

### Current Health Event

#### World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week is celebrated every year from 1 to 7 August in more than 170 countries to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world. In Lebanon, breastfeeding exclusivity and continuation rates are low due to lack of awareness.

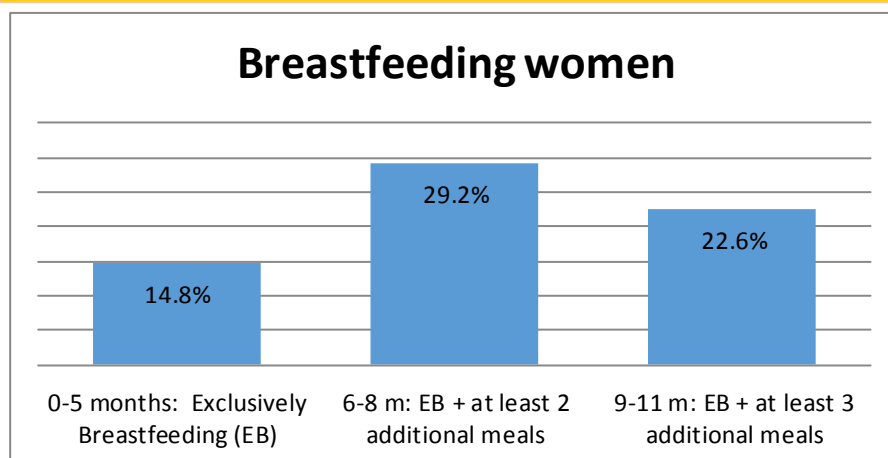
#### Editorial note:

Breastfeeding is the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need. WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding starting within one hour after birth until a baby is six months old. Nutritious complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.

Breastfeeding rates in Lebanon are very low and most recent figures show that only 14.8% of infants under 6 months are exclusively breastfed (*National Health Statistics Report 2012*). In addition, the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiatives ranked Lebanon on lower end of the spectrum in terms of successful breastfeeding rates compared to other countries in the region and globally.

Predictors of low breastfeeding rates in Lebanon include lower socio-economic status, Caesarean birth, urban residence, early hospital discharge, and hospital practices that hinder breastfeeding like lack of rooming in of mother and baby, fixed newborn feeding schedules, and offering artificial formula as first feeds instead of breast milk. Misconceptions like insufficiency of breast

Figure: Women indicators. *National Health Statistics Report in Lebanon (2012)*



milk to achieve satiety in the baby, and breastfeeding causing maternal weight gain or breast sagging are common reasons for early discontinuation. One of the main barriers for breastfeeding in Lebanon include the lack of awareness and lack of supportive environment for breastfeeding.

Since 2008, it is prohibited under Lebanese law Law 47/2008 to market or promote infant or follow-up milk replacement products for children aged up to 36 months. However, further interventions are needed.

**A joint statement about Optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies in Lebanon has been issued in November 2012 by the MOPH, MOSA, UNICEF, WHO, UN-HCR, WFP AND UN-FPA and IOCC.**

A guidebook on Infant and Young Child Feeding has been developed with the support of the Lebanese Association for Early Child Development (LAECD). A media campaign for the promotion of breastfeeding at national level will be implemented around the breastfeeding week this year, by the Ministry of Public Health and IOCC, World Vision, LAECD, Lactica, the Order of Midwives in Lebanon, UNICEF and WHO.

| Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon* |           |           |         |       |
|--|-----------|-----------|---------|-------|
| Disease                                    | 2014      | 2015**    | Jul.    | Aug.  |
| <b>Vaccine Preventable Diseases</b>        |           |           |         |       |
| Polio                                      | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)   | 0 (0) |
| AFP  | 53 (16)   | 59 (5)    | 7 (0)   | 1 (0) |
| Measles                                    | 235(107)  | 29 (8)    | 4 (2)   | 1 (1) |
| Mumps                                      | 736(117)  | 1274(301) | 84 (28) | 9 (7) |
| Pertussis                                  | 87 (25)   | 25 (6)    | 3 (1)   | 0 (0) |
| Rabies                                     | 1 (0)     | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)   | 0 (0) |
| Rubella                                    | 18 (12)   | 7 (1)     | 1 (0)   | 0 (0) |
| Tetanus                                    | 0 (0)     | 1 (0)     | 0 (0)   | 0 (0) |
| Viral Hep. B                               | 218 (33)  | 139 (22)  | 7 (0)   | 3 (0) |
| <b>Water/Food Borne Diseases</b>           |           |           |         |       |
| Brucellosis                                | 252(36)   | 170(42)   | 22(1)   | 6(1)  |
| Cholera                                    | 0(0)      | 0(0)      | 0(0)    | 0(0)  |
| Hydatid cyst                               | 16(2)     | 14(1)     | 1(0)    | 0(0)  |
| Typhoid fever                              | 546(33)   | 235(20)   | 20(0)   | 3(0)  |
| Viral Hep. A                               | 2582(911) | 618(121)  | 29(2)   | 6(0)  |
| <b>Other Diseases</b>                      |           |           |         |       |
| Leishmaniasis                              | 663(638)  | 28(20)    | 1(1)    | 0(0)  |
| Meningitis                                 | 232(35)   | 231(40)   | 25(3)   | 4(0)  |
| Viral Hep C                                | 100(6)    | 65(3)     | 3(0)    | 0(0)  |

\*Numbers in brackets refer to Syrian \*\*as of 18 August 2015