

## Breastfeeding is Fashionable

**W**hy is breastfeeding the IN thing? Because Rachel Weiss, Madonna and other celebrities are doing it? Maybe... but more so because we know breast is best: good for baby, good for mother and will definitely help women get back into shape faster. The woman of today is strong and uncompromising in defining her identity, self-worth and doing what is right.

Why YOUth should not feel shy to speak about breastfeeding? Society has conditioned many people to view breasts only from a sexual standpoint and not as a body part with a crucial biological function. The sight of a breastfeeding mother should be an ordinary aspect of daily life that is trendy, fashionable and to be proud of. It is up to YOUth to change the cultural context of breastfeeding and of work, so that breastfeeding is compatible with the modern workplace and living. There should not be any difference in the practice of breastfeeding in private or in public. YOUth can help create a world where women can breastfeed their babies with pride.

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## Who are we?

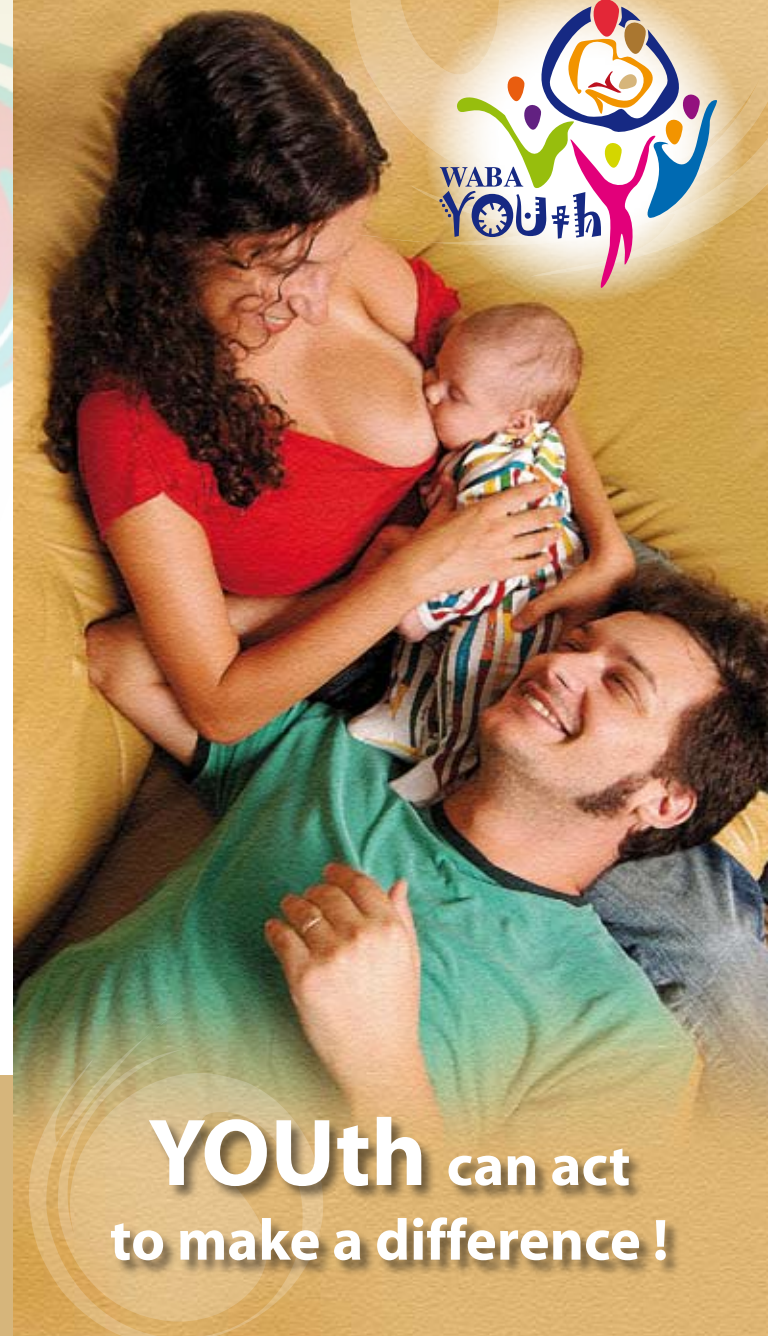
The **WABA YOUth Initiative** is a global programme initiated in 2006 that is opened to all youths who want to help and make a difference. The objectives are to get youths interested in breastfeeding; and to develop and sustain young advocates to promote and protect breastfeeding through the perspectives of human rights, reproductive health and gender equality. YOUth can be one of us!!! Be part of our Yahoo Group "YOUth4Breastfeeding", where we have discussions, share information and send newsletters.

**The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)** is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with 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 on Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are the 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 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).



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# Breastfeeding



**YOUth can act to make a difference!**

## Why Breastfeed?

### Why should we, the YOUth, care about breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding is best! That is the fundamental reason why every baby deserves to be breastfed! The benefits of breastfeeding extend also to mothers, fathers, families and societies.

### What is so special about breastfeeding?

Breastmilk is the most complete nutritional package for infants! It cannot be duplicated through any other infant feeding choice. From the first moments of life, breastfeeding has positive developmental impacts throughout the child's life, even after breastfeeding has stopped.

### What are the benefits to the baby?

Children who are breastfed are healthier, have fewer symptoms and shorter illnesses when they do fall sick, and they have a higher Intelligence Quotient (IQ) level than formula-fed babies.

### Why is it good for the mother to breastfeed?

Women who breastfeed are less prone to diseases such as: anaemia; ovarian and breast cancers; and osteoporosis. Also, they bounce back more quickly from childbirth through reduced post-partum bleeding and are more likely to lose excess weight gained during pregnancy than mothers who formula feed.

### What is exclusive breastfeeding?

It means that no other drink or food is given to the infant. The infant should breastfeed frequently as it demands and for unrestricted periods.

### How long should a baby be breastfed?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and then introducing nutritious complementary foods with continued breastfeeding for two years and beyond.

### Will breastfeeding affect the shape of a woman's breasts?

Breastfeeding does not cause "droopy boobs". The shape of the breast is influenced by heredity, body fat and pregnancy, not by breastfeeding. A woman who breastfeeds loses the amount of weight she gained during pregnancy more quickly than a woman who bottle feeds.

### If I have small breasts... can I breastfeed?

In breastfeeding, the size of the breast does not matter -- big or small, human breasts can produce enough milk for the baby!

### How does infant formula differ from breastfeeding?

- Infant formula contains no antibodies, which means formula doesn't provide the baby with the added protection against infection and illness that breastmilk does.
- Infant formula companies can never duplicate the qualities of breastmilk, which changes according to the baby's needs.

### What are the risks of infant formula?

Research has shown many risks result from the decision to feed the baby with infant formula. Some examples are:

#### For Infants and Children:

Increased the risk of asthma, allergy, acute respiratory disease, infection from contaminated formula, nutrient deficiencies, childhood cancers, chronic disease, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, gastrointestinal infections, mortality, ear infection, side effects of environmental contaminants, increased altered occlusion and reduced cognitive development.

#### For Mothers (not breastfeeding):

Increased risk of breast, ovarian and endometrial cancer, overweight, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, stress, anxiety, maternal diabetes and reduced natural child spacing.

### Why should the society support breastfeeding?

The benefits of breastfeeding are not limited to the health of mother and child, but also include economic and environmental benefits.

- Families spend less money when breastfeeding
- Infant formula is often very expensive
  - Employers lose less "sick" days that parents must take to care for their unwell children; and
  - Energy costs of preparation of formula is not a factor in breastfeeding, and there is no waste that requires disposal which may be damaging to the environment; when a child is breastfed!

The benefits of breastfeeding could only be reaped when moms live in an environment and society that supports breastfeeding.



## Gender

The roles and responsibilities of boys and girls are divided according to their biological order. These norms and 'rules' experienced since young will be perpetuated to the others as they grow up.

- **Men:** In patriarchal societies as in most parts of the world, culture rules that the man supports the family and be served by the woman.
- **Women:** Women's low social status is reflected in various aspects of their lives such as education and health. They lack decision making power and face discrimination, thus suffer more from poverty, lack of education and limited income-earning opportunities than men.

Breastfeeding can only be fully supported when society understands that breastfeeding is a shared responsibility wherein all men's moral support and congenial ambiance is necessary. Having a baby is a joint decision so the responsibility of taking care of children should also be a joint responsibility. Your contribution as YOUth: believe and live in a gender sensitive way to contribute towards a peaceful society!

## Reproductive Health

Puberty, period, sex, pregnancy, birthing, breastfeeding – these are parts of women's reproductive cycle. Breastfeeding is a reproductive health right, thus factual information and skilled support for childbirth and breastfeeding should be available for all women. However, women may be encouraged to passively accept practices that are 'routine' that may interfere with natural birthing and breastfeeding, such as:

- Labouring without supportive companion
- Being deprived of water and light foods
- Pharmacological pain control
- Use of supine or lithotomy position, instead of squatting and other positions
- Episiotomy and other invasive procedures
- Caesarean section, instead of natural birthing
- Suctioning of the newborn
- Separation of mother and baby
- Baby automatically being given formula or water
- Mother told that her milk is not enough for baby
- Traditional practices like discarding of colostrum

A woman's pregnancy and childbirth experience can greatly impact the way breastfeeding begins and continues. When talking about reproductive health, men and women are biologically different and we need support from each other.

## Back to Work

Every mother is a working woman. For employed mothers, these are some of the minimum recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and are adopted as law in some countries:

- Provide workers with paid maternity and paternity leave (14 weeks, at 66% of salary);
- Ensure that mothers and pregnant woman do not lose their job or positions at work;
- Allow breastfeeding workers to take breastfeeding breaks or reduce their daily hours of work (remunerated accordingly); and
- Employers should provide a clean and comfortable place for women to breastfeed or express and store their breastmilk.

Also, breastfed babies get sick less often, so parents do not need to take as much leave from work to care for them. This benefits employers too because employees can focus more at work, and it need not cost employers much! It's a woman's right to breastfeed even after maternity leave and society should support the mother and child.

## Economics

Breastmilk is more than the best food for infant nutrition.

- Breastmilk is a renewable resource, and is FREE. Breastfeeding eliminates the economic burden of purchasing:
  - o formula, bottles, and teats
  - o water for mixing and washing

Too young to make a difference for breastfeeding? Think again! **YOUth** already exist in five social domains where you have the power to share with others about the benefits of breastfeeding!



		YOU CAN ...
FAMILY	Breastfeeding moms	Ask how you and others can help them while they are breastfeeding.
	New mothers	Talk about the benefits of breastfeeding and link her with a mother support group.
	Fathers	Tell them how much money they can save from breastfeeding through fewer medical bills and no need to buy formula for babies.
	Grandparents	Tell them the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and that other foods and fluids are not needed for the first 6 months of life.
	Brothers & sisters	Help out with family household chores.
	Relatives	Give mothers emotional support and encouragement.
PUBLIC	Neighbours	Praise neighbours if they are breastfeeding.
	Clubs	Initiate discussions for club members.
	Malls & shops	Distribute basic information about breastfeeding to shoppers.
	Supermarkets & pharmacies	Check the prices of infant formula and if there are any violations of the Code.
	Transports	Give your seat up for pregnant moms and mothers with babies, and offer a brochure on breastfeeding basics.
SCHOOL/ UNIVERSITY	Schoolmates	Ask your friends what they know about breastfeeding and share with them what you know.
	Teachers	Ask teachers to include the topic of breastfeeding in class.
	Councils	Organise breastfeeding awareness week in school.
	Bulletin boards & local newspapers	Publish breastfeeding messages and images.
WORK	Colleagues	Be sensitive about the needs of breastfeeding moms and encourage others to do the same.
	Bosses	Tell them how much the company can benefit from supporting breastfeeding (see section on Back to Work). Encourage them to set up a crèche at the workplace.
	Workers' unions	Create discussion on the rights of working mothers to breastfeed. Submit a petition to government to strengthen maternity protection.
CYBERSPACE	Friends	Email them info on breastfeeding upon learning someone is pregnant or breastfeeding.
	Chat	Discuss and give positive feedback about breastfeeding.
	Blogs	Share your insights on how YOUth can help out for breastfeeding.
	Websites	Disseminate web adds and links of great websites on breastfeeding.

- o sterilisation equipment, supplies and detergent
- o the fuel/electricity needed to transport, prepare and store breastmilk substitutes.
- Breastmilk is always readily available. There is no need to incur the costs of producing cow milk.
- Breastfeeding is a health investment for life. Babies who don't breastfeed have more asthma, allergies, respiratory diseases, ear infections, diabetes and obesity.

A mother produces approximately 346 litres of breastmilk in two years. In Mali, for example, breastmilk would account for 5% of the GDP, if costed at a modest USD 1 per litre. Breastfeeding mothers contribute to the global economy – silently and invisibly!



## Human Right

Mothers have the right to breastfeed, anytime, anywhere. Breastfeeding is essential to fulfill every child's right to adequate food and the highest attainable standard of health.

Given the above, have you ever heard, seen, or thought of the following situations as a violation of women's and children's rights?

- The improper and aggressive marketing of breastmilk substitutes: This is intended to influence mother's feeding choice. Often, she is not free to choose.
- If mothers have the right to breastfeed anytime and anywhere, why do they have to struggle to find ways to breastfeed their infants at the workplace or in public places?
- An HIV-positive mother who wants to breastfeed her infant: Does she have the information and support she needs for making this choice?

Commercial interference, family structures, societal attitudes and governmental policies often undervalue and ignore women's right to breastfeed their infants.

## Breastfeeding and HIV

What is the role of breastfeeding when it comes to HIV? There is no right or wrong answer, and we need to equip ourselves with facts:

- The best prevention for babies is by protecting mothers from being infected.
- Breastmilk is optimal and renewable, so it greatly enhances food security for babies and families.
- HIV can be transmitted during pregnancy, labour, birthing and breastfeeding.
- With no intervention, 65% of babies born to HIV-positive mothers do not become infected. About 15% become infected after over two years of mixed breastfeeding.
- Till 2001, 1.7 million babies died of AIDS, but 30 million babies died because they were not breastfed. That means, in resource poor settings 6-month's exclusive breastfeeding is advisable.
- Exclusivity is the key to prevention, i.e. breastmilk only or replacement feeding only. Mixed feeding results in much higher rates of transmission, because water and other drinks/foods may damage the baby's gut thus facilitating the entry of HIV.
- UN guidelines state that replacement feeding should only be recommended if it is acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable and safe (AFASS).

Parents have the right to know the risks of exclusive breastfeeding, mixed feeding and replacement feeding for HIV transmission and child survival.

## Unethical Marketing

Do you know that some companies get richer at the expense of babies' lives? Companies may resort to promotional practices which put profit before health. The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes was adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) to stop unethical marketing of breastmilk substitutes, such as:

- Offering free samples to parents
- Idealising artificial feeding by comparing products favourably with breastmilk and by making misleading health claims regarding the products
- Using health workers to promote products and contact pregnant women and mothers
- Pushing bottles and teats
- Giving gifts to health workers and mothers

To stop such violations see [www.ibfan.org/code/](http://www.ibfan.org/code/)

## Go Natural!

Breastmilk is a natural and renewable resource. Artificial baby milk and processed baby foods are products that create ecological damage, for example:

- Dairy farms require clearance of land, and imagine the amount of water used!
  - Factory-processing with high energy consumption
  - Products need to be transported; that pollutes and wastes fuel
  - Tin and plastic used for packaging
  - Fuel and water used to prepare powdered milk
  - Discarded plastic feeding bottles, teats and cans
- Come to think if it, breastfeeding is entirely free of waste! We need to support the breastfeeding culture that respects Mother Earth and adheres to nature's way!

# Breastfeeding: YOUth can act to make a difference !