



**14 February 2013**  
**WABA Joins “One Billion Rising” Campaign to End Violence Against Women!**

**On its’ 22nd Anniversary, WABA asserts that gender based violence has serious consequences on women’s reproductive health and life – including her right to breastfeed her children - and must be stopped!**

WABA firmly stands against all forms of violence against women and joins “One Billion Rising” *Strike-Dance-Rise* Campaign to ensure that women have the ability and right to live safe, healthy, meaningful and productive lives at home, at work and in their communities.

Violence against women is the ultimate form of discrimination against women. Across their life-cycles girls and women—from infancy to old age—are subjected to multiple forms of violence that limit women’s freedom and autonomy, harms their health, and leads to their premature death and disability. It both limits and is caused by women’s weaker economic, political and social power. It is a serious violation of women’s human rights and has grave consequences to women’s reproductive health and life.

Breastfeeding is a fundamental part of women’s reproductive life cycle with enormous health and psychological benefits for both mothers and children. In order to actualize their right to breastfeed, women must be empowered personally and thus be free agents within their families, social environments and also protected from blatant and unconscionable influence of corporate interests that violate global United Nations norms for promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding. WABA emphasises gender equity and the need for all sectors of society and members of the family to be enlightened and informed, so that they recognise the rights of breastfeeding women and not exert any form of violence upon them.

Women’s right to breastfeed can be best supported and facilitated when we contextualize women’s lives in their broader social and economic situations. When women are not adequately nourished, when their social environments impede breastfeeding, when they experience physical, sexual, psychological abuse or battery and when they suffer gender discrimination, their ability to exercise their human right to breastfeed is more difficult.

This year’s WABA World Breastfeeding Week theme is ‘BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT: CLOSE TO MOTHERS’. It focuses on supporting and providing skilled mother-to-mother or peer support and counseling to women to ensure greater support for mothers’ well being and help for women to fulfill their decision to breastfeed. There is a vital need for communities, workplaces, health care systems and government agencies to provide breastfeeding support for women, and for provisions to be made for emergency situations to support women who find themselves in unexpected, and critical or violent situations over which they have little control. (See more at:

<http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>)

Notes:

- 1) This was prepared with inputs by Paige Hall Smith, Co-Coordinator, of the WABA Gender Working Group, from Naweed Harooni, Jennifer Mourin, Amal Omer Salim and Anwar Fazal of the WABA Secretariat.
- 2) See IBFAN and WABA’s Breastfeeding and the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health contribution to the General Comment on the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health at: <http://www.waba.org.my/pdf/cescr-paper.pdf>
- 3) For more information on the “One Billion Rising” Strike- Dance-Rise campaign see <http://onebillionrising.org/>

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