workplaces support breastfeeding. Promote transformation of workplaces to become 'family friendly'.

This should include:

- a. Provision of accessible crèches which facilitate and support breastfeeding.
- b. Spaces in or near workplaces with the necessary facilities, privacy and hygiene for mothers to comfortably and safely breastfeed or express and store milk.
- c. Flexible working arrangements, breastfeeding breaks or reduced working hours, and teleworking.
- d. Safe and hygienic environments for all workers, and especially for pregnant and lactating mothers, which do not incur employment or wage disadvantages.

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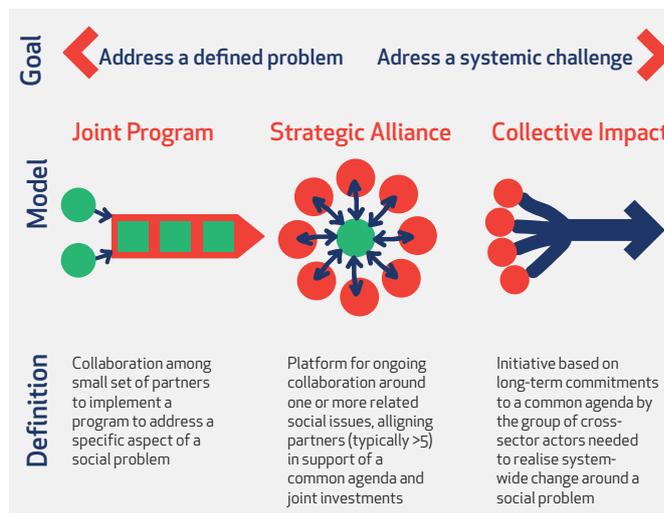
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# SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIP AND THE RULE OF LAW



'It takes a village to raise a child' is a call to each of us to play our part in building an ideal village. We need laws that are fair and to which we all have access. We also need to find new and better ways of working together. SDG 16 aims to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. We are all responsible collectively for our children and the future they will inherit. Children embody the future of humanity. Every child has potential, which can only be fulfilled if rights are respected and responsibilities are fulfilled. The Convention on the Rights of the Child protects the rights of children. Women also have rights against being disadvantaged or treated differently to men, in society or in the workplace. There is much to do to build our longed for village. To improve breastfeeding rates, we need to overcome many challenges: inadequate government policies, lack of information and advice, lack of community support and aggressive sales of breastmilk substitutes. We need a global partnership to overcome them. SDG 17 reminds us that 'Many hands make light work'. We have to work together in order to achieve the village we want. World Breastfeeding Week links change-makers at community, country and regional level to call for global action. We must expand our alliance and work

alongside others beyond the present breastfeeding movement, and together achieve sustainable development and human rights. We can only survive as a species by recognising this balance and interdependence.



Infographic, A basic typology of multi-stakeholder partnerships (from Peterson et al, 2014)

## WORKING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Share the evidence on the value of breastfeeding widely, particularly among those with power and influence. Monitoring of actions and results is also crucial to build the evidence.

Promote a positive attitude to breastfeeding. The more breastfeeding is talked about, the more effective our messages will be.

Advocate for breastfeeding programmes to be included in all health programmes and scaled up.

Enforce the law, including the International Code for Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes as the promotion of these products undermines breastfeeding and the best first food. Infants are unable to make a choice and governments have a duty to protect them.

International conventions set agreed global norms. Work in partnership at the community, national and higher levels to demand that the conventions for children's and womens' rights, such as maternity protection, are reflected in the laws of every country and that these are enforced.

## ACTIONS

- 1 Understand the evidence for the importance of breastfeeding, and the interventions that are needed to increase breastfeeding rates.
- 2 Learn about the relevant international conventions and the laws, regulations and government policy in your country.
- 3 Identify potential allies, and work with them. Create a compelling common case for change. Select 3 to 5 priorities, and develop a common set of actions.
- 4 Be alert to conflicts of interest when choosing allies and supporters.
- 5 Galvanise your campaign with people who have multiple skills.
- 6 Allocate time and resources, including money. Plan well and remain accountable.

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# WABA | WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK

# BREASTFEEDING

## A Key to Sustainable Development

**1** 

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. Breastfeeding contributes to poverty reduction.

**2** 

Exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond provide high quality nutrients and adequate energy and can help prevent hunger, undernutrition and obesity. Breastfeeding also means food security for infants.

**3** 

Breastfeeding significantly improves the health, development and survival of infants and children. It also contributes to improved health and wellbeing of mothers, both in the short and long term.

**4** 

Breastfeeding and adequate complementary feeding are fundamentals for readiness to learn. Breastfeeding and good quality complementary foods significantly contribute to mental and cognitive development and thus promote learning.

**5** 

Breastfeeding is the great equaliser, giving every child a fair and best start in life. Breastfeeding is uniquely a right of women and they should be supported by society to breastfeed optimally. The breastfeeding experience can be satisfying and empowering for the mother as she is in control of how she feeds her baby.

**6** 

Breastfeeding on demand provides all the water a baby needs, even in hot weather. On the other hand, formula feeding requires access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation.

**7** 

Breastfeeding entails less energy when compared to formula production industries. It also reduces the need for water, firewood and fossil fuels in the home.

**8** 

Breastfeeding women who are supported by their employers are more productive and loyal. Maternity protection and other workplace policies can enable women to combine breastfeeding and their other work or employment. Decent jobs should cater to the needs of breastfeeding women, especially those in precarious situations.

**9** 

With industrialisation and urbanisation the time and space challenges become more prominent. Breastfeeding mothers who work outside the home need to manage these challenges and be supported by employers, their own families and communities. Crèches near the workplace, lactation rooms and breastfeeding breaks can make a big difference.

**10** 

Breastfeeding practices differ across the globe. Breastfeeding needs to be protected, promoted and supported among all, but in particular among poor and vulnerable groups. This will help to reduce inequalities.

**11** 

In the bustle of big cities, breastfeeding mothers and their babies need to feel safe and welcome in all public spaces. When disaster and humanitarian crises strike, women and children are affected disproportionately. Pregnant and lactating women need particular support during such times.

**12** 

Breastfeeding provides a healthy, viable, non-polluting, non-resource intensive, sustainable and natural source of nutrition and sustenance.

**13** 

Breastfeeding safeguards infant health and nutrition in times of adversity and weather-related disasters due to global warming.

**14** 

Breastfeeding entails less waste compared to formula feeding. Industrial formula production and distribution lead to waste that pollutes the seas and affects marine life.

**15** 

Breastfeeding is ecological compared to formula feeding. Formula production implies dairy farming that often puts pressure on natural resources and contributes to carbon emissions and climate change.

**16** 

Breastfeeding is enshrined in many human rights frameworks and conventions. National legislation and policies to protect and support breastfeeding mothers and babies are needed to ensure that their rights are upheld.

**17** 

The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (GSIYCF) fosters multi-sectorial collaboration, and can build upon various partnerships for support of development through breastfeeding programs and initiatives.



# Sustainable Development Goals

**1**   
End Poverty in all its forms everywhere

**2**   
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

**3**   
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

**4**   
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

**5**   
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**6**   
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

**7**   
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

**8**   
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

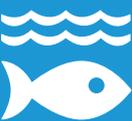
**9**   
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

**10**   
Reduce inequality within and among countries

**11**   
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

**12**   
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

**13**   
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

**14**   
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

**15**   
Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

**16**   
Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

**17**   
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development