

PRESS RELEASE

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**World Alliance For
Breastfeeding
Action**

WABA speaks out for working mothers on International Labour Day

Labour Day is traditionally a time to celebrate the achievements of workers and trade unions. It is also a time to call attention to workers' concerns. The Women and Work Task Force of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) speaks out this Labour Day 2006 to note the increasing challenges that face mothers of infants and young children.

As economies develop, more and more mothers enter or return to the workforce when their children are young. More and more employers are outsourcing jobs to contract workers, or looking outside the country where labour costs are lower. Jobs move out of the formal workplace into the informal economy. Women, especially young women and immigrant women, are over-represented in precarious jobs with no maternity leave, no breastfeeding breaks, no social protection, and no regulation.

Their babies are getting caught in the slow-turning wheels of the economy.

For decades, the global economy has been changing. The pace of change is ponderous, compared to a baby's life. Multi-national institutions, high-level policy decisions and non-decisions, will eventually affect a mother's daily work opportunities, but her baby needs her milk *now*, starting from the hour of birth. Her baby needs her milk again and again in order to thrive for the first two years of life. Her baby cannot wait for the huge wheels of international economic systems to grind out a solution that treats babies fairly.

Most women feeding a child optimally provide over 400 litres of milk during the child's first two years. This important food source, delivered primarily in the intimate space between mother and baby, is seldom counted in national food production statistics. As long as human milk remains invisible, it is easily overlooked. Invisibility makes it easy to forget that mothers have the right to an adjustment in their workload, so as to free the resources of time and energy wanted for milk production.

On Labour Day 2006, WABA acknowledges

- the international labour unions for the support they have provided to working mothers who are breastfeeding their children. Breaks in the workday for the purpose of nursing or expressing milk have been a key part of international workplace standards since 1919.
- the family-friendly workplaces that provide flexible work schedules, child care at or near the workplace, and on-site breastfeeding support.
- the fathers, families, work-mates, supervisors, employers, neighbours, and older children who are already pitching in to give breastfeeding mothers the time they need for feeding and resting.

WABA calls on nations

- to ratify the International Labour Organisation's Convention 183 on Maternity Protection and to enforce Maternity Protection laws.
- to develop a similar level of breastfeeding support for women working in the informal economy.
- to account for human milk in national food statistics.
- to prioritise the growth and development of young children through optimal feeding as an economic development goal.

Every mother is a working mother. Mothers have the right to the information and support that enable them to breastfeed...and their babies cannot wait!

For more information, kindly contact:

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International, Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) and LINKAGES. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) ● WABA, PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia ● Tel: 60-4-6584 816 ● Fax: 60-4-6572 655 ● Email: waba@streamyx.com ● Website: www.waba.org.my