

Breastfeeding is worth more than its cost saving

While economic data may be useful in certain settings for creating awareness of the importance of breastfeeding among policy makers, WABA cautions that economic calculations underestimate the larger value of breastfeeding. Its economic value is only a fraction of its human welfare value. Breastfeeding also guarantees the baby skin-to-skin contact, attention from mother and other caring attributes which promote 'bonding'. Bottle-feeding does not guarantee any of these.

Furthermore, discussions on breastmilk production and its food value should be handled delicately so as not to 'offend' some women with the comparison to cows.

Policy makers should be made aware of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, the need to make mother support available, to provide extra support for working women, and to have a system for the regulation of the baby food industry so breastfeeding is not undermined.

This year's Action Folder provides information on the economic value of breastfeeding and serves as an advocacy tool to value the economic benefits of breastfeeding. WABA emphasizes that cost savings is not the only nor the major benefit of breastfeeding.

Indeed, mothers and babies have a right to breastfeed. Women should not be made to choose between mother work and other work. It is in society's interest to fund breastfeeding promotion and support programmes and to consider breastfeeding time as work time for mothers in paid jobs, or even to pay women to breastfeed. In Quebec, Canada, since 1995 there is a programme which pays mothers receiving public assistance who 'opt' to breastfeed.

Mothers who breastfeed should also be protected from advertising and promotion of breastmilk substitutes, as specified in the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes.

Mothers have a right to breastfeed and babies a right to breastmilk. Success in breastfeeding should not be a luxury only afforded by the resourceful, the rich or the lucky.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This action folder is written by Ted Greiner and Naomi Baumslag with inputs from (in alphabetical order): Annelies Allain, Sarah Amin, Denise Arcoverde, Doraine Bailey, Elisabet Helsing, George Kent, Pauline Kisanga, Linkages, Janet Nelson and Susan Siew. Project Design: Plug Multimedia. Illustrations: Paulo Santos and Liborio. Production: Raja Abdul Razak and C-Square Sdn. Bhd. Many thanks to all who reviewed this folder and to UNICEF and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial support to WABA.



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of organisations and individuals. WABA believes breastfeeding to be the right of all children and mothers; dedicates itself to protect, promote and support this right; and acts on the Innocenti Declaration. WABA works in close liaison with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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WABA does not accept sponsorship of any kind from companies producing breastmilk substitutes, related equipment and complementary foods. WABA encourages all participants of World Breastfeeding Week to respect and follow this ethical position.