



# WABA GLOBAL FORUM 2

Nurturing the Future:  
Challenges to Breastfeeding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
23-27 September 2002, Arusha, Tanzania

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## PRESS RELEASE

### International Conference on Meeting the Challenges to Breastfeeding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Arusha, 27 September 2002: An international conference to discuss the challenges to breastfeeding ended today at Arusha, Tanzania.

The second WABA Global Forum was organised by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), the Commonwealth Regional Health Community Secretariat (CRHCS) and the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) with assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), Netherlands and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). It brought together over 300 people from 70 countries. More than 60 workshops on 18 themes were held over five days, where participants shared their experiences, discussed, debated and clarified issues.

Several outcomes and recommendations for future actions emerged from the workshop deliberations. Some of these include the following:

- Revitalisation and expansion of the **Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative** with focus on neonatal care, humane birthing practices and baby-friendly communities for improved breastfeeding practices. These should be integrated with other existing breastfeeding programmes.
- The Forum accorded high profile to the **International Code** of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (adopted at the World Health Assembly in May 1981 as a tool to protect breastfeeding), and its importance was emphasised in the light of the globalisation process. An emerging issue that was discussed was the question of holding international agencies accountable for violations of the Code and this could be done in a human rights framework.
- Progress was made in linking with **trade unions** with the active participation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in the Forum. ICFTU invited the Maternity Protection Coalition to work with them on ratification of the ILO Maternity Convention C183.
- After lengthy discussions, breastfeeding advocates produced a working document on **human rights** and breastfeeding.
- The **environment** group agreed to greater collaboration and joint efforts in producing tools for media to better understand the environment issue especially with regard to contaminants in breastmilk.
- Breastfeeding advocates decided to reaffirm their links with the People's Health Movement and use the **People's Health Charter** for promoting breastfeeding.
- The women's workshops called for greater awareness on the common positions for working on **breastfeeding and women's issues**. There was recognition to include issues of gender equality and breastfeeding on the agendas of both movements.
- The clear link of improved breastfeeding with **humane birthing practices** was recognised as well as the need to integrate breastfeeding into **disaster preparedness** programmes.

- A **Men's Forum** was initiated at the 2<sup>nd</sup> WABA Global Forum. A network called the Global Initiative for Father Support (GIFS) will be based in Sweden. It recognises gender and complementary equality as guidelines for optimal infant and young children's feeding and acknowledges the existing international conventions on the right of the child and the right of the woman. It also notes that the existing hospitals and health policy practices are not conducive to full participation of fathers and families in the care and support of mother and baby.

A variety of theatre and dance performances including a medley of poems and lullabies were performed during two plenary sessions displaying the power of such popular communications media. Media showcases with video presentations, poster sessions, exhibits and displays and sale of publications were held during the Forum which generated much interest not only on the issue of breastfeeding but also related issues such as environment, globalisation, consumer and women's issues. The Forum also provided space for the local Tanzanian arts and crafts people to display and sell their wares.

At the closing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> WABA Global Forum, Anwar Fazal, Chairperson of WABA, stated: "the Second WABA Global Forum has been a watershed for the breastfeeding movement – we have shared information, been inspired and launched initiatives in critical areas of work. In particular,

- The AIDS pandemic – the breastfeeding and the HIV action groups have formed a framework for action.
- The challenge of globalisation and corporatisation – the Forum initiated a petition to Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of UNICEF to withdraw from the unconscionable partnership with the fast food McDonald's chain – that company is not the kind of role model for food security and good nutrition that one wants to encourage to exploit the UN halo.
- The health profession – a new initiative to work particularly with doctors and nurses and encourage such groups as the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine.
- Body Burdens – the poisoning of our bodies by irresponsible corporations is impacting on our health. A first initiative between the environment and breastfeeding movement has been established.
- A process to develop a "World Breastfeeding Charter" as a popular mobilisation tool will be developed.

The Forum has been a bazaar of many ideas and linkages and wonderfully creative people. The movement is looking forward with renewed energy and optimism, new ideas, new partners and new actions."

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