

## Our Allies

- **Trade Unions** – The global unions, including Public Services International (PSI), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Education International (EI), and national trade unions are important allies who will support breastfeeding for workers if informed of the many advantages of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding advocates need to make the effort to reach out to them.
- **ILO** – ILO Offices have been helpful and provide a useful source of information and support on MP efforts, particularly legal applications of the articles of the MP Convention and Recommendation.
- **Feminists/Women's groups** – are potential allies, depending on the campaign strategy and the kinds of groups you reach out to. Keeping a broader perspective on MP and using a gender approach has helped to ensure women's groups as allies in our MP campaign.

## How can you support maternity protection?

The MPC welcomes inquiries and input from all NGOs that prioritise the right of women to work and to breastfeed. Note the following ideas and contact an MP Coalition member:

- Identify national organisations working for better MP laws and regulations in your country or your neighbourhood. Action can be taken at a local, national, regional or international level.
- Talk to workers and trade unions to find out how their workplace support childbearing women. Every worker can play a role to ensure that breastfeeding is protected.
- Seek out employers who support their breastfeeding employees and give them public recognition.
- Know your own country's MP laws. Ensure that parents understand how to claim their entitlements. Check to see that employers actually follow the laws.
- Build community support for breastfeeding in order to assist mothers in the informal sector and mothers who are doing family care at home.
- Tell us your story – best practice examples as well as particularly difficult situations concerning for example your country legislation, model employers, a specific campaign.

## Available Resources:

- *Maternity Protection at Work: A Breastfeeding Perspective* – An action kit on how to campaign for improved maternity protection nationally and at the workplace for better policies and practices <[www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpckit.htm](http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpckit.htm)>
- *A New Standard for the New Century: Maternity Protection – ILO Convention No. 183* produced by the ITUC, PSI and EI as part of their global campaign for the ratification of the MP Convention <[www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991213340&Language=EN](http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991213340&Language=EN)>
- ILO Convention No. 183, Recommendation No. 191; Convention No. 184

## MP Coalition contact information:

Website: [www.waba.org/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpaboutus.htm/](http://www.waba.org/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpaboutus.htm/)

The MP Coalition is currently comprised of the following members:

- **Academy for Educational Development (AED)**  
P.O. Box 30072, Sunnyside 0132, South Africa  
Email: [ntombela@aed.org](mailto:ntombela@aed.org)  
Website: [www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)
- **International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)**  
**IBFAN/GIFA**  
11 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
Email: [info@gifa.org](mailto:info@gifa.org)  
Website: [www.ibfan.org](http://www.ibfan.org), [www.gifa.org](http://www.gifa.org)
- **International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA)**  
1500 Sunday Drive, Suite 102, Raleigh, NC 27607, USA  
Email: [info@ilca.org](mailto:info@ilca.org)  
Website: [www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org)
- **La Leche League International (LLLl)**  
957 N. Plum Grove Road, Schaumburg, IL 60173-4808, USA  
Email: [llli@llli.org](mailto:llli@llli.org)  
Website: [www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org)
- **World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)**  
PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia  
Email: [waba@waba.org.my](mailto:waba@waba.org.my)  
Website: [www.waba.org.my](http://www.waba.org.my)

## With technical support from:

- **International Maternal and Child Health Section (IMCH) of Uppsala University**  
Department of Women's and Children's Health, University Hospital  
Akademiska sjukhuset, SE-751 85 Uppsala, Sweden  
Email: [amal.omer-salim@kbh.uu.se](mailto:amal.omer-salim@kbh.uu.se)  
Website: [www.kbh.uu.se](http://www.kbh.uu.se)
- **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**  
Website: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

# Maternity Protection Coalition:

Why • Who • What • How



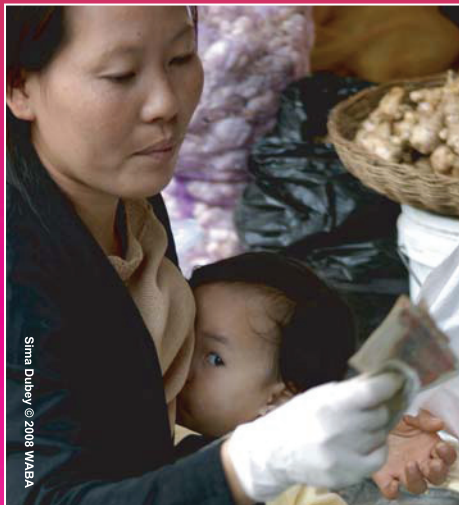
## Why the need for a Maternity Protection (MP) Coalition?

The Maternity Protection Coalition (MPC) is composed of five non-governmental organisations that support a woman's right to both work and breastfeed. These organisations advocate for the development, implementation and monitoring of essential maternity protection entitlements in the form of laws, regulations, and agreements on maternity protection at the workplace. The aim of the MP Coalition is to provide equity for childbearing women through job protection, non-discrimination, health benefits, paid maternity leave, and breastfeeding breaks.

Adequate maternity protection is needed as more and more young women and mothers are working and contributing significantly to the economy. Social reproduction cannot just be an individual responsibility of the parents or family. It is the collective responsibility of the state, employers and society at large. In general, protection is guaranteed through maternity protection legislation.

## Maternity Protection: a wider concept

The concept of "maternity protection", as promoted by the MP Coalition, is broader than just a few legal provisions. It includes various ways that the workload of childbearing women from all work sectors can be adjusted to accommodate childcare and breastfeeding. For instance, family and community members need to prioritise breastfeeding in relation to women's domestic work or community work. Employers need to consider the indirect benefits of breastfeeding – healthier children, less absenteeism, and happier mothers. The MP Coalition also stresses the need to develop creative support for women in the informal sector since the great majority of these workers have no formal protection or support systems.



## Who is the MP Coalition?

All MP Coalition members advocate for breastfeeding to promote optimal feeding, growth and development, health and thus survival of infants and young children. Collaborating through a coalition increases the synergy and effectiveness of their individual campaign efforts, ensures more visibility and presents a coordinated "voice" for the different audiences. The partners in the coalition are:

- Academy for Educational Development (AED)
- International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)
- International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA)
- La Leche League International (LLLI) and
- World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)

with technical support from the International Maternal and Child Health Section (IMCH) of Uppsala University and UNICEF.

## How did the MP Coalition come about?

The MP Coalition was formed during the breastfeeding advocacy campaign at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which took place from 1998 through 2000. The campaign culminated in June of 2000 with the adoption of ILO Convention No 183 and Recommendation No 191 on Maternity Protection. The Convention is significant because it recognises breastfeeding as a working woman's right, and thus breastfeeding breaks were retained in its provisions.

During the ILO campaign the MP Coalition showcased the importance of breastfeeding both for health reasons (in the interest of the workers and of their infants) and for economic reasons (in the interest of the employers and of society). Cooperation with international trade unions was central to our ILO campaign. Once the trade unions were convinced of the health and economic arguments, they were fully supportive and advocated for breastfeeding.

## What does the MP Coalition do?

Since 2000, the MP Coalition has continued to advocate in favour of maternity protection.

- It raises awareness on the issue and informs about new developments through electronic mailing and discussion lists.
- It encourages national breastfeeding groups to collaborate with their government to ratify the Convention or to improve national legislation.
- It assists in developing and implementing national and regional action plans.
- It offers technical assistance and training on MP to national or regional breastfeeding advocacy groups, trade unions, government representatives and employers. The Coalition has organised training programmes and workshops in various countries worldwide such as Costa Rica, Egypt, Italy, Malaysia, Poland, Sudan, Tanzania, UAE, Yemen, and continues to plan and offer trainings on a yearly basis.

- It provides resources and expertise on national strategy development, including the drafting of relevant texts. In 2003, the MP Coalition published the MPC maternity protection campaign kit, now available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.
- It collaborates with ILO staff, trade union groups and other allies.

## Seven key elements of a strong maternity protection law

The MP Coalition considers that a good maternity protection law includes all of the 7 elements described below.

- 1 Scope: who is covered?** Ideally, the more workers the better: formal sector, private and public, independent workers, agricultural workers, informal sector, part-time workers, temporary workers... No countries meet such high standards.
- 2 Maternity leave: a period of absence from the job with pay.** The longer the leave the better, but minimum 14 weeks, with at least 6 weeks after giving birth so as to enable the mother's rest. It should be for the mother to decide when she takes her leave.
- 3 Benefits: Medical care** during pregnancy, confinement and recovery in the form of maternity services and medication that are free or partially free. **Cash benefits** should amount to at least 2/3 of salary during the whole duration of maternity leave to replace earnings forgone during leave.
- 4 Health protection** for women and babies from workplace hazards particularly during pregnancy and breastfeeding when the health risks are greatest.
- 5 Job protection and non-discrimination:** ensuring a woman's job, or a job at the same level of responsibility and salary, to which she can return after leave; and forbidding discrimination on the grounds of maternity or lactation.
- 6 Breastfeeding breaks:** one hour provided for breastfeeding or expressing milk during the work day. Breastfeeding breaks may be replaced by a reduction in work hours and should be paid.
- 7 Breastfeeding facilities:** a suitable space at or near the workplace where a worker can breastfeed her child or express her milk.