

Statement to UNICEF Executive Board
on 7th June 2005
2005 Annual Session, New York



Thank you Mr. President. As the chairperson of the WABA Steering Committee, I am speaking on behalf of WABA and our core partners ILCA and La Leche League.

As members of the NGO Committee on UNICEF with ECOSOC status, we thank you for the opportunity to address the UNICEF Executive Board concerning the UNICEF future workplan. The International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), La Leche League International (LLLl) and the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) work together to reach the goals of the INNOCENTI DECLARATION to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. These organizations support an integrated approach to: maternal health, safe delivery, early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding, and continued breastfeeding with complementary feeding.

As NGOs working with mothers and babies around the world, we welcome Ms. Ann Veneman as the UNICEF Executive Director and challenge the UNICEF Executive Board to renew its commitment to the UNICEF programs that include the empowerment of women and the protection of the babies' health through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding. The Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, the HIV and Infant Feeding: Framework for Priority Actions, mother to mother support and lactation specialists are all important components and programs to support the UNICEF Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2006-2009.

Optimal infant and young child feeding practices improve children's survival, growth and development over the life of the child. Breastfeeding also contributes to poverty reduction by producing a valuable food and by cutting expenditures for health care. Further, optimally fed children have the best chance for healthy development and for making good use of educational opportunities.

UNICEF identifies poverty reduction as an over-arching goal. Poor feeding practices, including failure to exclusively breastfeed for the first 6 months, are a "major threat to social and economic development," according to the Global Strategy. Thus, it is clear that optimal feeding practices for infants and young children have a key role to play in meeting this goal.

For these reasons, ILCA, LLLl and WABA recommend that breastfeeding, as defined and described in the 2002 WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, be utilized as a cross cutting strategy and an important intervention in the UNICEF MSTP 2006-2009 and that breastfeeding be reinstated as an organizational target in order to receive the financial and program support needed to achieve the MTSP goals. We have developed a separate sheet with specific recommendations for the MTSP final version that have been made available to members of the board.

ILCA, LLLl, and WABA are committed to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding and are ready to continue our partnership with UNICEF in the challenge to build a better future for the children of the world. We welcome each of you to participate in World Breastfeeding Week in your community during World Breastfeeding Week celebrations and to wear with pride the UNICEF Golden Bow for Breastfeeding, the global standard for infant feeding. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Executive Board.

Beth Styer
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