



WABA | WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK
1-7 AUGUST 2019

“Global standards that are inclusive and promote decent work, sustainable economic growth and employment for all are essential. Decent work should include parental social protection that protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding”

World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)

Breastfeeding reduces maternal and child [morbidity and mortality](#). Breastfed children have higher intelligence, and not breastfeeding results in economic losses of about [\\$302 billion](#) annually. It is evident that breastfeeding is one of the best investments in saving lives and improving the health, social and economic development of individuals and nations. However, despite [international recommendations](#), only 40% of all babies under 6 months are exclusively breastfed and 45% continue breastfeeding up to 24 months. Sustaining and scaling up optimal breastfeeding include [supporting parents at work](#).

Inequalities such as gender discrimination and lack of support for parents at work stand in the way of [sustainable development](#). Globally, a mother's return to paid work after childbirth is one of the leading reasons for early cessation of breastfeeding. More than [830 million](#) women workers do not have adequate maternity protection. It is also important to note that more than half ([61.2%](#)) of the global workforce make their living in the informal economy and are not covered by maternity protection policies. Breastfeeding mothers in the informal economy face additional barriers such as living far from work, long working hours without breaks, and dangerous work environments. The challenges of paid work are exacerbated by the unequal distribution of care work, with the assumption of females as sole caregivers. Furthermore, the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) reports that only 78 out of the 170 countries studied offer [paternity leave](#). Lack of paternity leave limits the time fathers can spend with their partners and children after birth. Additionally, child health and social services often ignore or exclude fathers and do not inform them about breastfeeding support. World Breastfeeding Week 2019 campaign aims to address labour and gender inequalities to [protect, promote and support breastfeeding](#).

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is a global campaign coordinated by the [World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action \(WABA\)](#) that aims to inform, anchor, engage and galvanise action on breastfeeding and related issues. The #WBW2019 theme is '[Empower parents, enable breastfeeding](#).' #WBW2019 advocates for (a) parental social protection policies and legislation, (b) parent-friendly workplaces in both formal and informal sectors, and (c) parent-friendly values and gender-equitable social norms.



PARENTAL SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Parental social protection measures include paid public-funded leave for both parents, flexible workplace policies that enable breastfeeding, as well as state-supported cash transfer programmes for parents and families. Policies and legislation that protect maternity rights, while allowing for a more equal distribution of the burden of care, are integral to achieving greater gender equality and empowerment.



PARENT-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES IN BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS

Parent-friendly workplaces in the formal sector should offer paid leave, a private space with facilities to breastfeed or express and store breastmilk, affordable childcare within the workplace or nearby, along with flexible working hours to help mothers continue breastfeeding. In the informal sector, we should work to ensure that workers are recognised and protected by national laws that also support optimal breastfeeding.



PARENT-FRIENDLY VALUES AND GENDER-EQUITABLE SOCIAL NORMS

Gender-equitable parenting that includes fathers/partners on the parenting team benefits both children and parents. Fathers/partners can learn co-parenting strategies for supporting breastfeeding that are sensitive to what the mother wants and needs. Couples need to agree on their breastfeeding goals and communicate well with each other, especially when there are challenges to breastfeeding.



Inform

people about the links between gender-equitable parental social protection and breastfeeding



Anchor

parent-friendly values and gender-equitable social norms at all levels to support breastfeeding



Engage

with individuals and organisations for greater impact



Galvanise

action on gender-equitable parental social protection to advance breastfeeding

Use the resources available on our [website](#), [Action Folder](#), [Social Media Kit](#) and [Media Kit](#) to spread awareness of this campaign before, during and after #WBW2019. Advocate for improved parental social protection and gender equality using our [Parents at Work: Leave & Breastfeeding Breaks by Country](#) tool. [Together](#), we can work to empower parents and enable breastfeeding, now and for the future!



World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations dedicated to 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 for Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). WABA coordinates the annual World Breastfeeding Week campaign. WABA works closely with many organisations and individuals. Our partners in this effort include: the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM), International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), La Leche League International (LLL), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), and several other international organisations.