

New York, 1 Aug 2011 - The United Nations and its partners are promoting the use of all possible means of communication, including social networking, blogs and even flash mobs, to get the message out on the benefits of breastfeeding beyond clinics and delivery rooms to the wider public.

Breastfeeding is directly linked to reducing the death toll of children under five, yet only 36 per cent of infants below the age of six months in developing countries are exclusively breastfed, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"With so much at stake, we need to do more to reach women with a simple, powerful message: Breastfeeding can save your baby's life," [UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake](#) said on the occasion of [World Breastfeeding Week](#), which is celebrated from 1 to 7 August.

"No other preventive intervention is more cost effective in reducing the number of children who die before reaching their fifth birthdays," he stated.

Among the benefits of breastfeeding, UNICEF pointed out that the practice could lead to a 13 per cent reduction in deaths of children under five if infants were exclusively breastfed for 6 months and continued to be breastfed up to one year.

"Breastfed is best fed, whether the baby is born in Uganda or England, China or Canada," said Mr. Lake.

However, while breastfeeding rates in the developing world are on the rise in two-thirds of countries with data, millions of infants are not benefiting from this life-saving practice.

Therefore, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and their partners are using the occasion of World Breastfeeding Week to spur new and creative ways to raise awareness and reach a larger audience with the message of the benefits of breastfeeding.

The theme of this year's World Breastfeeding Week, which is an initiative of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, is "Talk to Me! Breastfeeding – a 3D Experience." It emphasizes the importance of communication at various levels and between various sectors to promote breastfeeding.

"[Communication is key to attain progress](#)," said Flavia Bustreo, WHO Assistant Director-General for Family, Women's and Children's Health. "This year's theme for the World Breastfeeding Week highlights the opportunity of new communication technologies for making qualified support accessible to health care providers, mothers and families..."

"Protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding is important because, even though breastfeeding is natural, it is also a learned behaviour," added Dr. Bustreo.