

PRESS RELEASE

Breastfeeding in a Globalised World

- for peace and justice

World Breastfeeding Week 1-7 August 2003



The United Nations estimates that everyday some 3,000 to 4,000 infants die because they are denied access to adequate breastmilk.

"With increasing globalisation and more opening of markets, breastfeeding is threatened as never before. Some instruments like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and free trade agreements can be used to undermine health codes that promote, protect and support breastfeeding, under the guise that they can restrict the rights of formula manufacturers to compete freely in the marketplace," said Anwar Fazal, Chairperson Emeritus of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA). "Breastmilk is unique medically and nutritionally. It is not a like-product comparable to infant formula and other baby foods that compete in the marketplace."

Since the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes 22 years ago at the World Health Assembly, much progress has been made but many baby food manufacturers continue their aggressive promotion of artificial feeding products. Breastmilk substitutes are promoted as equivalent in nutritional value to mother's milk and labels boast that their products are "easier to digest", "endorsed by nutrition experts", and "closer than ever to breastmilk." Free samples are given to pregnant women and new mothers at medical clinics and product information and coupons are routinely mailed to them.

Anwar Fazal said, "Breastfeeding is also about peace and justice. It is the natural, universal and peaceful way of nurturing our children. In a world often wracked by injustice, violence and war, breastfeeding can be a sentinel of peace - inner peace, peace with other people and peace with the environment."

Breastfeeding groups and advocates all over the world will be raising these issues during World Breastfeeding Week which is celebrated every year on August 1-7. WBAW is in its 12th year celebration and continues to provide breastfeeding advocates a platform to raise awareness globally on breastfeeding. This year, breastfeeding advocates analyse breastfeeding in the context of globalisation. It is especially significant also because it is the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Alma Ata Declaration "Health for All" Campaign (see note no.3).

The goals for World Breastfeeding Week 2003 are to:

- Recognise the challenges and opportunities of globalisation for breastfeeding practices
- Maximise the potential of global communications to educate people on the importance of breastfeeding, appropriate complementary feeding, and the health risks of artificial feeding
- Promote and act on the United Nations Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding (see note no.2)
- Prevent the weakening of the United Nations International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions
- Building alliances with public interest groups striving for global justice, peace and health for all
- Think globally and act locally with all sectors of our world-wide breastfeeding community in order to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global alliance of individuals, networks and organisations that protect, promote and support breastfeeding based on the Innocenti Declaration and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF. Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) 1 WABA, PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia 1 Tel: 60-4-6584 816 1 Fax: 60-4-6572 655 1 Email: secr@waba.po.my 1 Website: www.waba.org.my

Notes for Editors:

1. To read the WBW 2003 Action Folder in English, Chinese, French and Spanish, please visit our WBW webpage <www.waba.org.my/wbw/wbw03/wbw2003.html>. For more information, contact Liew Mun Tip, PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia. Tel: 60-4-6584 816 l. Fax: 60-4-6572 655. Email: secr@waba.po.my
2. The Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding <www.who.org> is a comprehensive tool for governments, health care systems, the community and individuals to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. The strength of the Global Strategy is that it is the result of a series of regional consultation before it was adopted at the World Health Assembly in 2002. It is based on human rights principles and built on previous United Nations initiated achievements such as the International Code, Innocenti Declaration and Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI).
3. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration on Health for All. The People's Health Movement (PHM) and International People's Health Council launched the Million Signature Campaign, a march on the internet demanding Health for All Now. More information is available on <www.TheMillionSignatureCampaign.org>.

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