



**Understanding the past — Planning the future:
Celebrating 10 years of WHO/UNICEF's Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child
Feeding**

WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK 2012

The World Health Organization (WHO) is pleased to join the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action and many other partners in celebrating the 20th annual World Breastfeeding Week from 1 to 7 August 2012. This year's theme highlights global efforts to protect, promote and support breastfeeding through implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, adopted by the World Health Assembly and the UNICEF Executive Board in 2002.

At the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly in May this year, WHO's Member States further reinforced the Global Strategy by endorsing a comprehensive implementation plan for maternal, infant and young child nutrition. The plan sets six targets, one of which is for at least 50% of babies under six months of age to be exclusively breastfed by 2025. Currently, the global rate of exclusive breastfeeding is 37%: Some 26 countries have already met the target, demonstrating that with focused efforts, it is possible to achieve—and even exceed—the global goal.

Emphasis is placed on early and exclusive breastfeeding for its substantial benefits in reducing child mortality and morbidity. Suboptimal breastfeeding is responsible for 45% of neonatal infectious deaths, 30% of diarrhoeal deaths and 18% of acute respiratory deaths in children under 5 years.

Increasing the rates of optimal breastfeeding practices is also a key aim of the UN Secretary-General's *Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health*. This strategy, which aims to save 16 million women and children by 2015, has been 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 Information and Accountability that includes exclusive breastfeeding as one of 11 core indicators that will be reviewed annually.

To monitor the implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding in countries, WHO developed a tool for assessing national practices, policies and programmes. Based on this tool, the International Baby Food Action Network of Asia developed the *World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative* to monitor and report on infant and young child feeding practices, policies and programmes worldwide.

WHO remains committed to promoting breastfeeding as the ideal source of nourishment for infants and young children. This World Breastfeeding Week, we urge governments and partners to join us in renewing their efforts, so that children all around the world get the best start in life.

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

Dr Flavia Bustreo
Assistant Director-General
Family, Women's and Children's Health