

BREASTFEEDING AND THE



When we support optimal breastfeeding, we support the success of the Sustainable Development Goals.



**Goals 1, 8 and 10:
End Poverty; Promote
Economic Growth; and
Reduce Inequalities**

- Globally, the cost of lower cognitive ability associated with not breastfeeding amounts to about US\$ 300 billion annually, representing 0.49 percent of global gross national incomes (GNI).
- The health benefits associated with optimal breastfeeding could save billions of dollars in healthcare costs each year by dramatically reducing hospital admissions for infectious diseases.



**Goal 4:
Ensure Quality Education**

- Breastfeeding is associated with an average three point increase in IQ among children and adolescents, when controlling for maternal intelligence.
- Greater cognitive ability leads to increased productivity and earnings, and also to better learning and literacy outcomes.



**Goals 2 and 3:
Achieve Zero Hunger; and Improve
Health and Well-Being at All Ages**

- Breastmilk provides 100 percent of a child's energy needs for the first six months of life; half or more of energy needs from six to 12 months; and one-third of energy needs between 12 and 24 months.
- Breastfeeding could save the lives of 820,000 children under five each year.
- Infants younger than six months who are not breastfed are three to four times more likely to die than those who received any breastmilk.
- Improved breastfeeding practices could:
 - Prevent nearly half of all diarrhea episodes and one-third of respiratory infections
 - Save an additional 20,000 maternal lives annually from breast cancer.
 - Decrease the prevalence of overweight/obesity and diabetes later in life.



**Goal 5:
Achieve Gender Equality**

- Breastfeeding is consistently associated with longer periods of postnatal infertility and improved birth spacing.
- By decreasing unintended pregnancies, breastfeeding may allow more women and girls to stay in school, pursue careers, and lead more equitable lives.
- In 2003, it was estimated that in countries where breastfeeding was most prevalent, such as Uganda and Burkina Faso, there would have been 50 percent more births without breastfeeding.



Goals 12 and 15: Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production; and Improve Life on Land

• Breastmilk is a renewable resource that is environmentally friendly, produced without pollution, and consumed with a minimal ecological footprint.



• Breastmilk substitutes, alternatively, require energy for manufacturing, materials for packaging, fuel for distribution and water and toxic cleaning agents for daily preparation—all of which pollute the air, contaminate oceans, and generate billions of tons of plastic and metal waste that ends up in landfills.