

New analysis shows an investment of US\$ 4.70 per newborn could generate US\$ 300 billion in economic gains by 2025

Islamabad/Pakistan, August 14, 2017 – Promotion of breastfeeding could save the lives of 820 000 children under the age of 5, globally, by achieving enhanced rates of breastfed children. This was revealed in a newly released joint WHO-UNICEF report. The report stated that no country in the world fully meets the recommended breastfeeding standards and that only 23 countries, out of 194 nations, have exclusive breastfeeding rates above 60%.

Pakistan stands at 18% for “Early initiation of breastfeeding” and only 37.7% of mothers practise “exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months”. Statistics suggested that 44 per cent of Pakistani children are stunted (lower height for age, having poor cognition and other development milestones). Compliance to early initiation of breastfeeding; exclusive breastfeeding and complimentary breastfeeding for 2 years could significantly reduce stunting in Pakistan.

Moreover, evidence shows that breastfeeding has cognitive and health benefits for both infants and their mothers. Children who are exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life are 14 times more likely to survive than non-breastfed children. It also helps prevent diarrhoea and pneumonia which are major causes of death in infants. Mothers who breastfeed have a reduced risk of ovarian and breast cancer, 2 leading causes of death among women.

“Breastfeeding gives babies the best possible start in life,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO. “Breastmilk works like a baby’s first vaccine, protecting infants from potentially deadly diseases and giving them all the nourishment they need to survive and thrive.”

Global Breastfeeding Collective is making efforts to enable more mothers to breastfeed through enforcing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes so that breast-milk substitute companies cannot mislead women; strengthening policy provisions that support family leave and encourage more working mothers to breastfeed their babies at family place; increasing access and quality to skilled breastfeeding counselling in the health system; fostering community networks that support women in breastfeeding and implementation of Ten Steps of successful breastfeeding in maternity facilities, including providing breastmilk for sick and vulnerable newborns.

Breastfeeding is not a single woman's job. Mothers need assistance and support from their health care providers, families, employers, communities and governments and together, we can support women to breastfeed and protect the health and well-being of future generations.

Breastfeeding is pivotal for the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals. It improves nutrition (SDG2), prevents child mortality and decreases the risk of noncommunicable diseases (SDG3), and supports cognitive development and education (SDG4). Finally breastfeeding is also an enabler to ending poverty, promoting economic growth and reducing inequalities.

Dr Mohamed Assai, WHO Representative to Pakistan, said that mothers should continue breastfeeding for 2 years as breastfeeding could save hundreds of thousands of children by safeguarding them against several diseases. WHO, along with all other relevant United Nations agencies and partners, would continue providing technical support to the Government of Pakistan to ensure that all reproductive health centres and hospitals, whether public or private, were converted into Baby Friendly Health Facilities across the country by 2030.

Related link

[Babies and mothers worldwide failed by lack of investment in breastfeeding](#)

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