

# Special Session Webinar Series on Women's Stories of Survival, Innovation, Resilience and Development

## REDUCING AVOIDABLE BABY AND WOMEN'S DEATHS THROUGH IMPROVED RIGHTS AND ECOSYSTEM FOR BREASTFEEDING

7 July 2023

10:00 - 12:00 BST | 19:00 - 21:00 AEST | 21:00 - 23:00 NZST



**Facilitator** Bringing Research for International Development and Global Equity (BRIDGE) Network, Auckland University of Technology

It is estimated that 800,000 baby deaths and 20,000 women deaths per year result from a lack of protection and support for breastfeeding worldwide (Victoria et al., 2016). These deaths are avoidable. Breastfeeding is a universal preventative health care measure that saves lives in low-, middle- and high-income countries yet it is not prioritised by policymakers.

Supporting women's and children's rights and increasing breastfeeding to near-universal levels for infants and young children could save upwards of 800,000 children's lives a year worldwide (13% of all deaths in children under two) and prevent 20,000 deaths from breast cancer (Rollins et al., 2016).

In high-income countries, breastfeeding reduces the risk of sudden infant deaths by more than a third, and in low- and middle-income countries, approximately half of all diarrhoea episodes and a third of respiratory infections could be avoided by breastfeeding (Victoria et al., 2016). For mothers, longer-duration breastfeeding reduces the risks of breast cancer and ovarian cancer (Victoria et al., 2016).

This Special Session Webinar organised in collaboration with Auckland University of Technology's Bringing Research for International Development and Global Equity (BRIDGE) Network and Avoidable Deaths Network highlights the growing barriers to breastfeeding globally and what steps can be taken to dismantle the structural constraints to breastfeeding in low-middle- and high-income countries.

Not only are the human costs high (United Nations Children Fund, 2016), UNICEF estimates that not breastfeeding costs the global economy US\$302bn per year.

Money is the language of policy makers and building a breastfeeding ecosystem makes economic sense. Modelling estimates that global economic losses from not breastfeeding reached US\$302 billion in 2012, equivalent to 0.49% of the world's gross national income (UNICEF, 2016). In high-income countries alone these losses amounted to US\$231.4 billion, equivalent to 0.53% of gross national income (Rollins et al., 2016).

This Special Session Webinar brings together three world-class researchers

who present innovative tools for policymakers, advocates, and media that count human milk production in economic statistics, highlighting the importance of women's unpaid work in our national budgets. These tools also show the return on investment for countries in supporting breastfeeding ecosystems and the costs of not enabling women's and children's rights to breastfeeding.

Currently, women are encouraged to breastfeed without the structural support system to enable widespread uptake. Policy interventions have been successful in increasing breastfeeding and preventing avoidable deaths. Informal interventions can also be promoted to build a strong breastfeeding ecosystem.

With this Special Session Webinar, we as scholars and practitioners wish to highlight the issue of structural barriers to breastfeeding and tools for policymakers, advocates and media to use to build a breastfeeding ecosystem and support women's and children's rights.

More concretely, the expert panel aims to:

1. Highlight the invisibility of women in economic systems and raise breastfeeding on the policy agenda;
2. Identify productivity supports (formal and informal) for gender-responsive budgeting that will prevent avoidable deaths of women and children; and
3. Introduce innovative tools for calculating the economic benefits of breastfeeding in low-, middle- and high-income countries.

## NOTE

Description of the Special Session was written by Dr. Julie Smith. © Avoidable Deaths Network (2023). Image: © Shutterstock (2023).

Dr. Julie Smith is an Honorary Associate Professor and awarded ARC Future Fellow at the Research School of Population Health, The Australian National University. She is also a Fellow at the Crawford School of Public Policy's Tax and Transfer Policy Institute.

## SERIES CHAIRPERSON

Dr. Nibedita S. Ray-Bennett is the Chairperson of the Special Session webinar series '*Women's Stories of Survival, Innovation, Resilience and Development*'.

## MORE INFORMATION

*Avoidable Deaths Network*

Website: [avoidable-deaths.net](https://avoidable-deaths.net)

LinkedIn: [avoidable-deaths-network](https://avoidable-deaths-network)

Twitter: [AvoidableN](https://AvoidableN)

Instagram: [avoidabledeathsnetwork](https://avoidabledeathsnetwork)

Facebook: [AvoidableDeathsNetwork](https://AvoidableDeathsNetwork)

ADN Voluntary Commitments

SFDRR: [20211123\\_001](https://20211123_001)

*BRIDGE Network*

Website: [bridgenetworkglobalequity.org/](https://bridgenetworkglobalequity.org/)

LinkedIn: [bridge-network-for-global-equity/](https://bridge-network-for-global-equity/)

YouTube: [bridgenetworkforglobalequity](https://bridgenetworkforglobalequity)

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