

World Breastfeeding Week 2024

Official Statement for Malaysian Lactation Consultants Association (MALCA) for World Breastfeeding Week 2024 Celebration (1st-7th August 2024)

As the Malaysian Lactation Consultants Association (MALCA), a collective group of International Board of Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) in Malaysia, we are proud to stand in solidarity with the global breastfeeding community in observance of World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) 2024 Celebration.

This year's WBW theme is "Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All." The phrase "closing the gap" refers to reducing inequalities in breastfeeding support. This includes addressing disparities in access to information, resources, and support systems for mothers to successfully breastfeed, in various socio-economic, cultural, and environmental adversities. The goal is to ensure that all families, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal opportunities to receive the necessary support and guidance for breastfeeding. This is crucial for promoting the health and well-being of both infants and mothers. The theme emphasizes that improved breastfeeding support within society helps to bridge health gaps across diverse population backgrounds, especially during times of emergencies and crises.

Aligned with thematic area 2 of the WBW-SDG 2030 campaign, we are committed to advancing breastfeeding goals that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, SDG 4: Quality education, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, and SDG 10: Sustainable cities and communities.

As we observe World Breastfeeding Week 2024, it is crucial to acknowledge the disparities that exist in breastfeeding support, as highlighted in the World Breastfeeding Week 2024 action folder. These disparities range from challenges faced by working mothers due to inadequate workplace lactation policies and facilities, to sociocultural norms that hinder breastfeeding practices, and

inconsistent support from healthcare providers. To address these inequalities, MALCA is dedicated to promoting initiatives that provide universal access to breastfeeding support, empower communities for sustainable change, and advocate for policies that eliminate barriers to breastfeeding. By integrating these strategies, we aim to create a supportive environment where all mothers can start and continue breastfeeding, regardless of their circumstances.

As we champion the theme 'Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All' during World Breastfeeding Week 2024 Celebration, it is imperative to emphasize specific disparities in breastfeeding support. For instance, the urban poor often struggle with limited access to protected maternity benefits, which can force mothers to return to work prematurely, thereby hampering their ability to continue breastfeeding. Additionally, informal workers, such as contract and daily-paid employees, frequently lack adequate maternity leave benefits, which can significantly impact their breastfeeding journey. These examples highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policies and supportive practices that ensure all mothers, regardless of their economic status or employment type, have equal access to the resources and support necessary to sustain breastfeeding.

MALCA is committed to addressing these challenges by:

- Advocating for support systems and engaging stakeholders across sectors to foster a conducive environment for mothers to nurture their children through breastfeeding.
- Inviting all stakeholders to join us in this important initiative to promote breastfeeding excellence, support breastfeeding families, and close the gap in breastfeeding inequalities.

Together, let's work towards a future where children have access to optimal breastfeeding support and mothers can breastfeed with confidence and dignity.

Sincerely,

Malaysian Lactation Consultants Association (MALCA)