

Press Release

World Breastfeeding Week 2009

1-7 August 2009



In Emergencies, Breastfeeding Is A Lifeline.

Emergencies can happen anywhere in the world. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to malnutrition, illness, and death in these situations. Whatever the emergency – from earthquake to conflict, from floods to the flu pandemic – the story is the same: breastfeeding is a lifeline and a shield that protects infants in emergencies.

From 1-7 August 2009, the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), and breastfeeding advocates in more than 150 countries worldwide will be celebrating World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) for the 18th year. This year, WABA teams up with the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN) and the International Baby Food Action Network-Geneva Infant Feeding Association (IBFAN-GIFA) who represent an international collaboration of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations (IFE Core Group) concerned with protection and support of safe and appropriate infant and young child feeding in emergencies. Together we call for the active protection and support of breastfeeding during emergencies and the prevention and refusal of donations of breastmilk substitutes¹, bottles and teats that, too often, do more harm than good.

When an emergency strikes, simple measures can make all the difference in the world. Emergency preparedness is the key to quick appropriate actions. Mothers need to be secure and have priority access to food for the family, water, shelter and safe places to breastfeed.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF recommendations - early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age and continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond - are even more critical in emergencies. Breastfeeding is the one safe and secure source of food and fluid for infants - instantly available, providing active protection against illness and keeping an infant warm and close to his/her mother. It also reduces the risk of post-partum haemorrhage in the mother, the leading cause of maternal mortality worldwide. In the challenging and risky environment of an emergency, how infants are fed is key to their survival.

Protecting breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding from inappropriate marketing influences is an essential component of emergency interventions. Violations of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant WHA Resolutions are frequent². International guidance³ developed by the IFE Group clearly states that *donations of breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats should not be sought nor accepted in emergencies.*

Everyone can play a positive and important role in emergency preparedness and response. Find out what you can do by consulting the WBW 2009 ACTION FOLDER produced by WABA and the IFE Core Group that includes an extensive Guide for Action. Available online at the WABA website and in print in 4 languages from WABA.

**'Breastfeeding is a vital emergency response.
When a disaster strikes, everyone should be ready!'**

¹ Breastmilk substitutes include infant formula, other milks, infant foods, juices, teas

² As documented in IBFAN-ICDC Focus May 2009 publication on 'The Code and Infant feeding in emergencies'

³ *Operational Guidance of Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies*, version 2.1, February 2007. www.ennonline.net



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Key links

- 1) World Breastfeeding Week 2009 <http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org>

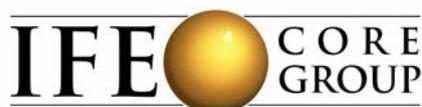
- 2) Operational Guidance on IFE, available in 11 languages, <http://www.enonline.net/> and click on the link.

- 3) IBFAN-ICDC Focus on the Code and Infant feeding in emergencies, May 2009, www.ibfan.org and on WABA and ENN websites

- 4) For key resources to support WBW 2009, visit www.enonline.net and follow link or visit directly at <http://www.enonline.net/ife/breastfeedingweek.aspx>



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 (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). 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: wbw@waba.org.my | Website: www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org and www.waba.org.my



An inter-agency collaboration concerned with the protection and support of safe and appropriate infant and young child feeding in emergencies