



World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action

Protects, Promotes and Supports Breastfeeding Worldwide

Session 2: Social & Economic Context of Women



Glossary of the words used in this session

Hierarchy: Any system of persons ranked one above another.

Patriarchal: Characteristics of an entity, family, society, tribe or community controlled by men.

Discrimination: Treatment or consideration of , or making distinction in favour or against a person, based on a group, class, colour, faith or category to which that person belongs rather than on individual merit.

Gender Role: A set of social and behavioral norms that are generally considered appropriate for either a man or a woman in a social or interpersonal relationship.

Community: A social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common Characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society , within which it exists.



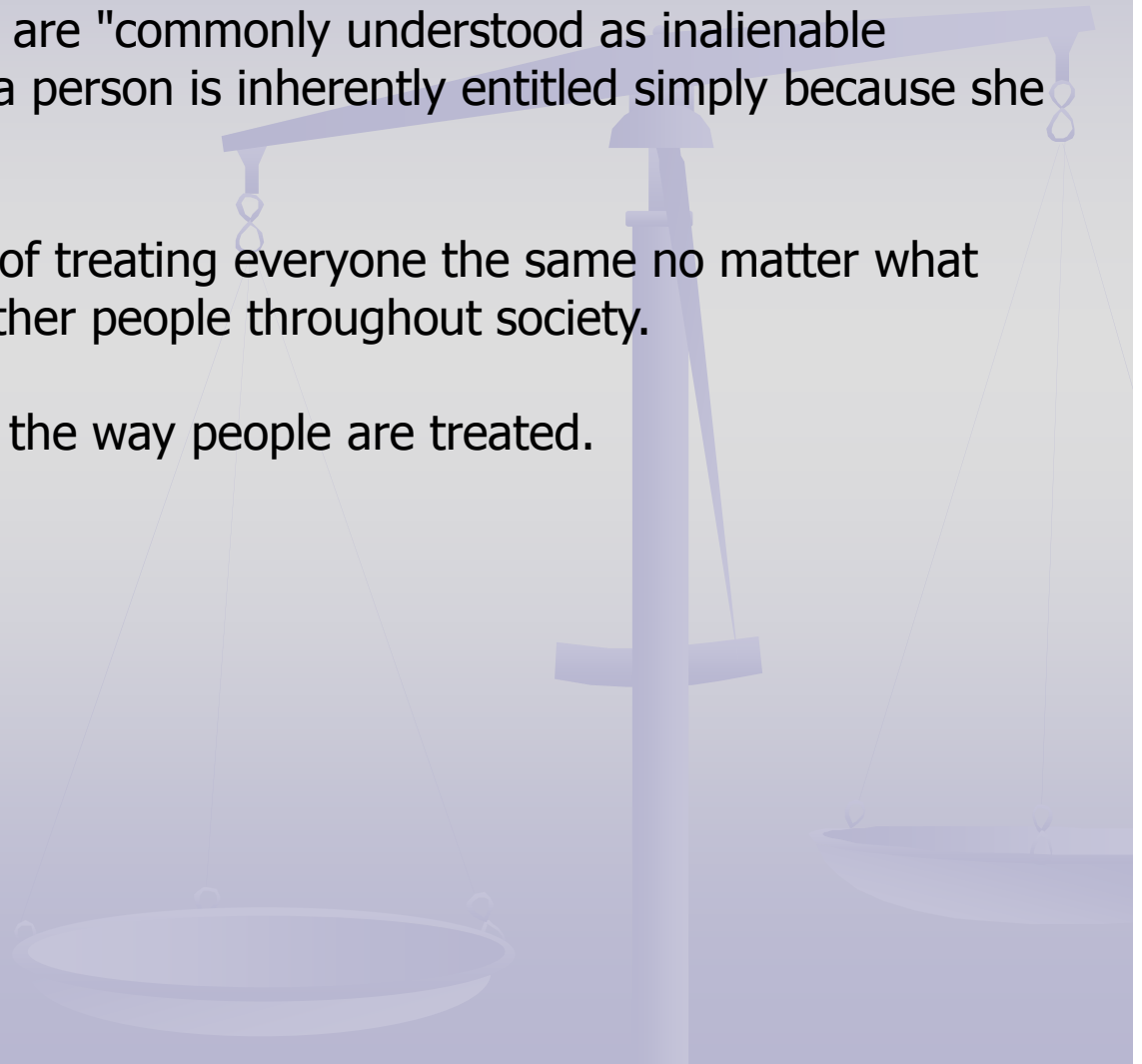
Glossary of the words used in this session : contd.

Social Norms: are group-held beliefs about how members of a community should behave in a given context.

Human Rights: Human rights are "commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being.

Equality: Equality is the idea of treating everyone the same no matter what differences they have from other people throughout society.

Equity : Fairness or justice in the way people are treated.



Glossary of the words used in this session : contd.

Power: Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of people.

Class: A set, collection, group, or configuration containing members regarded as having certain attributes or traits in common; a kind or category.

Caste: A caste is a system of social stratification and social restrictions in which social classes are defined by endogamous and hereditary groups.

Institutionalise: The term "institutionalisation" is widely used in social theory to refer to the process of embedding something (for example a concept, a social role, a particular value or mode of behaviour) within a social system, or society as a whole.

Gender Constructs: It focusses on how the meaning of Gender is created/developed in a society.



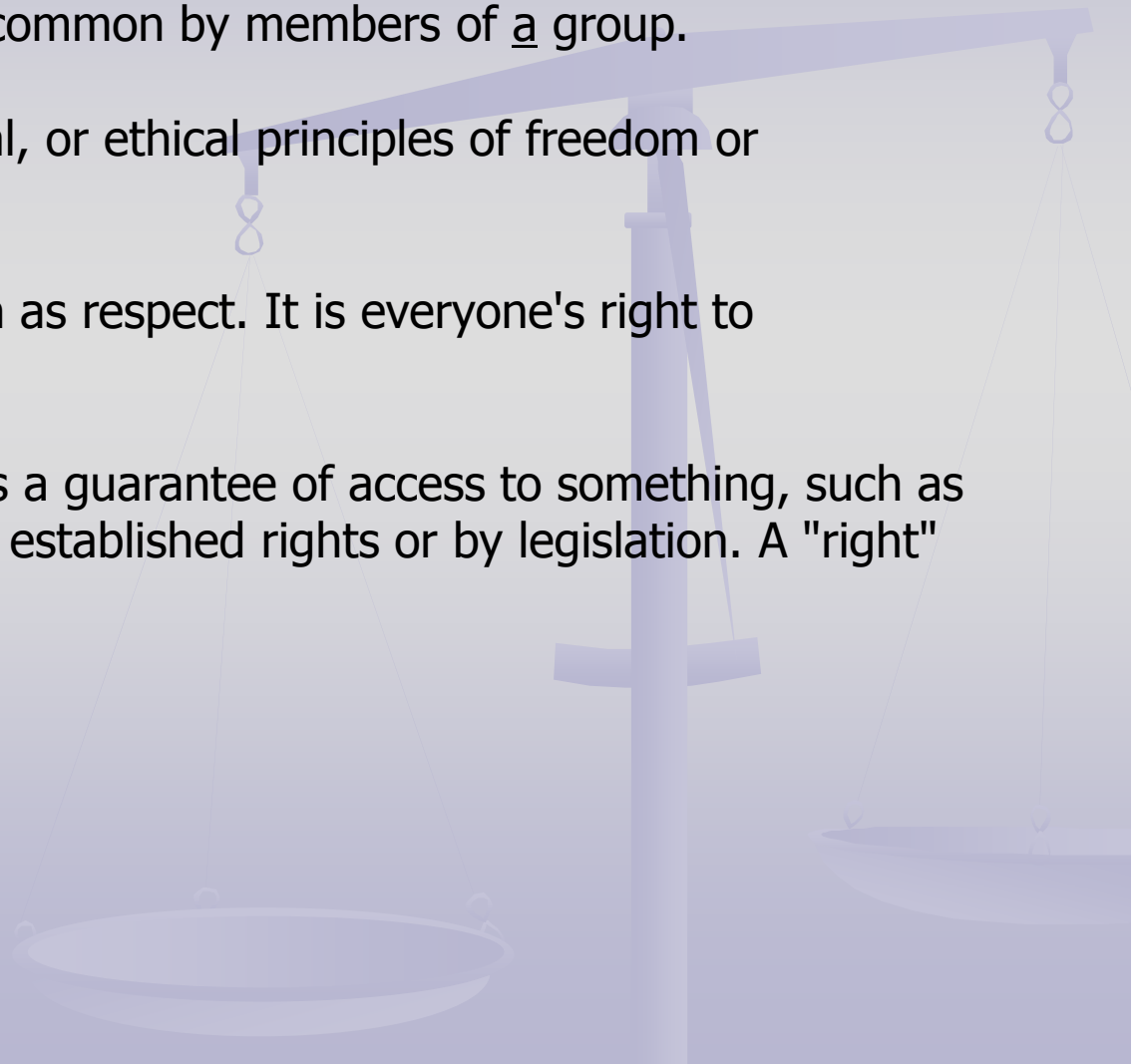
Glossary of the words used in this session : contd.

Stereotype: A simplified and standardized conception or image invested with special meaning and held in common by members of a group.

Rights: Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement.

Dignity: Dignity is also known as respect. It is everyone's right to have dignity.

Entitlement: An entitlement is a guarantee of access to something, such as to welfare benefits, based on established rights or by legislation. A "right" is itself an entitlement.



Introduction

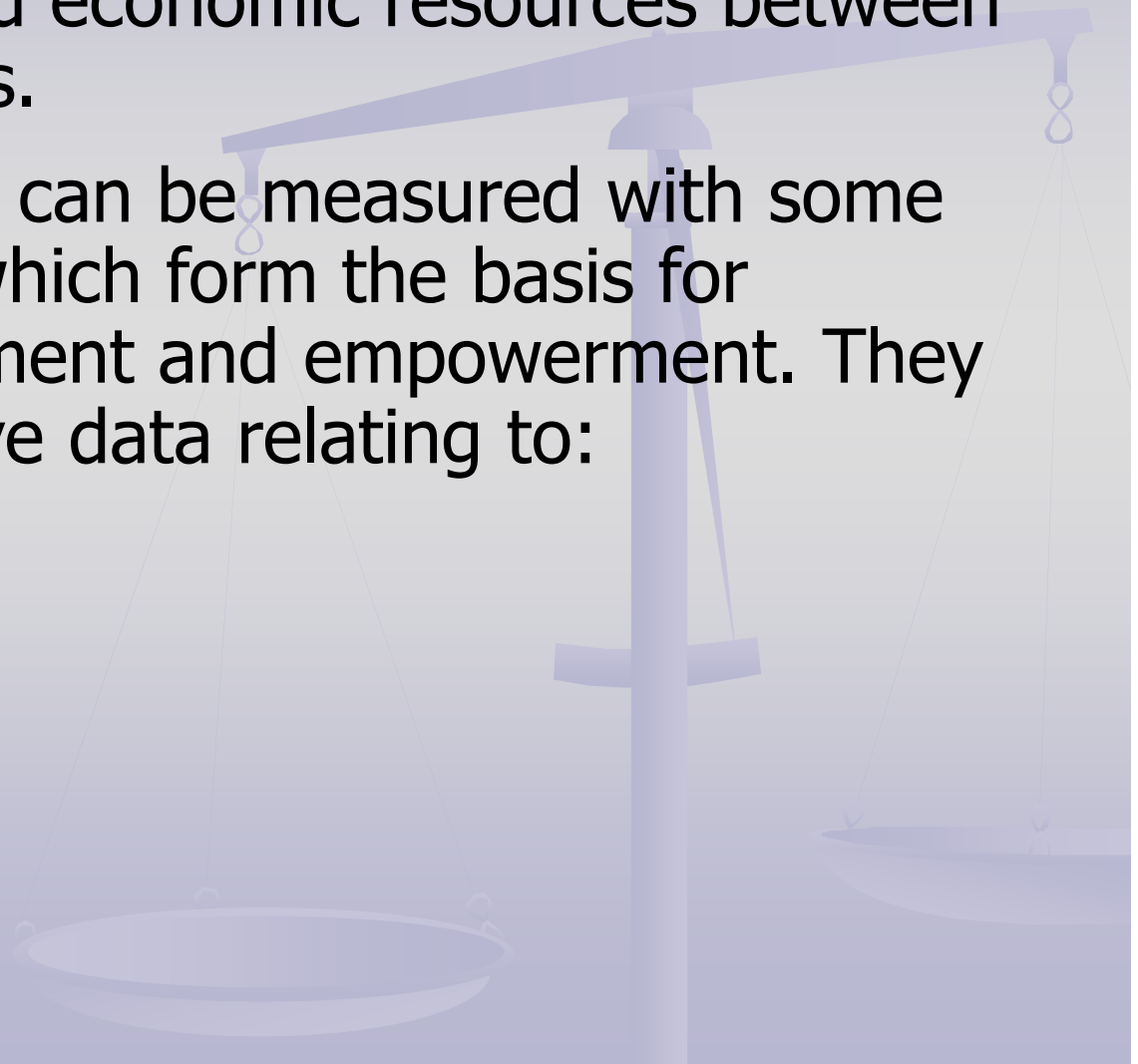
- Women and men are treated differently in the family, in the workplace and in society due to biological differences and socialization patterns. As a result, women generally have an unequal and subordinate position in relation to men.
- Such gender bias and discrimination also results in women having limited, if any, access to and control over key resources, such as land for subsistence farming, shelter, job opportunities, political leadership positions, etc.



Gender Imbalance

is a concept used to describe the disparities in terms of social and economic resources between males and females.

Gender imbalance can be measured with some basic indicators, which form the basis for women's development and empowerment. They include quantitative data relating to:



Gender Imbalance-contd.

- **Women's general health situation** – maternal mortality rate and nutritional status (anemia), access to health care.
- **Literacy rate** – indicating women's level of education.
- **Economic activity** – women's participation in the workforce, their earned income levels and burden of work will reveal gender imbalance in this area.
- **Women's political participation** – number of women in decision making capacity, and others.



- **Sex-disaggregated statistics** reveal these imbalances, and reflect lack of women's empowerment. Favorable indicators on the other hand, indicate greater equality between men and women which often translates into better social and economic conditions for women.
- There is a sharp difference in the social and economic status of people in developed countries and those in developing countries, which is even worse in least developed countries. Sometimes these disparities also occur within developed countries (eg. the USA).



Gender Imbalance-contd.

- **Gender discrimination** has major repercussions on women's social and economic status. It is largely the cause of women's low educational status, poor health and nutritional status and low economic and political participation, contributing to women's dis-empowerment



Using sex-disaggregated data can help:

- identify the different situation of women and men, including changes over time;
- identify and define problems, develop options and choose the option which will be most effective and beneficial for both women and men;
- allocate resources and efforts in a more equitable fashion;
- evaluate and monitor results and outcomes by sex;
- show progress or lack thereof of women, using indicators and regular data publications.



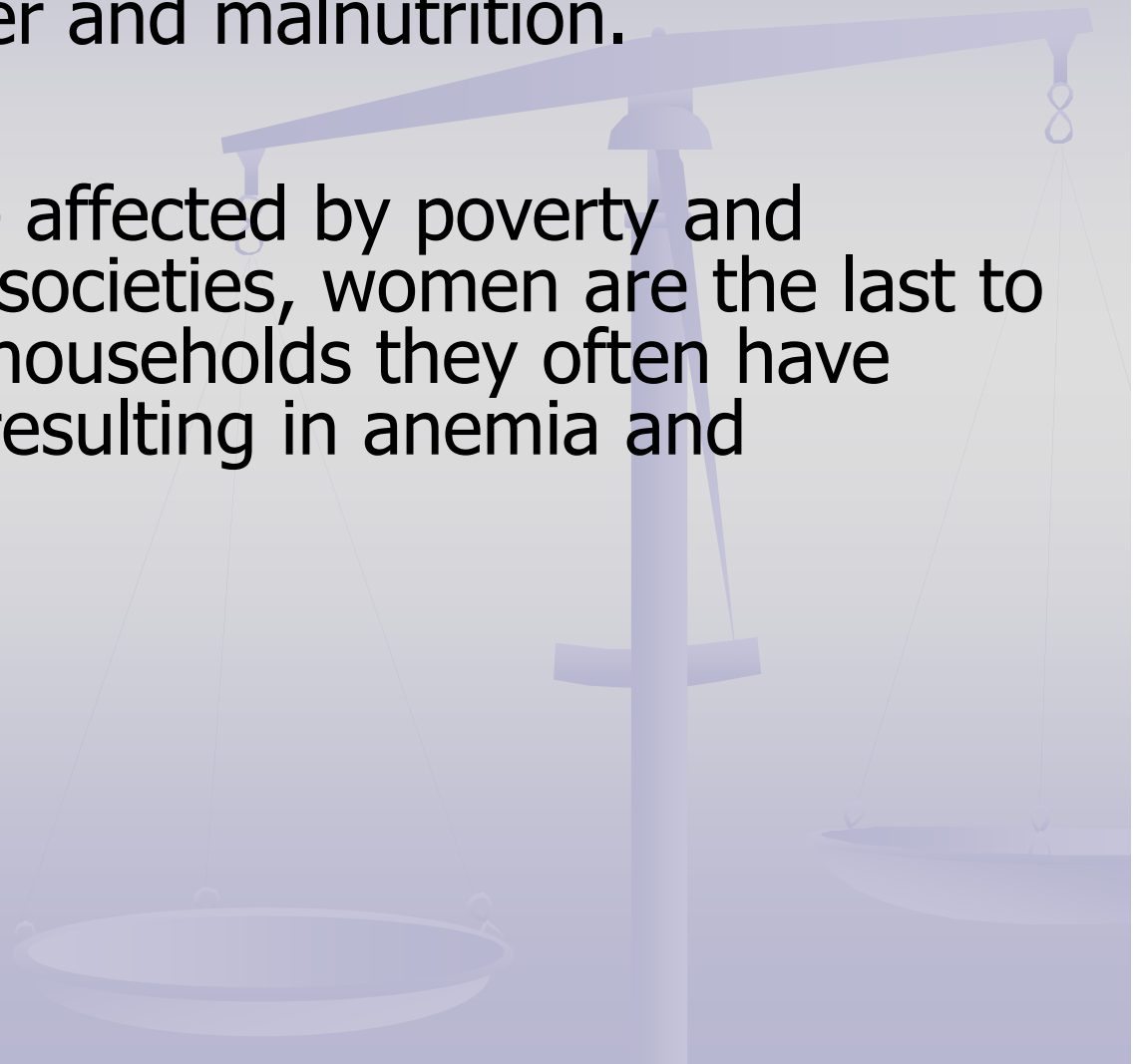
Some basic indicators which are necessary for gender analysis are:

- Poverty and hunger
- Health status with prevalence of diseases, and lack of access to health resources
- Education and illiteracy
- Women's economic activity, earned income
- Women's political participation



POVERTY & HUNGER

- Worldwide over 9 million people die each year because of hunger and malnutrition.
- Women are more affected by poverty and hunger. In many societies, women are the last to eat, and in poor households they often have very little to eat resulting in anemia and malnutrition.



- Deprivation is rampant in developing countries.
- Even within the same region there is a wide gap. For instance, while <2% of people in Chile live below US\$1 per day, 7.8% in Brazil and 18.4 % of people in Venezuela live below US\$1.25 per day.
- Similarly, in the African region, while 26.2% of South Africans live below US\$1.25 per day, 32.8% in Cameroon, 51.5% in Uganda and 88.5% people in Tanzania live below US\$ 1.25 per day.



- In South Asia, only 14% of Sri Lankans live below US\$1.25 per day, while 41.6% Indians and 55.1% people in Nepal live below US\$1.25 per day

- In 2005, the wealthiest 20% of the world accounted for 76.6% of total private consumption. The poorest fifth just 1.5%

(Source: UNDP HDR 2007-2008)



EDUCATION

- Education plays a crucial role in women's development. It helps them get higher income jobs, thereby improving the quality of life with better nutrition, promoting better hygiene and increase the use of health services. Educated women are more likely to marry later and have fewer children.



EDUCATION..

- However education for girls is generally not encouraged in some societies and there is considerable difference in education levels between girls and boys even when it is encouraged. This gap is more marked in secondary and tertiary education.



Adult Literacy

- Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names.
- Globally for 1995-2005, the female rate of adult literacy was 72.7%.
- In developing countries, the rate of female enrollment of adult literacy was only 69.9%.
- In least developed countries it was 44.3%, while in the human development areas the female rate of adult literacy was 93.6%.



Primary Education

- In 2007, 101 million children of primary school age were not in school. Almost half of these children live in Africa, and 39% live in Asia.
- About 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005; 57% of them were girls.



The Rate of Female Enrollment in education

- In developing countries, the rate for gross primary school enrollment for females is 104%; for gross secondary enrollment, it is 58%; and for gross tertiary enrollment, it is 16%
- In least developed countries, the rate for gross primary school enrollment for females is 90%; for gross secondary enrollment, it is 28%; and for gross tertiary enrollment, it is 3%.



- In OECD countries, the rate for gross primary school enrollment for females is 101%; for gross secondary enrollment, it is 98 %; and for gross tertiary enrollment, it is 65%



HEALTH

- In some poorer countries, especially where gender discrimination is greater, health care and medical treatment, especially private health care is mostly reserved for male members of the family. Women also tend to hesitate seeking health care as they have to travel long distances to reach health care facilities in rural areas. Women are known to delay seeking medical help due to undervaluing themselves and a belief that they are less entitled to good health as compared to men.

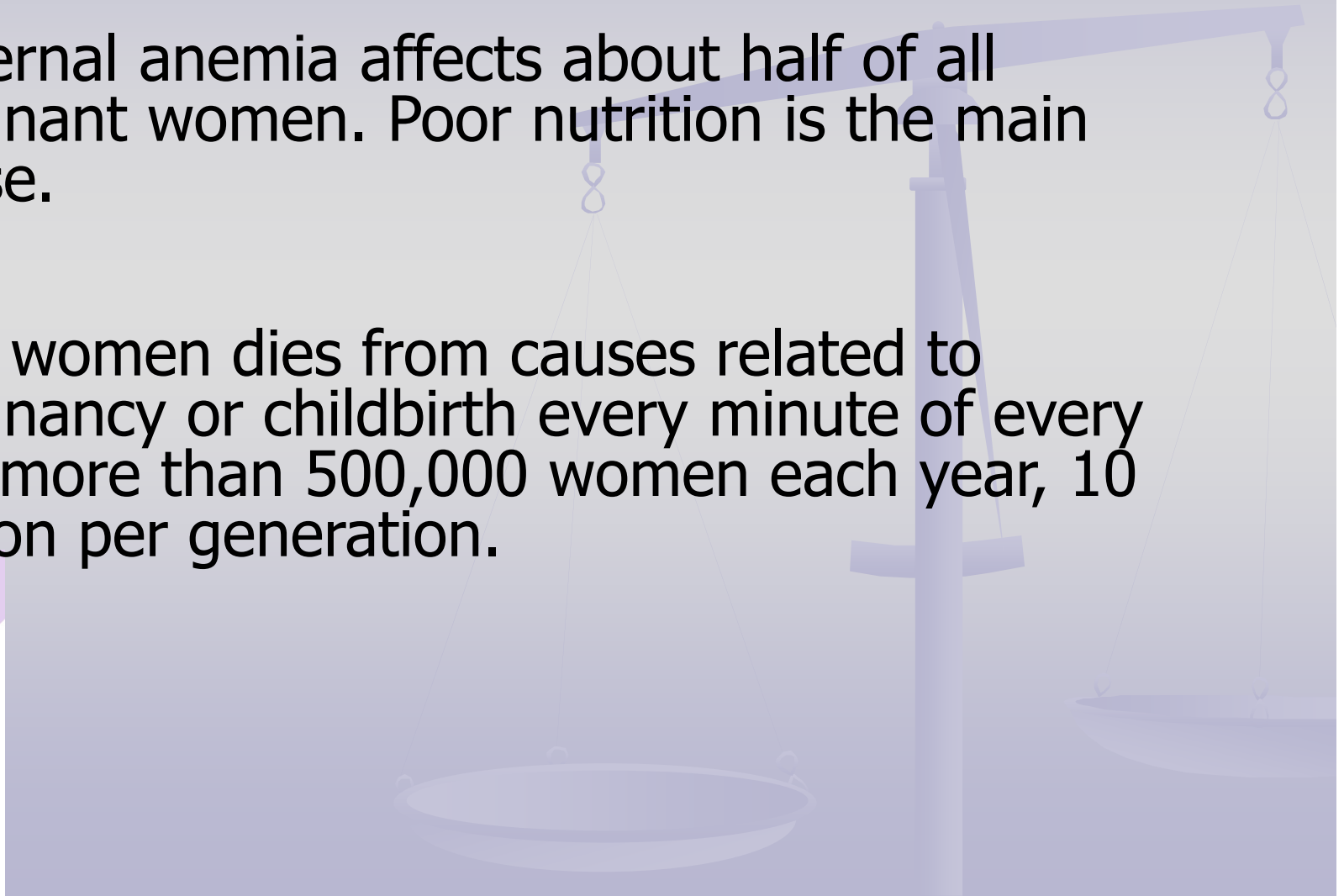


- Better health outcomes for women are determined by lower fertility rate, reduced infectious diseases, reduced child and maternal mortality, and improved healthy life expectancy, adequate nutrition, easy access to basic health-care and maternity services, clean water and improved sanitation facilities.

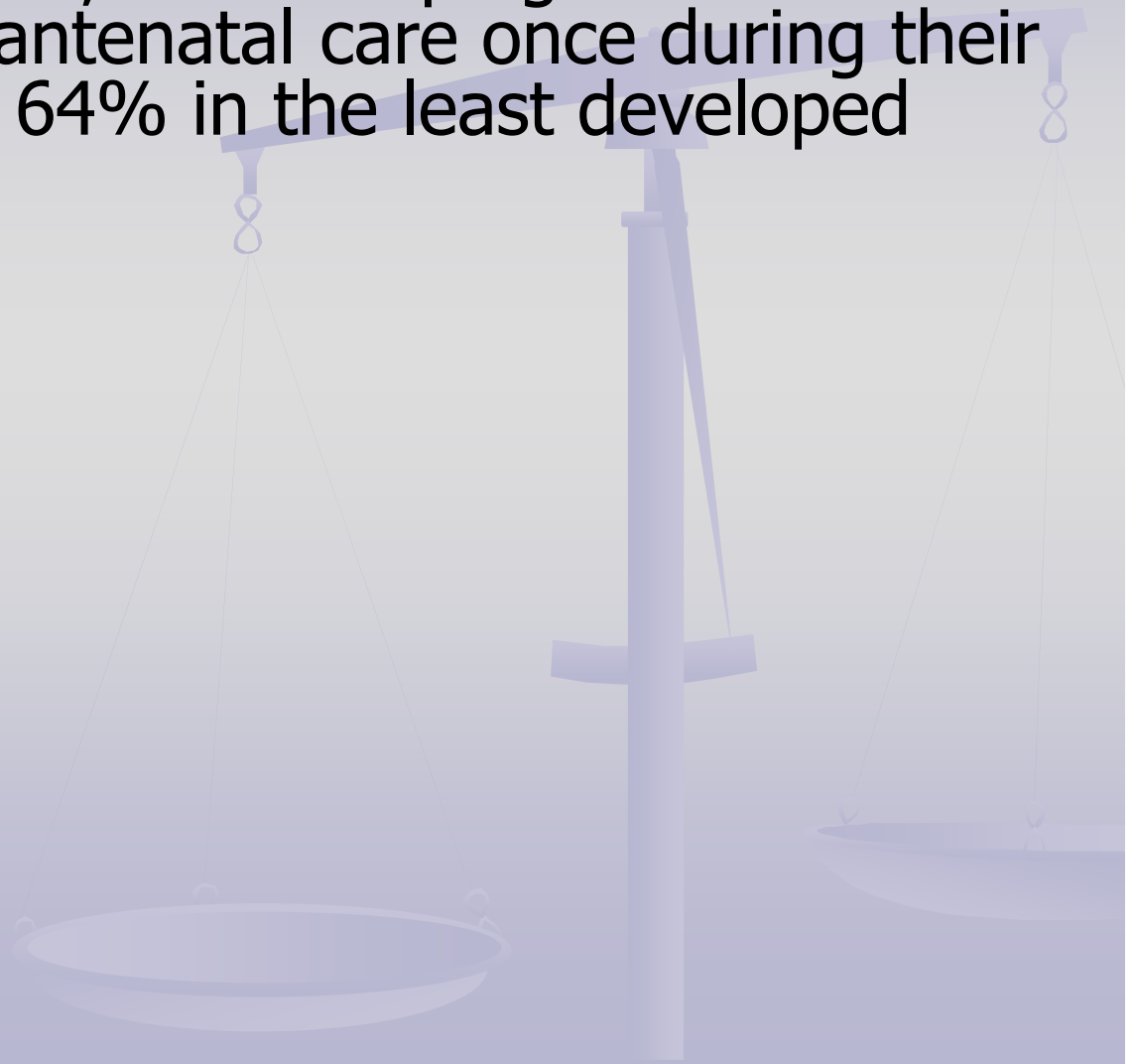


Malnutrition, disease, repeated pregnancies and poor environment can have lifelong implications for women's survival.

- Maternal anemia affects about half of all pregnant women. Poor nutrition is the main cause.
- One woman dies from causes related to pregnancy or childbirth every minute of every day—more than 500,000 women each year, 10 million per generation.



- Between 2000-2007, in developing countries 77% of women received antenatal care once during their pregnancy and only 64% in the least developed countries.



Women's Economic Activity

- Women's economic participation in market activity and in the labour force is important in reducing their poverty. Women's lower education levels and lack of training are major reasons for women's poorly paid low-level jobs.
- Women's reproductive and domestic responsibilities also hinder their full participation and development in the economic sphere. These are also causes for discrimination against women in times of economic recession retrenchment.



According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2005:

- The **rate of economic activity of females** in developing countries is 56 per cent and it is only 67 per cent of male rate; it is 52 per cent of male rate in both Latin America and South Asia. Even in countries with high human development the female economic activity is only 74 per cent of male rate.



- In no country is **women's earned income** at par with men. The ratio of estimated female to male earned income can be as low as 0.38, 0.21 in Saudi Arabia, 0.32 in Sudan, or 0.27 in Peru. Even in highly developed nations, women's earned income is not equal to men's earned income, for example, 0.90 in Switzerland, 0.62 in USA, 0.54 in Belgium, or 0.51 in Singapore.
- Furthermore, women's work in the informal sector is generally unregulated, with long hours, lower wages and appalling work conditions, often unsafe and unhealthy. Most women do not or are unable to protest for fear of losing their jobs as workers can very easily be replaced.



Women's political participation

- Women are generally poorly represented in decision making processes.
- On the whole, women are still largely absent from the world's parliaments, accounting for only about 14 per cent of members. The overall increase in women's share of seats in parliaments was attributed mainly to political measures in several countries, where quotas were legislated or adopted on a voluntary basis



Implications of Socio-Economic Indicators for Breastfeeding Promotion

- 1) Sex disaggregated data at country level will give a clear understanding of the **social and economic conditions** under which women live.
- 2) It is necessary to **advocate change** in society's attitude towards women to reduce **gender inequalities** that contribute to unequal access to education, economic and political participation, nutrition and health for women and girls.

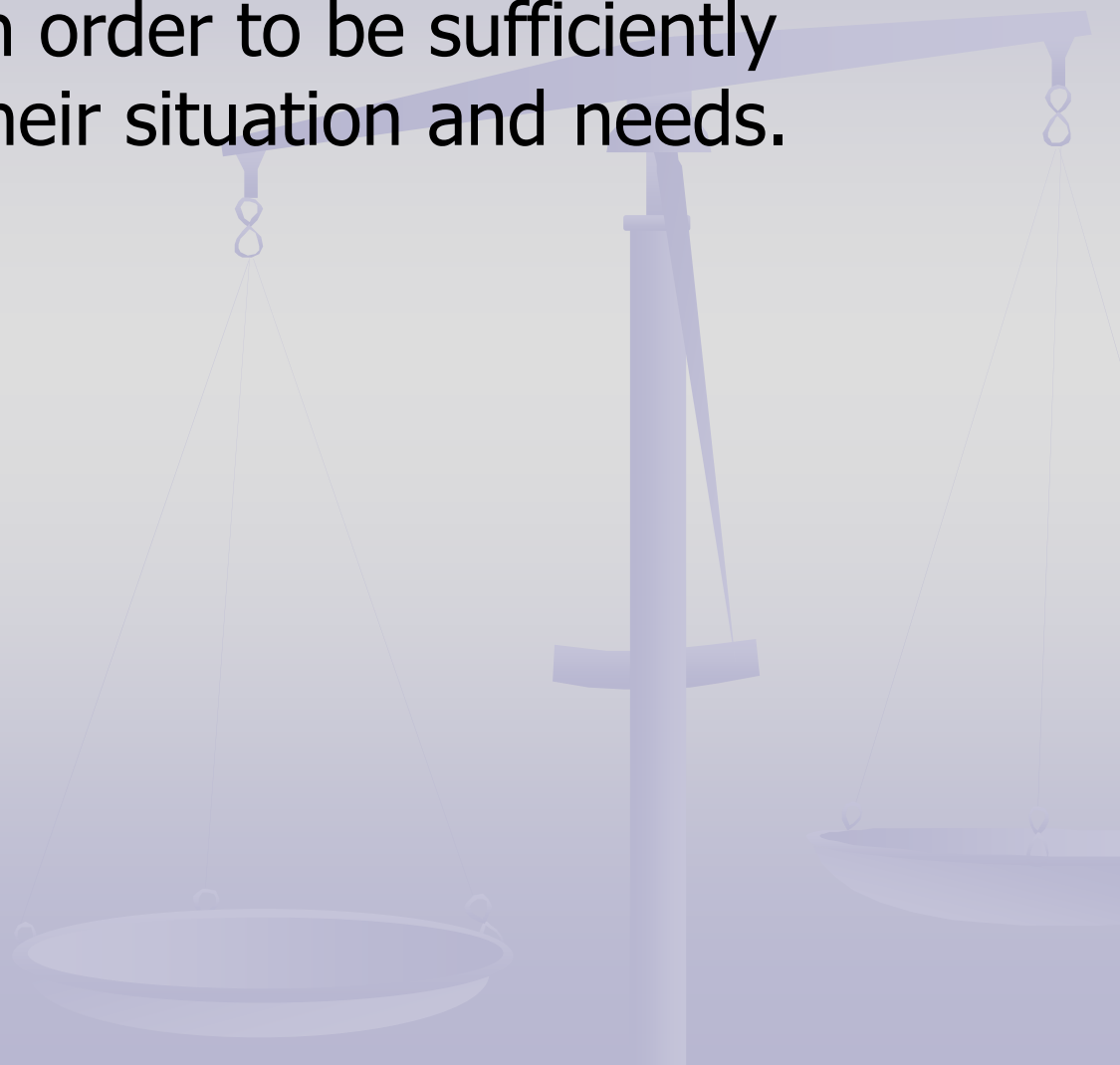


3) It is necessary to develop a **programme of action** that seeks to improve women's social and economic status and protect their rights.

4) While a woman's decision to breastfeed (or not) depends on a variety of factors, her state of health, her need to earn a livelihood, poor work conditions and lack of workplace support, lack of empowerment or confidence, her emotional state due to poor sense of self, etc. all make it a **greater challenge** for her to breastfeed!

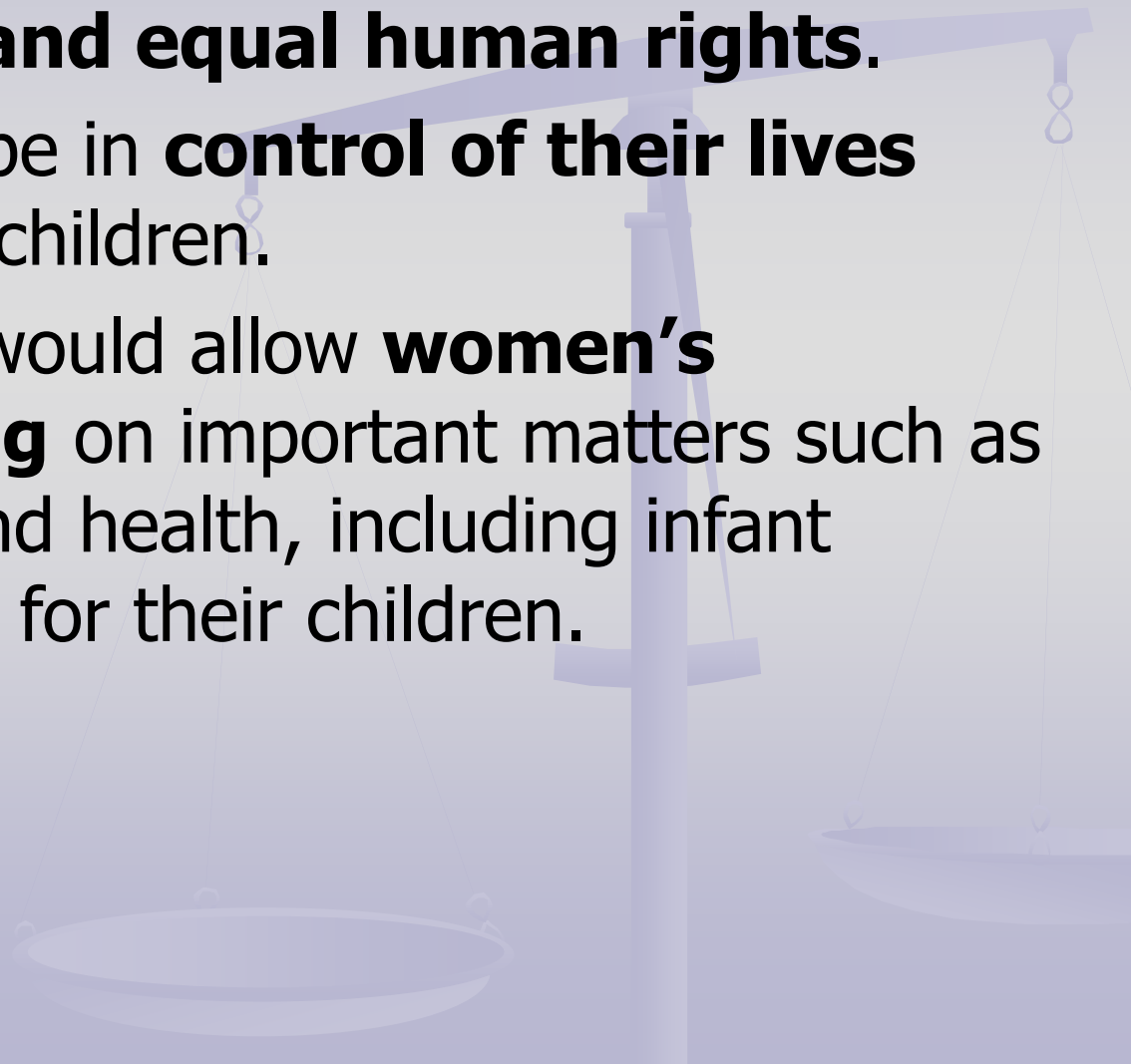


- ❖ This is why breastfeeding promotion campaign **MUST** be sensitised to women's socio-economic context as well in order to be sufficiently sensitive to their situation and needs.



The **action plan** should ensure that:

- Women live and work in conditions of greater **gender equity and equal human rights**.
- Women need to be in **control of their lives** and that of their children.
- Such conditions would allow **women's decision-making** on important matters such as their own lives and health, including infant feeding decisions for their children.

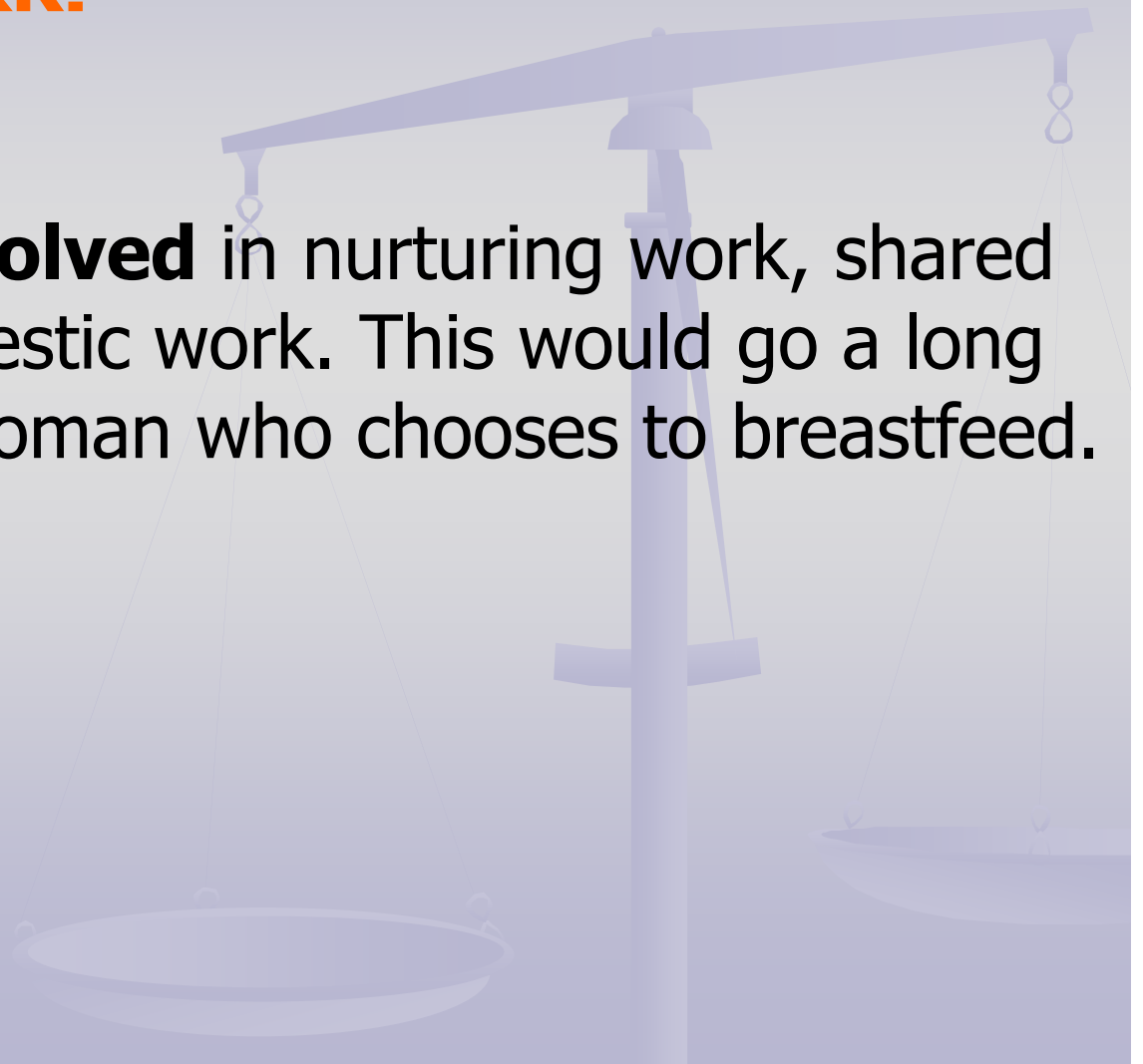


- Women's **health and nutritional needs** have to be protected, supported and respected.
- It is necessary to have **support arrangements** which include legislation to provide maternity entitlements and affordable childcare so women don't have to compromise their livelihood or career needs in order to care and feed children.



WOMEN SHOULD NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MOTHER WORK AND OTHER WORK!

Men should be **involved** in nurturing work, shared child care and domestic work. This would go a long way to support a woman who chooses to breastfeed.



For more information, see:

- WABA Gender Training Kit Part 2:2
- UNDP Human Development Report
- World Health Report



List & Summary of Global Documents relevant to Gender

- **Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

- **The Beijing Declaration: 4th World Conference on Women:**

It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement>



- **The 2002 WHO Global Strategy for IYCF:**

The **Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding** aims to revitalize efforts to promote, protect and support appropriate infant and young child feeding. It builds upon past initiatives, in particular the Innocenti Declaration and the Baby-friendly Hospital initiative and addresses the needs of all children including those living in difficult circumstances, such as infants of mothers living with HIV, low-birth-weight infants and infants in emergency situations.

http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/global_strategy/en/

- **The ILO Convention C-183(2000) on Maternity Protection:**

Maternity Protection at workplace is a legal and social recognition of the contribution that women make by having babies. It enables them to combine both productive and reproductive roles successfully at their workplaces.

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C183

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child: (CRC)**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years old often need special care and protection that adults do not. The leaders also wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children have human rights too.

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>



- **UN Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5:**

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest. MDG 4 deals with reduction in child mortality rate, while MDG 5 is about improvement in maternal health.

http://www.who.int/pmnch/about/about_mdgs/en/index.html

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml>

- **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000):**

Recognized that war impacts women differently, and reaffirmed the need to increase women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. The UN Security Council subsequently adopted four additional resolutions on women, peace and security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889(2009) and 1960 (2010). Taken together, the five resolutions represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries.

See more at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%282000%29



Bibliography

- Kamla Bhasin , *Understanding Gender* , New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2004.
- Lakshmi Menon , *Gender Issues in Breastfeeding Advocacy* , Penang, Malaysia, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, 2003.
<http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/gender/pdf/Gender20Orientation.pdf/>
- Lakshmi Menon , Vibhuti Patel , *Grinding Realities*, Penang, Malaysia & Mumbai, India , WABA & Post Graduate Deptt. Of Economics, S.N.D.T Women's University, 2005.
http://www.waba.org.my/whatwedo/gender/pdf/gender_orderform.pdf
- Kamla Bhasin , *What is Patriarchy?* , New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2004.
- Kamla Bhasin , *Exploring Masculinity* , New Delhi, Women Unlimited , 2004.

