



World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action



Empowering Parents
Campaign



Global Day of Parents Statement

1 June 2019

Empower Parents, Enable Breastfeeding - Support for the lifelong commitment to children

Did you know that the inclusion of [fathers/partners](#) in breastfeeding interventions improves breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates? This applies to all countries regardless of [socioeconomic status](#). [Targeting fathers](#) is associated with two times the likelihood of getting the baby exclusively breastfed for 6 months. Breastfeeding is one of the [best investments](#) in saving lives and improving the health, social and economic development of individuals and nations. Both parents play a critical role in the health and development of their children and this is enshrined in the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC). The [Global Day of Parents](#) provides an opportunity to appreciate all parents of the world for their selfless commitment to children and their lifelong sacrifice towards nurturing this relationship. Breastfeeding and supporting breastfeeding is a key part of this relationship.

UNICEF's Early Moments Matter campaign highlights that good parenting for healthy brain development in babies requires time—time to bond, time to engage in activities that inspire learning, time to eat, play and love; time together with their communities. However, a lack of investment in [parental leave policies](#), lack of flexibility at work, or inaccessible childcare means that too many parents struggle to balance work with the most precious and formative time in their children's lives. Women also bear a disproportionate share of childcare responsibilities and are consequently disadvantaged in terms of their labour force participation and [decent work](#) opportunities.

Although global breastfeeding initiation rates are relatively high, and despite international recommendations, only 40% of all babies under 6 months are exclusively breastfed and 45% continue breastfeeding up to 24 months. [Scaling up](#) optimal breastfeeding according to the recommendations could prevent more than 823 000 child and 20 000 maternal deaths each year. Not breastfeeding is associated with lower intelligence and results in [economic losses](#) of about \$302 billion annually.

[Research](#) shows that family-oriented policies such as paid parental leave can advance a range of [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and improve maternal and infant health. The [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) also stresses that parents need support measures that make it easier to pursue decent work without sacrificing their child's development. Such transformative policies for parents yield positive health, economic and gender equality outcomes which are critical to the SDGs.

Supporting parents at work through the provision of paid public-funded maternity, paternity, parental or family leave is a prerequisite for optimal breastfeeding. Policies are necessary but not sufficient – they must be accompanied by programmes to encourage and incentivise parents and employers to make use of the leave, as well as by additional social protection mechanisms to cover all parents. A gender-equitable division of labour would recognise the unique care work done by breastfeeding women, enable women to combine breastfeeding and work, and fathers/partners to take responsibility for a larger share of domestic and care work. [Empowering parents](#) by providing social protection can enable and create demand for breastfeeding-friendly policies and programmes that would help both women and their partners to [balance care with other work](#). No parent should have to choose between earning an income and caring for their child.

On Global Day of Parents, let us work together to empower parents by:

- Providing unbiased breastfeeding information and support to both parents and their families from pregnancy to childhood
- Advocating for support for breastfeeding at EVERY workplace together with employers and trade unions
- Engaging governments to improve parental social protection policies and laws that support optimal breastfeeding and lead to greater gender equality

Working as a team can empower parents and enable exclusive breastfeeding. It's about time!

#WABA #breastfeeding #EmpoweringParentsCampaign #WBW2019 #EatPlayLove

#Earlymomentsmatter#GlobalGoals#ParentsDay#WorldsFathers



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).