



*Support for breastfeeding illustrate the potential influences on a mother's decision to breastfeed and to have a positive breastfeeding experience.*

Supporting mothers is an ongoing need and critical for the success of a mother to breastfeed. In the following five years since 2008, research started to emerge on the positive impact of PEER COUNSELLORS (PCs) on breastfeeding rates. Peer counsellors are women and other people who are not professionals, or health workers from the community, who are trained to support breastfeeding regardless of their educational background. WABA chose to focus on Peer Counsellors for the 2013 WBW theme, to expand peer support available worldwide.

### **Breastfeeding Support: Close to Mothers (WBW 2013)**

Even when mothers are able to get off to a good start, all too often, in the weeks or months after delivery, there is a sharp decline in breastfeeding rates and practices, particularly exclusive breastfeeding. The period when mothers do not visit a healthcare facility is the time when a community support system for mothers is essential. Continued support to sustain breastfeeding can be offered in a variety of ways. Traditionally, the family provides support. However, as societies change, in particular with urbanisation, support for mothers from a wider circle is needed, whether it comes from trained healthcare workers, lactation consultants, community leaders, friends who are also mothers, and/or from fathers or partners.

A cost-effective way to provide needed support to mothers when professional help is not available is through peer counselling or peer support. Peer Counsellors can be readily available near the mother's home, and they can provide day-to-day help. Peer support may be coupled with occasional attendance by a lactation consultant, or a skilled professional, to complement the ongoing support. It is also very helpful to have women of various parties meet both before and after the baby is born, to learn from each other.



*A young mother in the Philippines being helped by her mother and mother-in-law to breastfeed her baby.*

WBW photo by Joefel Soco-Carreon