



World Breastfeeding Week encourages breastfeeding and highlights the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and children. The week is celebrated every year from 1 to 7 August. Annually, the world witness 823.000 child deaths, 20.000 maternal deaths and \$302 billion in economic losses. Increasing breastfeeding can have a positive effect to mitigate and prevent these issues.

“If breastfeeding did not already exist, someone who invented it would deserve a dual Nobel Peace prize in medicine and economics”, said Keith Hansen from the World Bank.

In low- and medium income countries, babies who were breastfed had a 21% lower risk of death in their first year than babies who were never breastfed. Breastfeeding prevents malnutrition in all forms and is therefore a significant investment in global health.

In developing countries, breastfeeding of children can help break the cycle of poverty. It is a low-cost way of feeding babies and infants and does not put an additional strain on household income. Because the quality and quantity of milk production is relatively unaffected by the mother’s nutritional status, breastfeeding can also ensure food security in times of crisis. Many

of the 60 million refugees and displaced people in the world are women and children at risk of malnutrition, and these groups can benefit from breastfeeding.

Breastmilk provides essential nutrients and antibodies and has been called “a baby’s first vaccine” by UNICEF. According to a new UN report ([insert hyperlink](#)), babies who are not breastfed within the first hour of life is put at a higher risk of death and disease.

“Breastfeeding gives children the best possible start in life. We must urgently scale up support to mothers, be it from family members, health care workers, employers and governments so they can give their children the start they deserve”, said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

According to the UN, breastfeeding is “the smartest investment” families, communities and countries can make. Nutrition, food security and poverty reduction are essential to achieve the Global Development Goals and Agenda 2030, and breastfeeding is critical to achieve many of the goals. In addition to support goal two “zero hunger” and goal 3 “good health and wellbeing”, breastfeeding is also key to goal 4 “quality education” as it contributes to cognitive development and education.

### Additional links:

- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/08/breastfeeding-is-smartest-investment-families-communities-and-countries-can-make-un/>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/07/535732-breastfeeding-within-hour-birth-provides-baby-first-vaccine-says-unicef>
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1015952>
- <https://www.unicef.org/publications/>