

# Letter of support to the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) on the International Day of the Midwife 2017

Dear ICM colleagues,

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) sends you felicitations on the 2017 International Day of the Midwife. The theme “*Midwives, Mothers and Families: Partners for Life!*” is certainly one that we endorse and support. Breastfeeding is best sustained through partnerships between the mother-baby dyad, partners, families and skilled supporters, such as trained midwives. This is best exemplified at the start of life, with the precious bonds that form between mothers, babies and the rest of the family.

Midwives are important influencers in a new mother’s intention and decision to breastfeed.

Initiating breastfeeding is a necessary first step to sustaining it. Globally, only 45 per cent of newborns are put to the breast within the first hour of birth, and roughly the same proportion of infants less than 6 months of age are exclusively breastfed. Early initiation, exclusive and continued breastfeeding are practices that can prevent about 823,000 child deaths every year. Moreover, recent evidence has established that breastfeeding can avert about 20,000 maternal deaths annually caused by breast cancer. In addition to being a key life-saving intervention, breastfeeding promotes long term health and wellbeing for all.

To address the many challenges to optimal breastfeeding we need trained midwives who can support mothers throughout the continuum of care. The trained midwife is a similarly trusted support for the partner and family, with information and skills, enabling them to support the mother in her breastfeeding journey.

Let us, as global organisations, continue to advocate and support activities at all levels to ensure that mothers are empowered and enabled to have a successful pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding experience. Together we can build a warm chain of support across the first 1000 days.

WABA has worked with ICM in the training of young midwife leaders (YMLs) to become advocates and changemakers on breastfeeding practices in their countries. This is what some of the YMLs have to say about partnerships for improved breastfeeding practices.



*Setiya Hartiningtiyaswati (Indonesia): “Exclusive breastfeeding is not just about mother and baby. They need **support** to make it happen. I believe in a strong partnership between midwives, mothers, fathers and families that will create a harmonious atmosphere to ensure the fulfilment of **infant and women rights in breastfeeding**”*



*Rully Hevrialni (Indonesia): “As a breastfeeding advocate, I believe that partnership with midwife, mother and family is fundamental to **promote exclusive breastfeeding**, increase baby and mother welfare and **empowering** mother to breastfeed.”*



*Joseph Kithokoo Mulwa (Kenya): “I believe in partnership between ICM and WABA since breastfeeding is worthwhile to achieve all the sustainable development goals and more strongly **reduction of maternal/neonatal mortality**. And yes, by investing in young midwives, **IT’S POSSIBLE!!**”*



*Chirwa Linvell Iddes (Malawi): “I believe in partnership as a driving force for sustaining breastfeeding. When midwives involve families in the provision of care, a **gap between the community and the hospital** is closed and midwives become members of the family for life.”*



*Clara Methie (Zimbabwe): "I believe in partnership that works, Midwives, Mothers, Families together promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding for the **wellbeing of the population worldwide**. One cannot talk about successful and healthy delivery without a **well-trained midwife** to guide the mother on best breastfeeding practices."*

Let us be inspired and let us continue to work together!

Warm good wishes,

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Co-Executive Directors

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)