

## PARTNERS/LINKS

The WABA Gender Working Group is co-coordinated by Marta Trejos of CEFEMINA, Costa Rica, Paige Hall Smith, University of North Carolina, USA and Renu Khanna, SAHAJ, India. It works with partners in both the women's movement and the breastfeeding movement in different regions. The core Gender Working Group includes:

- Asian and Pacific Resource and Research Centre on Women (ARROW), Malaysia
- Centro Feminista de Información Acción (CEFEMINA), Costa Rica – Marta Trejos
- Society for Health Alternatives (SAHAJ), India – Renu Khanna
- Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness (CHETNA), India
- Latin American and the Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN), Nicaragua – Ana Maria Pizarro
- People's Health Movement (PHM), Nicaragua – Maria Hamlin Zuniga
- Anthropology Department, York University, Canada – Penny Van Esterik
- WABA Men's Working Group, Cameroon – James Achanyi Fontem.
- Training and Assistance for Health and Nutrition (TAHN) Foundation, Bangladesh – Rukhsana Haider
- Paige Hall Smith, University of North Carolina, USA
- WABA Secretariat, Malaysia – Sarah Amin, Amal Omer-Salim and Naweed Harooni.

## ACTIVITIES

The activities of the Gender Working Group involves:

- Outreach and Information Exchange
- Gender Training
- Gender Quiz
- Advocacy/Networking with women's, men's and other groups
- Gender Guidelines
- Online E-Gender Training
- Publications

For more information log on to WABA website:

[www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/gender/index.html](http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/gender/index.html)

## PUBLICATIONS / RESOURCES

- 1 Innovative Initiatives: Supporting Working Women's Right to Breastfeed, 2007.
- 2 Grinding Realities: Women and Breastfeeding in the Informal Sector, 2005.
- 3 Against All Odds: Gendered Challenges to Breastfeeding, 2005.
- 4 Breastfeeding: A Reproductive Health and Rights Issue, 2005.
- 5 Towards Healthy Mothers and Children: A Gender and Rights Approach to Breastfeeding Promotion (Discussion Paper), 2004.
- 6 Link 3: Breastfeeding and Women's Empowerment (from "Ten Links for Nurturing the Future Action Tool"), 1998.
- 7 How about taking a Gender Quiz? [www.waba.org/whatwedo/gender/quiz.htm](http://www.waba.org/whatwedo/gender/quiz.htm)

## CONTACT ADDRESS



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## TOWARDS A COMMON ADVOCACY AGENDA

*Statement made at the Second WABA Global Forum in Arusha, Tanzania, 23–27 September 2002, based on the four workshops on Theme 7 – Outreach to Women's Groups.*

Breastfeeding is a basic human right and it is agreed that the protection of women's right to breastfeed is a shared position of the women's movement and breastfeeding movement. Women can fully exercise this right only where there exists a gender equal social and political environment, whereby women's contribution to productive and reproductive work, including nurturing, is recognised, and where all forms of breastfeeding support can be made available. Gender equity is therefore basic to the breastfeeding movement.

The breastfeeding movement also recognises:

- That breastfeeding support requires changes in all social environments and policies.
- That social transformation needs to take place at all levels to bring about gender equality.
- Women's right to life and survival.
- Women's right to choose free of commercial, medical and political pressure.
- Women's right to food, irrespective of race, class, caste, religion, region and age.

## DEMANDS

Women's groups and breastfeeding groups have decided to put on their advocacy agenda the following demands:

- To recognise the common concern of the adverse effect of globalisation and privatisation on health care services, and the increasing feminisation of poverty.
- Women's right to accessible, affordable, comprehensive, high quality and gender-sensitive women's health services.
- Women's right to breastfeeding based on informed choices, free of commercial, medical and political pressure.
- Social recognition and value of women's work at home as caregivers and nurturers.
- Implementation of maternity protection for women at paid work in the formal and informal sectors.
- Women's right to food, adequate nutrition, rest, safe water and shelter.

# MAINSTREAMING GENDER in BREASTFEEDING PROGRAMMES

*What's breastfeeding got to do with gender issues?*



World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action  
(WABA)

## What's breastfeeding got to do with gender issues?

BREASTFEEDING is an important part of women's reproduction and benefits women's health. Women have the right to breastfeed as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As with other issues concerning women's health and sexuality, breastfeeding takes place in a gendered world. Hence breastfeeding promotion programmes should take into account the gendered context of women's lives. Breastfeeding and child rearing are particularly difficult for the majority of the world's women, marginalised by poverty, violence, poor nutritional status, job insecurities and gender inequalities.

### GENDER PROGRAMME

WABA's Gender Programme aims to situate breastfeeding issues within the women's agenda, and particularly the women's reproductive health and rights framework. It also aims to raise awareness about breastfeeding issues in the women's movement so that they can jointly protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

With its Task Forces on Women and Work, Mother Support and the Men's Working Group, the Gender Programme aims to mainstream gender issues within breastfeeding promotion programmes worldwide.

### OVERALL GOALS

1. To promote gender awareness among breastfeeding advocates and to mainstream the gender perspective in breastfeeding advocacy and programmes.
2. To promote collaboration between the breastfeeding movement and the women's movement, in order to strengthen the common advocacy goals of both movements; and to undertake joint advocacy,

education and training on women's rights, health and breastfeeding.

3. To increase the participation of men, especially fathers in childcare, domestic responsibilities and to raise men's awareness on women's and children's rights, reproductive health issues and safe sex.

### OBJECTIVES

- breastfeeding advocates/groups are aware of gender concepts and key issues of the women's movement, particularly women's social and economic situation and health conditions, in order to develop gender-sensitive breastfeeding promotion and advocacy strategies;
- women's groups recognise breastfeeding as a women's issue, including as a reproductive health and rights issue, and integrate it in their advocacy activities;
- Men involved in all matters of infant feeding practices and child care, and household responsibilities and work, including greater responsibility for safe sex and family planning. Stronger networking with men's groups is also enhanced.

### BACKGROUND

WABA contextualised breastfeeding from a gender perspective in 1993, spearheaded by its Women and Work Task Force. WABA's activities on gender and breastfeeding include:

**1993** WABA launched World Breastfeeding Week 1993 theme on Mother-Friendly Workplaces and produced action folder *Women, Work and Breastfeeding*.

**1994** Produced Activity Sheet #4 on "Breastfeeding: a Feminist Issue". Participated in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo.

**1995** Produced World Breastfeeding Week 1995 action folder *Breastfeeding: Empowering Women*. Participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. WABA's Women and Work Task Force has special focus on women working and breastfeeding in informal sector.

**1996** Dr. Vanessa Griffen, Coordinator of the Gender and Development Programme of the Asian and Pacific Development Centre, presented on gender and breastfeeding at the **WABA's Global Forum 1**, in 1996 in Thailand.

**1997** *Mother-Friendly Workplace Initiative: Ten Community Experiences* - a report of seedgrants for innovative initiatives in promoting mother-friendly workplaces during 1994-1997.

**1998** *Link 3 - Women's Empowerment*, a discussion paper to debate and clarify common concerns on breastfeeding and gender.

**1999** WABA as part of the Maternity Protection Coalition worked towards recognising breastfeeding as a women's right in the revised ILO Maternity Protection Convention C 183.

**2000** Collaborated with the International Women Count Network (IWCN) on valuing women's work of breastfeeding in the national economy.

**2002** Organised four workshops with the theme, "Outreach to Women's Groups" at its **Global Forum 2** in Arusha, Tanzania, drawing great interest from women's groups, health groups and breastfeeding advocates. Its outcome included:

- A strong statement and a recommendation to set up a Gender Working Group.
- The birth of the Global Initiative for Father Support (GIFS) which aims to encourage male involvement in supporting breastfeeding and reproductive health issues.

**2003** Published the Maternity Protection Kit.

**2004** The Gender Working Group was set up and began various activities, including its first gender training in Nov./Dec., Penang.

**2005** The Gender Programme produced three publications. It conducted several gender training workshops for breastfeeding advocates in North America, Africa and Latin America.

Participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> International Women's Health Meeting, New Delhi, the AWID International Forum, Bangkok; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia-Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health, Kuala Lumpur.

**2006** Conducted Gender Training with focus on men's groups.

Facilitated the reactivation of Men's Working Group.

Mainstreamed gender in HIV and breastfeeding issues, and produced a joint statement on Gender, Child Survival and HIV with women's groups and HIV groups.

**2007** Gender Training with focus on South Asia; Advocacy at the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health, Hyderabad, India.

**2009** Joint Gender Training with FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN). Mainstreamed gender in food and human rights as well as situating breastfeeding in the context of mother and child rights, Nov., Delhi.

**2012** Launching of E-Gender training course online.