

Join La Leche League International (LLLI) and the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)
In Celebration of -

World Health Day, April 7, 2010: 1000 Cities, 1000 Lives

This year's **World Health Day** theme addresses the challenges surrounding the growing urban population. The World Health Organization is calling upon cities across the globe to be counted among the "1000 cities" dedicated to improving the health in urban areas.

The Challenges

- Virtually all population growth over the next 30 years will be in urban areas.
- The urban poor suffer disproportionately from a wide range of diseases and other health problems.
- The major drivers of health in urban settings are beyond the health sector.
- Actions and solutions exist to tackle the root causes of urban health challenges.
- Build partnerships with multiple sectors of society to make cities healthier.



Breastfeeding: A Paradigm for Change

What role might breastfeeding play in addressing the challenges and offering at least a partial solution?

- **By providing a natural slowing of population growth.** Breastfeeding—exclusive and frequent throughout the day and night in the early months—acts as a natural child spacer, typically resulting in a two-year interval between babies. Not only does this allow for focused attention on the baby, it also allows the mother to fully recover from pregnancy and delivery before getting pregnant again. Cities benefit by a slower population growth.
- **By transcending poverty.** Breastfeeding is the great equalizer. The baby born into poverty that is nourished and nurtured at his mother's breast receives the same start as the baby born into wealth

and similarly nourished and nurtured. The biological benefits of this simple act are independent of wealth and power. The ramifications of this equalizing extend beyond the infant to the family and community as a whole, by preserving precious resources that might otherwise be used in the manufacture, transportation, purchase, and preparation of infant formula. Having a healthy breastfed baby means that the mother has more time to do other things, such as care of the baby, herself, her family and engage in other work or social activities. In this way she can contribute to the household economy and the effects of poverty can be lessened.

- **By providing a vehicle to "drive" health in urban settings.** Breastfeeding is at once *outside* the "health sector" and at the same time a *cornerstone* for this primary health care. Babies who are not breastfed are at greater risk from a host of health issues from minor to life-threatening, short-term to long-term. Similarly, the mother who does not breastfeed her infant is at an increased risk for health issues of her own.
- **By providing a time-honored action that contributes significantly to solving urban health challenges.** Breastfeeding—and its potential for impacting community-wide health—is firmly based on scientific evidence. Women have breastfed their children for millennia, and humanity's continued existence on the planet is a testament to its effectiveness.
- **Organizations such as WABA and LLLI are active partners in the quest for healthy cities.** By working in the communities to ensure adequate support for breastfeeding mothers, breastfeeding is re-established as a global cultural norm.



1000 lives: The Story of a Local Health Champion

As part of this year's World Health Day celebration, WHO calls upon us to nominate local health champions who are a "powerful force within urban settings making changes that have enormous health benefits for us all." To that end, meet "**Eva**"—**Every Breastfeeding Mother.**

- *Eva is the mother of a breastfed baby.* From birth, she has nourished and nurtured her child at the breast, offering protection from disease, shelter from storm, and unconditional love.
- *The health of Eva's infant provides indirect protection for others.* A healthy infant does not spread a disease he/she does not have.
- *The money Eva saves on the cost of formula and medical bills can be put to other uses.*
- *Eva's simple actions are environmentally friendly.* Breastfeeding is "green" and does not waste valuable resources, or generate tons of waste for overflowing landfills.
- *Eva provides a role model for other women.* Women learn from other women. Not only do they learn the "how-to" of breastfeeding by watching Eva nurse her infant, but they also learn to appreciate breastfeeding in the cultural setting. Mother-to-mother support has been around for millennia as well, and is an effective means of sharing wisdom within a community.
- *Eva provides evidence-based health data at every well-child visit to a health care professional.* Eva's success at breastfeeding and her infant's resulting health are shining examples to health care workers they visit. Those professionals can help spread what they learn from Eva to other women.
- *By breastfeeding, Eva provides a shield for her infant in an emergency.* Not only is human milk a convenient food source, it requires no clean water, refrigeration for storage, or water for cleaning containers. Even in the harshest of disaster-caused conditions, Eva's baby can be safe, warm, and well-fed.

How Can We Help Eva?

While Eva is capable of breastfeeding her infant quite successfully, we can ensure she has the support she needs:

- *Work with local governments to ensure that Eva can breastfeed as part of her legal right even in public.* If your community isn't as breastfeeding-friendly as it ought to be, work to change social norms through legislation to protect Eva's right to breastfeed.
- *Let Eva know she's doing a valuable job for her baby and her community.* A smile and a few words of encouragement let her know what she is doing matters
- *Help Eva continue to breastfeed if she works outside of her home.* Work with employers in your community so that they fully support women like Eva to continue breastfeeding while working and recognizing that they will be more effective and committed employees in the long-term.



Eva is a Local Health Champion—Every woman who breastfeeds is a Local Health Champion!

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For more information, contact:



LLLI at <http://www.llli.org>



WABA at <http://www.waba.org.my/>



LA LECHE LEAGUE
INTERNATIONAL

La Leche League International (LLLI) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1956 by seven women who wanted to help other mothers breastfeed their babies. LLLI, the world's largest resource for breastfeeding and related information, offers encouragement worldwide through mother-to-mother support and breastfeeding mother support groups in 69 countries.



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 Declarations, 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 (LLLI), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). WABA is in consultative status with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). • Address: P.O. Box 1200, 10850, Penang, Malaysia • Tel: 604-6584816 • Fax: 604-657 2655 • Email: waba@waba.org.my • Website: www.waba.org.my