



# The Situation in the United Arab Emirates

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# Demographics of UAE

- Population: 9,574.428 (Sept. 2015)
- 81% or 87 % of the population are work migrants.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest imbalance after Qatar of male/female ratios in the world or 2.75 men to 1 woman. (1)
- Women constitute about a quarter of the population of the UAE. They are free to be educated, work, drive and are encouraged to take an active part in the development of the society.
- The normal working week is 48 hours (+ 9 in service industry) in the private sector. Domestic workers are not provided for under the Labour Law.
- Civil servants work for 35 hours.

(1) [worldpopulationreview.com](http://worldpopulationreview.com)

# Maternity Protection in the UAE.

## ■ **Civil Service Sector**

- **Maternity Leave** is 2 months and can be taken 2 weeks before EDD, based upon a medical report.
- At the end of the Maternity Leave, the employee may combine annual leave and/or leave without pay.

## **Breastfeeding Breaks**

- At the end of Maternity Leave and for 4 months the employee may leave work early for 2 hours to breastfeed which are part of the work hours and with full pay.

Council of Ministers Resolution No 15 of 2013 on Human Resources for Independent Federal Entities. Article 67

# Maternity Protection Continued

**Private Sector Maternity Leave** is 45 days including a period before and after the birth. This can be extended for a further 10 days without pay. This does not deduct from any other leave that the female employee is entitled to.

## **Breastfeeding Breaks**

During 18 months following birth, a female employee who nurses her baby may take 2 half hour breaks for the purpose of feeding her baby. These are considered as part of the working hours and no deduction in wages can be made.

Labour Law No 8 1980. Amended by Laws no 24 1981. No 15 of 1985 and No 12 of 1986

# Paternity Leave

- **Under the Civil Law**
- The employee who is blessed with a live child within the state shall be granted Paternity Leave for 3 consecutive or separate working days during the first month of the child's life.
- There is no provision for Paternity Leave in the Private Sector Labour Law.
- Draft Child Protection Law and the "Breastfeeding Law".

# Provision = Adequate?

- ❖ Mothers are forced to return to work early.
  - ❖ Short hospital stays after birth, with little or no follow up. PKU 5<sup>th</sup> day then not seen until 1<sup>st</sup> vaccination.
  - ❖ Husbands are not able to support their wives when they also work long hours.
  - ❖ 48 hour week + 9 more in service industries.
  - ❖ Domestic staff are not covered by this law.
  - ❖ Civil servants work 35 hours.
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- ❖ Women are often isolated and rely upon friends or social media for advice.
  - ❖ Many families in the private sector are unaware of breastfeeding breaks or that they can continue breastfeeding. They think that bottle feeding is the only option. Misinformation and cultural mores also undermine continued breastfeeding..



# The role of men. It's natural isn't it?

- In the Quran it states “The mothers shall give suck to their children for **two whole years**, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling... *Quran, s.2, v.233*.
- Most men are eager for their wives to breastfeed but often feel helpless when there are difficulties.
- Employers have very little idea that new mothers need facilities to express their milk at work.
- They also think that longer Maternity Leave and Breastfeeding Breaks mean reduced production.



# One Solution: BFF in the Emirate of Sharjah

- Breastfeeding Friends (BFF) formed late 1999.
- We were unable to influence the conditions of maternity leave or hospital stay.
- Our solution was to support families in the community even on a small scale.
- We had no budget and were all working full time.
- Legally came under the umbrella of Mother and Child Health Clinic (MCH) in Sharjah and worked closely with the Breastfeeding Coordinator in Central MOH and other likeminded people.





# What we did.

- Telephone Support Line in English and Arabic. (Later Urdu too).
- Made a leaflet that was attached to the vaccination cards of all newborn infants in the largest Government Hospital in Sharjah.
- Began Peer counselors training and 20 hour WHO/UNICEF Courses.
- Celebrated National Breastfeeding Week.
- Code monitoring.
- Developed a Breastfeeding Booklet for mothers.
- Began the “Mother Friendly Workplace Initiative”.
- Included booklets for employers and employees.
- Developed guidelines for Nursing Rooms at Work.

# All Change

- In 2009, BFF patron HH Sheikha bint Sultan Al Qassimi proposed that BFF make an even larger commitment to breastfeeding.
- The Emiri Decree (2011) of HH Sheikh Sultan Al Qassimi stated that the Emirate of Sharjah should become an officially accredited Baby Friendly Emirate by the end of 2015.
- The **Sharjah Baby Friendly Campaign** began as a separate body from BFF with a budget from Sharjah Government. Their aim to reach hospitals, clinics, schools, universities, nurseries and malls.
- BFF were invited to continue their work under the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Sharjah with office facilities and funding.

# What can to be done?

- Educate employees and employers on the needs of breastfeeding mothers.
- Since 2011 SBFC:

Initiative	Total	Achieved	Work in progress
MFWP	90	35	55
Baby Friendly Nurseries	90	18	5
Baby Friendly Public Places	17		

- Educate society at large to support mothers who breastfeed.
- Pass the draft law on the UAE Code for the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.



Thank You Very Much