

Press Release

WABA Father's Day Statement

15 June 2014



World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action

From Dad to Caring Co-parent

When a man becomes a father, his life changes. However, unlike the biological changes that a new mother faces, a new father faces social challenges about his role: as a partner, in the family and in the community.

A father's role has changed in many societies into that of a co-parent. Many fathers cherish taking on care and nurturing responsibilities for their children, recognising the complementary roles played by each parent.

The opportunity to co-parent in a complementary way presents itself from the earliest moments of parenthood. An informed and supportive father goes a long way in being the practical and emotional help needed by a breastfeeding mother. Understanding, involvement and support from a father is more likely to result in the family making the decision to breastfeed^[1] which will then leads to a successful breastfeeding journey for the breastfeeding family team^[2]. This in turn lays the foundation for valuing the nutrition, comfort and bonding that every child needs.

The challenges for fathers remain, of course. Men were not expected to take on such responsibilities for family care a generation ago and men too struggle to find contemporary positive role models.

Men exposed to domestic violence may remain too damaged to make the transition, though many do.

Development and modernisation have often led to unintended consequences. Rural displacement into growing urban conurbations has seen traditional family structures break down more rapidly. Extended families and their support have become rarer.

Rare too is 'Father as sole breadwinner', with both parents working as a matter of necessity. In some parts of the world, the migration pressures lead to fathers being far away from families and children in search of a livelihood. To them Father's Day may be whenever they can speak to their children using a cheap phone card to bridge the distance.

Father's Day, is an opportunity for men and women to think deeply about what it means to be a father and a parent. WABA salutes all fathers who strive to make a difference to their children, partners, families and their communities.

[1] Bar-Yam NB, Darby, L. Fathers and breastfeeding: a review of the literature. J Hum Lact. 1997;13:45-50

[2] Lynn A. Rempel, John K. Rempel, he Breastfeeding Team: The Role of Involved Fathers in the Breastfeeding Family. J Hum Lact 2011 27: 115



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World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals & organisations concerned with the protection, promotion & support of breastfeeding worldwide. WABA action is based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the Global Strategy for Infant & 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 & an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

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