

WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES?

- ◆ We network with country groups to raise awareness on ILO Convention 183 and related developments, and stimulate national action on maternity protection (MP).
- ◆ We are a part of the Maternity Protection Coalition (MPC), an international coalition of breastfeeding groups that works for better MP.
- ◆ We produce and distribute advocacy materials to support regional and national partners in training about breastfeeding and MP, and in national advocacy and campaigns towards ratification of Convention 183 and related goals.
- ◆ We collaborate and link with international partners, such as trade unions (TUs), health professional groups (midwives), occupational health & safety groups, the child care community, and women's advocacy groups, and we facilitate cooperation between partner groups (TUs) and breastfeeding groups at regional and national levels.
- ◆ We promote the Mother/Parent-Friendly Workplace Initiative (MPFWI) to NGOs and selected employers' and workers' groups, with the aim of showing how workplaces can be breastfeeding friendly and can set up child-friendly crèches.

Individuals and organisations can join the Task Force and receive email updates on maternity protection, ratifications of C183 and news about what local and national groups are doing to support breastfeeding women at work around the world. In addition to breastfeeding and parent groups, we welcome trade unions, women's groups, human rights groups, child care providers, occupational health and safety workers, and community development organisations.

Visit the WABA website to learn more:

www.waba.org.my/womenwork/wwork.html, and for MP Chart: www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpchart.html. Also for MPC Kit: www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/womenandwork/mpckit.html.

JOIN US!

REFERENCES

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Hofmeyr A, *Breastfeeding & Human Rights: towards a comprehensive approach*, WABA 2002.
2. WHO/UNICEF *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*, para 10, http://www.who.int/nut/documents/gi_infant_feeding_text_eng.pdf
3. <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/policy-innocenti.htm>
4. <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/cgi-lex/convde.pl?query=C183&query0=183>
5. <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/cgi-lex/convde.pl?R191>
6. ILO, *Maternity Protection at Work*, 1997, p 51.
7. 4th World Conference on Women, Beijing *Platform for Action*, para 16, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm>.
8. *Being Mother Friendly*, handbook, WABA 1996.
9. *Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding*, para 4.
10. Julie P Smith and Lindy H Ingham, Mothers' Milk and Measures of Economic Output, *Feminist Economics*, Volume 11, Number 1 / March 2005.
11. "Maternity, motherhood, parenting and the role of women in procreation must not be a basis for discrimination nor restrict the full participation of women in society." *Platform for Action*, para 29.

WOMEN & WORK TASK FORCE

Co-coordinators

- Elaine Petitat-Côté - elaine.cote@gifa.org

WABA Secretariat

- Sarah Amin, Naweed Harooni, Amal Omar Salim



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declarations, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).



What does the task force stand for?

What is the task force doing now?

How has WABA supported breastfeeding women at work?



World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action

PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-658 4816 • Fax: 604-657 2655
E-mail: waba@waba.org.my
Website: www.waba.org.my

WHAT DOES THE TASK FORCE STAND FOR?

A number of international conventions and agreements¹ support the position that breastfeeding is a human right of mother and child. Women have the right to breastfeed and should be supported in fulfilling this right especially in the context of paid and unpaid work. The child's right to the highest attainable standard of health implies breastfeeding, which is universally recognised as the best way to feed infants and young children².

Economic participation is a right and is also a necessity for many women worldwide. Women must be able to integrate their paid work with their reproductive capacity for childbearing and breastfeeding. According to the ILO, "Maternity protection is a precondition of genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women"⁶.

1 WABA's Women & Work Task Force acts on the belief that integrating breastfeeding with other forms of work requires strong policies and actions that protect and fulfill women's rights, including the right to breastfeed.

In 1991, the Innocenti Declaration³ called on national governments to "[enact] imaginative legislation protecting the breastfeeding rights of working women and [establish] means for its enforcement". In 2000, the International Labour Organisation adopted a revised Maternity Protection Convention No 183⁴ and Recommendation No 191⁵, stipulating women's right to one or more paid breastfeeding breaks during the workday or a shorter workday and recommending facilities for breastfeeding at or near the workplace.

2 WABA's Women & Work Task Force supports the development, adoption, implementation, and monitoring of strong maternity protection laws and regulations, as well as the ratification of C183.

Women constitute the overwhelming majority of the poorest people living on earth⁷, yet they are resourceful and can be part of the solution. Breastfeeding advocacy for women in the poorest sector should be a priority. Support from employers, co-workers, and governments can also turn almost any workplace into a more "mother/parent-friendly" environment by providing modest accommodation for breastfeeding or an on-site or nearby crèche⁸.

3 WABA's Women & Work Task Force supports the development of Mother/Parent Friendly Workplaces and encourages local action on behalf of women in the entire range of work situations, including women working in marginalised sectors, to empower them to realise their human rights as workers and mothers.

Babies and young children are our most important human resource for the future. In the 2002 Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, WHO and UNICEF identified poor feeding practices as a major threat to social and economic development⁹. Breastfeeding has also been shown to have economic value¹⁰.

4 WABA's Women & Work Task Force advocates for greater recognition for the value of breastfeeding just like the work that women and men do for pay. Human milk should therefore be valued in the system of national accounts.

Most work can be done equally well by both women and men, but there is no escaping the fact that childbearing and breastfeeding remain the biological preserve of women. Social groups have dealt with this by classifying as "women's work" the activities that more easily accommodate the needs of pregnancy, birth and recovery, as well as breastfeeding. In modern economies, women want and need to take on all types of work. New ways have to be explored to provide for the biological demands of women's reproductive role in a context of gender equity¹¹.

5 WABA's Women & Work Task Force explores questions of gender equity and the human right to breastfeed.



HOW HAS WABA SUPPORTED BREASTFEEDING WOMEN AT WORK?

HISTORY OF THE TASK FORCE:

In 1991, WABA started the Women & Work Task Force.

In 1993, the "Mother Friendly Workplace Initiative" was launched as the World Breastfeeding Week theme. Later WBW themes especially relevant to breastfeeding women at work were the 1995, "Breastfeeding: Empowering Women", and the 2000, "Breastfeeding and Human Rights" themes.

In 1994, the Task Force started a Seedgrants Project to encourage actions supporting working women and breastfeeding. This project has funded 66 initiatives in 38 countries, from Costa Rica to Swaziland, Azerbaijan to Vietnam. Projects include for example: mother support groups for African market women and Indian fisherfolk; crèches for babies of Philippine factory workers; information for indigenous mothers at schools in Northern Canada; worker organisation in a rural Costa Rican community to discuss support for breastfeeding with the employers and local government officials; and information dissemination on national maternity protection laws in several Eastern European and Asian countries.

In 1996, WABA published a handbook, Being Mother-Friendly.

In 2003, the Maternity Protection Coalition, of which the task force is part, brought out the Action Kit for Maternity Protection at Work, now available in several languages.

In 2004, Task Force coordinators revised the Task Force's programme using a gender perspective.

In 2008, The MPC Action Kit was updated and now available online.

WABA'S INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY ON BREASTFEEDING WOMEN AND WORK INCLUDES:

1994 Representation at the International Year of the Family Conference, Malta; Representation at the International Conference on Population & Development, Cairo.

1995 Representation at the 4th World Conference on Women, Beijing.

1998 WABA's international workshop on Women, Work & Breastfeeding, Quezon City, Philippines.

1999 & 2000 Representation at the International Labour Organisation Maternity Protection Committee, Geneva. WABA is a founding member of the Maternity Protection Coalition (MPC). Other members of the Coalition are IBFAN, ILCA, LINKAGES with technical support from IMCH and UNICEF; since 2006, LLLI is also part of the MPC.

2000 Representation at the People's Health Assembly, Bangladesh.

2003 Representation at ICFTU World Women's Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

2005 4th International Congress on Women's Health, New Delhi.

2005 & 2007 World Forum on Early Care and Education, Montreal & Kuala Lumpur.

2010 The MPC Chart was last updated and provides an overview of the status of maternities leave and breastfeeding breaks by country.