



IN A CONFERENCE IN THE NORTH OF MAURITIUS, THE **KHALIFATULLAH MUNIR AHMAD AZIM** (ATBA) SPECIAL GUEST INVITED TO ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE ON “BREASTFEEDING”.

WEDNESDAY, 20 AUGUST 2014.



Breastfeeding is, in fact, such a natural physiological process that we tend to believe that this practice could easily be adopted as a choice rather than a necessity. Since ancient times, mothers have perceived breastfeeding as a necessity; however, due to industrialization and other social influences, breastfeeding was casted aside. As soon as they were given the choice between breastfeeding and boxed milk, they preferred to choose ease rather than necessity. Today, the emphasis is now given on measures aimed at supporting and promoting

breastfeeding, so that they are strengthened even more so that moms realize that there is no true substitute for breast milk.

In the past, support in a traditional way was provided by older women in the family and in the community, especially during the first 40 days after delivery. However, as societies evolve, especially with urbanization, more and more nuclear families emerged to the point that other members of the family may be far away. In addition, the pressure to return back to work is also steadily increasing. These are some of the factors that are responsible for the disappearance of this period of maternal care to infants. The theme which had been chosen this year for the World Breastfeeding Week is “**Breastfeeding: A Winning Goal for Life**”. Due to the fact that with the decline in breastfeeding rates, the need to continue to promote breastfeeding as an essential part of child development and maternal health is being felt more than ever.

This theme gives even more impetus to this call to action. It clearly establishes a very close relationship between breastfeeding and the Millennium Development Goals. The role of breastfeeding is to support the realization of fixed/established goals is now clear, especially the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). Regarding MDGs or the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, exclusive breastfeeding as the first step towards reducing child malnutrition allows them good growth from the first day of life.

Similarly breastfeeding contributes to the reduction of illiteracy and environmental degradation. Moreover, breastfeeding is closely linked to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. As such, children receive an equal start through breastfeeding, regardless of family income and breastfeeding makes women stronger (emancipated) by allowing them to be in control of their reproductive lives. The benefits of breast milk cannot be fully listed, because breast milk is unique. There is no substitute, despite all the technological advances made by mankind. It is a living fluid that actively protects against infections. Breast milk contains the amount of fat, protein, sugar, water and micronutrients necessary for the growth and development of a baby. By its very nature, breast milk is intended to aid digestion by babies and it changes to meet the needs of the baby.



In this regard, breastfeeding is now recognized as a driving force for public health as it promotes health, while at the same time, opening the way to a good start in life. The optimal breastfeeding of infants less than two years has the potential to play a key role in child survival and prevent more than 800,000 deaths of children under five in the developing world. For infants, breast milk prevents ear infections, diarrhea, respiratory infections, asthma, allergies, obesity, diabetes type 1 and 2, childhood leukemia, and sudden death syndrome of infant.

For the mother, breastfeeding protects against breast cancer, ovarian cancer, cervical and endometrial cancers, postpartum depression, and obesity. Breastfeeding is more than a lifestyle choice and it is a major health choice (*especially nowadays*), a long way towards protecting the health of mothers and children. Breastfeeding is the concern of all health caretakers and members of society; young and old, students, men and women, parents and grandparents and employers. Each assumes a variety of roles; it is important to communicate the benefits of breastfeeding on the health and overall well-being.