

## Action ideas

# What you can do to promote breastfeeding at the workplace

### Working women

- Raise the issue of breastfeeding at your trade union, women's group, or community organisation.
- Form a mother support group at your workplace to exchange practical information on breastfeeding techniques and management, or join an existing mother support group.
- Self-employed women such as street vendors can form child-care cooperatives, even breastfeeding each other's babies.

### Employers

- Follow the suggestions given on *Creating Mother-Friendly Workplaces*.
- Weigh the direct and indirect advantages of innovative child-care solutions versus their immediate costs.

### Unions and workers' groups

- Develop co-operative child-care programmes at work. Ensure that child-care staff are supportive of and knowledgeable about breastfeeding.
- Demand a clean working environment, safe from occupational hazards (e.g. chemicals, radiation), especially for breastfeeding mothers.
- Lobby for adequate paid maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, and family programmes that include pre-natal education about breastfeeding.
- Demonstrate that mother-friendly workplaces are beneficial to all women, and all workers.
- Create alliances with international labour federations and people's organisations to support the rights of breastfeeding workers.

### Health care workers

- Inform working women about the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding and the dangers of bottle-feeding.
- Offer practical advice on combining work and breastfeeding to employers and working women.

- Ensure that hospitals and clinics are mother-friendly workplaces.
- Provide family planning methods that support breastfeeding.
- Help employed mothers realise that they can breastfeed without having to resort to commercial products.

### Environmental and community action groups

- Increase public awareness that breastfeeding is environmentally friendly, whereas bottle-feeding is not.
- Use World Breastfeeding Week to attract media attention to this issue.
- Get well-known celebrities to publicly support breastfeeding and raise funds.
- Prepare a press release and fact sheets on the problems of working women and breastfeeding for the media, especially women's magazines.
- Hold writing or drawing contests on the theme to bring the issue to a variety of audiences and to create opportunities for fund raising.

### Women's groups and policy makers

- Lobby the government to support child-care and maternity leave costs.
- Determine whether existing maternity legislation is implemented, and whether it applies to all women workers.
- In countries without national maternity legislation, lobby the government to implement minimum maternity benefits as recommended by the ILO conventions.
- Encourage Women in Development (WID) projects to include compatibility with breastfeeding as a consideration in planning income generating projects.
- Link breastfeeding rights to campaigns of human rights, gender equity and child survival.

### FOR MORE ACTION IDEAS

ask for WABA activity sheets on:

- Breastfeeding as a feminist issue
- Breastfeeding: A world resource
- Mother-to-mother support for breastfeeding
- Protection, support and promotion of breastfeeding
- Putting the Code into practice
- Women's health, work and breastfeeding
- Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative action folder

For more information, write to the  
WABA Secretariat, PO Box 1200  
10850 Penang, Malaysia  
Tel: 60-4-6584816; Fax: 60-4-6572655

## Resources

*Women, work and breastfeeding.* Penny van Esterik, Cornell International Nutrition Monograph No. 23, Div. of Nutritional Sciences, Savage Hall, Cornell Uni., Ithaca, NY 14853, USA (US\$5.00)

*Creating linkages: Women, work and child-care.* The Coordinator's Notebook, Issue 11, July 1992. Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.

*La mujer y sus derechos de trabajo.* Ministerio de Trabajo y Prevision Social, Oficina Nacional de la Mujer, 14 Calle 5-49, Zona 1, Guatemala, Guatemala. 1992. (US\$5.00)

*Having a baby? Maternity leave provisions.* Women's Employment Branch, Department of Labour, Level 1, Nauru House, 80 Collins St, Melbourne 3000, Australia. (Brochure available in Arabic, Italian, Croatian, Serbian, Turkish, Vietnamese, Greek, Khmer, Macedonian and Spanish)

*World for work.* International Labour Office, attention: PRESS, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. (Available in English, French, Spanish, German and Arabic) (Free)

*Courrier de l'IBFAN.* MAPBIN/CHAN, B.P. 1134, Port Louis, Mauritius. (Subscription: Asia/Africa: US \$8.00; Europe/USA: US \$10.00)

*Mothers and children.* APHA Clearinghouse, 1015 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA. (Also available in French and Spanish.) (Subscription: Africa/Asia/Latin America/Middle East: Free. Europe/USA: US \$10.00)

*Breastfeeding briefs.* The Geneva Infant Feeding Association (GIFA), CP 157, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. (Available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) (Free)