

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)  
**PRESS RELEASE**



World Alliance for  
Breastfeeding Action

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**Remarkable Malaysian women pioneers honored  
at special International Women's Day event on  
17 March 2011**

In conjunction with the 2011 International Women's Day theme on **“Equal Access to Education, Training and Science and Technology: Pathway to Decent Work for Women”** and **WABA's 20th Anniversary** this year, WABA and KANITA (Women's Development Research Centre) of the Universiti Sains Malaysia, are collaborating to raise awareness on the struggles of women as both workers and mothers, and to advocate for a social environment that will enable women to balance their productive and reproductive work, including child care and breastfeeding.

WABA and KANITA are jointly organizing this event to recognise women's needs in the New Economic Model (NEM) framework, and to reflect another milestone of achievement by the women's movement in Malaysia over the past decades.

In this event, we are proud to honour five significant women who have courageously worked for their passions and livelihood as well as nurtured their families and/or supported other women in this similar struggle of working, nurturing children and breastfeeding. We look forward to the media's participation to cover the event, and make this celebration both an inspiration for all women, and advocate for women and children. It is a poignant reminder of the on-going efforts that are needed to bring about a gender just, healthier and happier society for all!

## **WABA's Call on International Women's Day**

*WABA supports actions to ensure that girls and women have equal access with boys and men to education and training in science and technology.* Science studies, traditionally favoured by males, are a first and necessary step for women who aspire to overcome the occupational segregation that so often consigns female workers to low-paid care-giving jobs, while men get the more exciting and well-paid opportunities in industry, information, and innovation. Science and technology training can:

- ◆ open an array of better-paying jobs to women, jobs that allow a mother to support herself and her child or children, jobs that offer her more security than work in the informal economy.
- ◆ give women access to types of jobs that may be compatible with breastfeeding as an employed mother, jobs that use reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking skills instead of manual labor; jobs done in an office instead of in the fields, the streets, or other women's homes.
- ◆ give women access to jobs in the formal economy, which are more likely than jobs in the informal economy to provide maternity protection and entitlements.

- ◆ build skills that develop a female employee's value to an employer, such that the employer is disposed to accommodate her needs for maternity protection because she cannot easily be replaced.

Science and technology training can set girls and women on the path to Decent Work. This was a concept introduced at the International Labour Organization in 1999. Decent Work means work that is productive, fairly paid, freely chosen, and secure...where all workers are fairly treated (including workers with family responsibilities), and where they have respect and dignity. Under the banner of Decent Work, maternity protection counterbalances potential disadvantages for workers who bear children, by safeguarding the health of mother and baby during pregnancy, birth, and lactation, while also protecting the mother's income and job.

***WABA supports increasing women's access to Decent Work through education and training in scientific and technical subjects.*** WABA's contribution to supporting working women worldwide to combine productive and reproductive work has been significant since its onset, starting with the 2nd World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) theme in 1993 on Working Women: the Mother-Friendly Workplace Initiative (MFWI). In 1998, on learning that the International Labor Organization (ILO) would revise its Maternity Protection Convention (103) and recommendation (95), WABA together with its partners began a campaign to be part of the revision process.

***Stressing on the slogan "Women should not have to choose between mother work and other work!", WABA calls for:***

- ◆ Paid maternity leave not less than 14 weeks for all working mothers!
- ◆ Paid paternity leave for fathers (at least 14 days)!
- ◆ Maternity leave to be paid by public funds and employers!
- ◆ Two daily breaks for breastfeeding/expressing milk!
- ◆ No discrimination in employment!
- ◆ Men, community and legislative support to create a mother-friendly workplace!

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