

**World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action**

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WABA Statement on International Women's Day

“Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum”

International Women’s Day (IWD) is an opportunity to reflect on the importance of supporting mothers who increasingly work both at home and elsewhere in the formal and informal sectors. In some instances even playing the role of the main breadwinner of the family.

Women everywhere have to juggle with the increasing and competing demands on them - from their families, children, partners and work. Women’s struggles to balance their productive and reproductive roles often come at enormous cost to themselves and their breastfeeding babies. Lack of sufficient support for women performing these multiple roles, impedes women’s career advancement, self-development and self actualisation, freedom and reduces their control and power over their own lives and in the different echelons of societal structures.

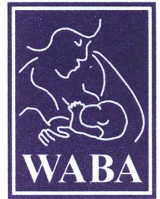
In conjunction with the theme for the IWD 2013 being “Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum”, WABA reiterates that women need full social support for both their productive and reproductive work and that breastfeeding is a critical part of women’s reproductive life. Women should not be forced to choose between mother work and other work, but they should be facilitated to accomplish both simultaneously.

Women’s reproductive work, including pregnancy, breastfeeding and caring for the next generation, is too often, undervalued and unrecognized. Yet this work is vital to the future of our world.

Healthy mothers and healthy babies make our next generation stronger. Breastfeeding is not only nurturing and healthy but it is ecologically friendly and increases a family’s food security.

Breastfeeding is a unique form of gendered care-giving because it involves a woman’s body, draws on her nutritional reserves, involves their emotions and improves their short and long term health. Too often however, women are not free to choose to breastfeed because they are deprived of unbiased information, lack of support from their health care providers, employers or communities.

WABA stresses that that all women should have the right to make informed choices, receive support and to practice breastfeeding without compulsion or coercion. Their rights must be respected in all spaces of society, e.g., at home, at work, in school or in the community.



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Women's productive work, in both the formal and informal sectors, is also vital to our economies. This work brings in income and other resources. It can provide women with more economic independence in their homes and communities. But this work is often in the informal sector and becomes, like their reproductive contributions, invisible and uncounted. It is also unregulated, untaxed, low waged, spread to long hours and offers women no protection from poor labor practices, from all kinds of harassment and discrimination, or from being fired when they have to miss a day of work.

On International Women's Day, the **World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action** demands on behalf of women, particularly breastfeeding mothers:

- maternity protection benefits,
- access to information to be able to make informed decisions,
- mother and baby-friendly workplaces,
- equality and equity of gender,
- freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence at work and in the home.

International Women's Day is the day to reaffirm:

MOTHERS HAVE A RIGHT TO WORK AND WORKERS HAVE A RIGHT TO MOTHERHOOD!

This Statement is prepared by Paige Hall Smith, Co-Coordinator of the Gender Working Group and Naweed A. Harooni, Program Coordinator on Gender & Working Women and reviewed by Amal Omer-Salim, Senior Technical Advisor and Jay Sharma, Consultant Senior Coordinator Information & Management