



**World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action**

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International Women's Day Press Statement

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EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: PATHWAY TO DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN

In conjunction with International Women's Day Celebration and WABA's 20th Anniversary this year, WABA supports actions to ensure that girls and women have equal access with boys and men to education and training in science and technology. Science studies, traditionally favoured by males, are a first and necessary step for women who aspire to overcome the occupational segregation that so often consigns female workers to low-paid care-giving jobs, while men get the more exciting and well-paid opportunities in industry, information, and innovation. Science and technology training can:

- ◆ open an array of better-paying jobs to women, jobs that allow a mother to support herself and her child or children, jobs that offer her more security than work in the informal economy.
- ◆ give women access to types of jobs that may be compatible with breastfeeding as an employed mother, jobs that use reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking skills instead of manual labor; jobs done in an office instead of in the fields, the streets, or other women's homes.
- ◆ give women access to jobs in the formal economy, which are more likely than jobs in the informal economy to provide maternity protection and entitlements.
- ◆ build skills that develop a female employee's value to an employer, such that the employer is disposed to accommodate her needs for maternity protection because she cannot easily be replaced.

Science and technology training can set girls and women on the path to Decent Work. This was a concept introduced at the International Labour Organization in 1999. Decent Work means work that is productive, fairly paid, freely chosen, and secure...where all workers are fairly treated (including workers with family responsibilities), and where they have respect and dignity. Under the banner of Decent Work, maternity protection counterbalances potential disadvantages for workers who bear children, by safeguarding the health of mother and baby during pregnancy, birth, and lactation, while also protecting the mother's income and job.

WABA supports increasing women's access to Decent Work through education and training in scientific and technical subjects. WABA's contribution to supporting working women worldwide to combine productive and reproductive work has been significant since its onset, starting with the 2nd World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) theme in 1993 on Working Women: the Mother-Friendly Workplace Initiative (MFWI). In 1998, on learning that the International Labor Organization (ILO) would revise its Maternity Protection Convention (103) and recommendation (95), WABA together with its partners began a campaign to be part of the revision process. As part of a prominent campaign strategy, the Maternity Protection Campaign Kit (<http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpckit.htm>) was developed. This kit serves as a useful advocacy tool to assist in national ratification campaigns for C183, improved national legislation or better collective bargaining agreements. WABA urges everyone to utilise this kit to advocate for better maternity benefits and decent work for all women worldwide.

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