

Joint Statement for World Day
for Safety and Health at Work
28 April 2019



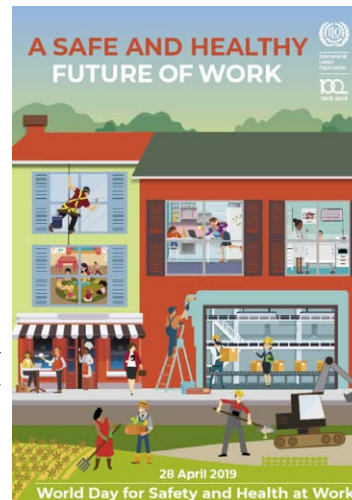
World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action



Health for All Now!
People's Health Movement

Advancing Support for Women to Combine their Productive and Reproductive Roles Including Breastfeeding in the Informal Economy

The [World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action](#) (WABA) and [People's Health Movement](#) (PHM) call for the safety and health of women in the informal economy. The World Day for Safety and Health at Work this year attempts to take stock of 100 years of work in improving occupational safety and health and looks to the future for continuing and enhancing these efforts. Worldwide, legislation concerning maternity protection at work usually only benefits women workers belonging to the formal economy. Although the [International Labour Organization's \(ILO\) Maternity Protection Convention](#), 2000 (No. 183) applies to all employed women, including those in atypical forms of dependent work, the scope may not cover all categories of workers. Women working in the informal economy may be one such category of workers.



It is important to focus attention on the informal economy, because it occupies workers worldwide both in rural and urban areas of both developing and industrialised countries, in a wide variety of work settings e.g. retail, mining, clothing, agriculture and manufacturing. More than half [1] of the global workforce make a living in the informal economy and are not covered by formal social protection policies. Informal employment can be found everywhere, but is much more common in low- and middle-income countries, and particularly among women.

Only one in four employed women around the globe and one in ten employed women in Africa and Asia receive paid maternity leave. Workers in the informal economy face many barriers to breastfeeding such as living far from work, long working hours without breaks, and dangerous work environments.

Breastfeeding provides the best nutrition and care for babies everywhere. For all families, especially in situations characterised by poverty, lack of adequate clean water, and poor sanitation, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond, help to ensure the safety and health of children. Scaling up optimal breastfeeding, according to the universal recommendations, could prevent more than 823 000 child and 20



000 maternal deaths each year. Not breastfeeding is also associated with lower intelligence and results in economic losses of about \$302 billion annually worldwide. [2]

Ensuring effective universal maternity coverage should be a priority, especially in countries where the informal economy accounts for a large proportion of the workforce. Development is also needed at the national level to ensure a suitable infrastructure of support for accessing health care and to identify mechanisms for funding maternity leave by social insurance or public funds. Informal economy employers tend to have limited awareness about safety and protection issues of pregnant workers and breastfeeding mothers. Showcasing of successful policy models, best practices, and coping strategies can help employers and policy-makers to identify suitable solutions that can be adjusted to the relevant context.

On this day, we make an urgent call to all policy-makers, employers, trade unions, civil society organisations, and communities to collectively advance support for women to combine their productive and reproductive roles in the informal economy by:

- Reviewing national laws and ensuring that workers in the informal economy are recognised and protected as workers.
- Identifying solutions for workplace maternity support that includes breastfeeding support for all women.
- Raising awareness amongst women on maternity protection and facilitating peer-to-peer support.



Example from Ghana

A study [3] on maternity protection at work in Ghana included the case of an informal market in Accra, that had a crèche and a pre-school on site. This crèche/school was used by the market traders and catered for children aged 1.5 to 5 years. It was provided by the association of market traders and funded through the market association (membership fees, fines, etc.). The crèche allowed women to continue their work when their children had reached an age where they were more likely to run around and the market had become unsafe for them. Mothers carried their younger children in a cloth on their backs and thereby combined work and care, including breastfeeding. Another case was a weaving business where both the employer and her apprentices brought their babies to work and breastfed when necessary. Older children were attending school nearby and would come after school to help look after their younger siblings.

Example from India

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union for low-income working women founded in India in 1972, now has two million members and worldwide influence. The Union's main goals involved organising workers once deemed "impossible to organise" and fighting for better working conditions. Just by collectivising and organising, workers have been able to get higher than the government-regulated minimum wage. One of the main achievements of SEWA over the past forty years has also been the creation of a network of crèches providing childcare for its members. This grassroots initiative is affordable and flexible, community led, and controlled by its members. It also offers skills training and other opportunities, and insists on decent wages and protections for full-time employees.

#WABA #breastfeeding #ILOFutureofWork #MaternityProtection
#EmpoweringParentsCampaign #WBW2019 #PeoplesHealthMovement #informaleconomy
#WorldDayforSafetyandHealthatwork

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations dedicated to 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), 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 is incorporated in Malaysia as World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action Bhd (847762-P), a non-profit company limited by guarantee.

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