

# Quezón City Declaration

**WORLD ALLIANCE FOR BREASTFEEDING ACTION INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP  
1-5 JUNE 1998, PHILIPPINES**

We, the participants in the [WABA International Workshop on Breastfeeding Women and Work: Human Rights and Creative Solutions](#), recognizing the difficulties faced by breastfeeding working mothers, declare the following:

All women work; all mothers work. Some of this work is paid, recognized, counted and protected by labour contracts and legislation. Much of women's work is informal, poorly paid, or unpaid, unrecognized, and unprotected by labour legislation. Women usually take responsibility for unpaid household work and the nurturing work of child rearing. Thus, work includes income-generating activities in the recognized labour market and in the informal sector, as well as unpaid, unrecognized household and volunteer work. Only women have the capacity to breastfeed. But the integration of breastfeeding with other kinds of work requires new policies and actions to protect the rights of women, including the right to breastfeed. This is particularly important today, as women workers face ever worsening conditions of work. Given the current process of economic globalization, conditions of paid work are becoming more uncertain and precarious. As a result many women are working more for less.

Breastfeeding is a right of mothers and is a fundamental component in assuring a child's right to food, health and care. Governments and civil society should pursue full implementation of these as human rights. The protection, respect and fulfilment of these rights requires universal recognition of the importance of maternity as a social function supported by public funds. "Maternity protection is a precondition of genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women." (International Labour Organization [ILO], *Maternity Protection at Work*, pg. 51, 1997)

There are a number of international conventions, recommendations and agreements whose implementation is crucial to the protection, respect and fulfilment of women's human rights. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the ILO Maternity Protection Convention Number 103 and Maternity Protection Recommendation Number 95 (1952), the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (1981) and subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions, the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Innocenti Declaration (1990). The World Summit for Children (1990), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the International Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and the World Food Summit (1996) also produced useful declarations in support of breastfeeding.

All babies and mothers have the right to an environment that protects, promotes and supports breastfeeding. This includes informing all members of society of the benefits of breastfeeding, protecting parents and health workers from commercial pressures and misinformation through the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions, implementing the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, and protecting the breastfeeding rights of women at work. Measures should also be taken to recognize the shared responsibility of women, men and society in child-rearing.

In view of these facts, the workshop participants propose an international action strategy that involves three simultaneous actions:

- Spread awareness of the importance of breastfeeding for optimal maternal and child health, including exclusive breastfeeding for six months and breastfeeding with appropriate complementary feeding for up to two years and beyond. For this, women need access to unbiased and complete information. The protection, respect and fulfillment of this right to breastfeed requires support at the individual, family, community, national and international levels.
- Create and strengthen social security systems that recognize families' reproductive and productive needs equally, in ways that do not lead to discrimination against women in the workplace. Ideally, a system of parental leaves is needed that enables mothers to exclusively breastfeed for about six months and then allows both parents to spend time with their babies in the following months, including, for example, when children are sick. Both mother and father should be able to take this time while their job security, seniority and family income are protected.
- Act locally with women in the entire range of work situations, including women working in marginalized sectors, to empower them to realize their human rights as workers and mothers.

We propose the following Plan of Action:

#### **1. International Level:**

- 1.1 Produce user-friendly materials about human rights. Use them to educate, empower and mobilize women (especially women in agricultural, plantation, and marginalized sectors) to ensure that their human rights under relevant international conventions are protected, respected, and fulfilled.
- 1.2 Positively influence the ongoing revision of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention No. 103 and Recommendation No. 95 to better support the breastfeeding rights of working women.
  - Develop a training course and materials for advocates from a wide range of sectors to lobby for improvements to the ILO Convention.
  - Facilitate an NGO meeting in connection with the ILO Conference.
- 1.3 Advocate for the following changes in the ILO Convention and Recommendation including:

A revised maternity convention that includes the following provisions:

- An increased period of paid maternity leave. (For example, sixteen weeks of maternity leave at full take-home pay up to a nationally-determined ceiling.)
- An increase in the duration of paid breastfeeding breaks. (For example, a total of 90 minutes per working day throughout the period of breastfeeding. Also, it should be possible to take these breaks at the beginning and/or end of the work day to shorten the working day if the mother so chooses.)
- Where appropriate, provide facilities for creches at the workplace, and for breast milk expression and storage.

- These benefits are to be paid for through public funds, not by employers, as specified in the existing Convention 103.

A revised recommendation that includes the following provisions:

- Six months of paid maternity leave (four months at full take-home pay and two months at 3/4 take-home pay, with a nationally-determined ceiling).
- One week of paternity leave at full pay. Six additional months of parental leave at 2/3 take-home pay, intended to be taken equally by both parents.
- Reduction of working hours by two hours per day for any parent of a preschool age child who requests it.

## **2. National Level:**

- 2.1 Conduct a workshop on the breastfeeding rights of women at work, to include lawyers, government departments, NGOs, media, labour unions, women's groups and those working on human rights, women's human rights, workers rights and rural development; breastfeeding groups, education departments, health and nutrition institutions, and community-based organizations.
- 2.2 Prior to the ILO conference in 1999, identify and meet with national delegates (two come from government, one from an employer group and one from an employee group). Ensure that the needs of women working in informal and marginalized sectors are considered in all discussions.
- 2.3 Facilitate inter-ministerial collaboration for consistency of policy among ministries dealing with health, labor and women's affairs.
- 2.4 Provide breastfeeding advocacy materials and education to employees and employers, including the importance of male support for breastfeeding and raising children.
- 2.5 Develop rationales using cost-benefit data on the economic benefits to employees, employers and government of providing support to breastfeeding women.
- 2.6 Encourage and facilitate the establishment of a network of affordable child-care facilities for working parents.
- 2.7 Encourage and facilitate the provisions of breastfeeding support services at the workplace, including mother to mother support and breastfeeding counselling.
- 2.8 Produce an inspiring storybook about breastfeeding women at work, including the marginalized sector.
- 2.9 Use mass media to build public recognition and appreciation of women's reproductive and nurturing role and her right to better maternity entitlements.
- 2.10 Advocate with transnational corporations to improve conditions for mothers who work for local contractors or suppliers, for example, through externally monitored Codes of Conduct.
- 2.11 Ensure implementation and enforcement of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes and subsequent WHA Resolutions as a minimum standard, through national legislation. Ensure independent monitoring of company compliance.
- 2.12 Lobby national trade unions to promote the rights of women at work including the right to breastfeed.

### **3. Local level**

- 3.1 Develop criteria and processes for identifying workplaces that are supportive of breastfeeding workers. Give public recognition to them.
- 3.2 Identify marginalised workers by collecting locally available information. Use this information to develop programs that inform them of their human rights.
- 3.3 Include breastfeeding and other child-care issues when communicating with grassroots networks of marginalized and disadvantaged workers and when implementing income-generating projects.
- 3.4 Utilize the mass media to build support for breastfeeding mothers at work. Work with identified "influential" mothers to publicize these rights.

The [WABA International Workshop on "Breastfeeding, Women and Work: Human Rights and Creative Solutions"](#), organized by the WABA Women and Work Task Force and ARUGAAN, was held from June 1-5 1998 in Quezon City, the Philippines. It was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) with UNICEF Manila and other organizations covering the costs for some participants. [Sixty participants](#) from 22 countries developed this Declaration in working groups and plenary sessions.