



World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action

WABA International Day of Families Statement

~ 15 May 2019 ~

Our planet and its people - breastfeeding and families matter

Family is still the basic unit of society, according to the [United Nations \(UN\)](#). Families all over the world have transformed greatly over the past decade in terms of their structure and as a result of global trends and demographic changes. The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action ([WABA](#)) joins the UN call on “Families and Climate Action: Focus on [SDG13](#)” to highlight that the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding are crucial for the health of our planet and its people. Breastfeeding is also a climate-smart decision that involves families.

[Breastfeeding](#) is a universal solution that gives everyone a fair start in life and lays the [foundation](#) for good health and survival of children, women, and the general population. Optimal breastfeeding helps prevent malnutrition in all its forms with positive lifelong effects on both children and mothers. Breastfeeding is also [linked](#) to all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a prime example of the deep connections between human health and nature’s ecosystems. [Breastmilk](#) is a natural, renewable food that is environment-friendly because it is produced and delivered to the consumer without pollution, packaging, or waste.

By contrast, [artificial feeding](#) leaves a major environmental footprint that contributes to a depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation, and climate change in a number of ways. Dairy farming causes the production of greenhouse gases. Additionally, the production, packaging, storing, distribution, and preparation of infant formula include the considerable use of fossil fuels and large amounts of water. Therefore, artificial feeding contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases and water scarcity that further aggravate climate change. Climate change leads to natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Unreliable supply chains of milk powder and unhygienic conditions that commonly prevail in emergency situations make breastfeeding the safest option.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) and [UNICEF](#) recommend that mothers breastfeed their babies within the first hour of life and exclusively for the first six months, and continue to breastfeed with appropriate complementary feeding up to two years of age or beyond. However, [global breastfeeding rates](#) remain unacceptably low. Return to work after childbirth and lack of [support](#) are some of the main barriers to optimal breastfeeding. [Interventions](#) that protect, promote and support breastfeeding in workplaces, communities, and health facilities, will generate large benefits for [families](#), employers, healthcare, nations, and the planet.

On International Day of Families 2019, WABA and its partners call for:

- Greater recognition of breastfeeding as a means of achieving the SDGs and reducing our carbon footprint
- National action plans on climate change mitigation to include breastfeeding
- Paid parental leave and family-friendly workplaces that support breastfeeding

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals & organisations dedicated to the protection, promotion & support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declarations, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF 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) 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).