

Report on Theme # 7 Outreach to Women's Groups

Four workshops in Theme 7 – Outreach to Women's Groups were held at the Second WABA Global Forum - *Nurturing the Future: Challenges to Breastfeeding in the 21st Century*, at Arusha, Tanzania, 23-27 September 2002.

Coordinators: Marta Trejos (IBFAN/CEFEMINA), Costa Rica
Lakshmi Menon, India, WABA, Malaysia

Workshop # 1 - Breastfeeding Support in the Context of Globalisation (23-09-02)

Speakers: Ana Maria Pizarro, Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN), Nicaragua
Grace Loumo, International Women Count Network (IWCN), Uganda and
Paloma Lerma Bergua, International Baby Food Action Network/ La Leche League International (IBFAN/LLLI), Mexico.

Facilitator: Penny Van Esterik

Key Issues Discussed

- Take globalisation beyond economic and political concepts to include fundamentalism in religion and politics.
- In Nicaragua, imposed neo- liberal systems have resulted in deterioration of environment, challenge to democracy and privatisation of healthcare systems.
- Reduction in access to services to support breastfeeding women.
- Governments will not work with women's groups and dismiss women's concerns.
- Rural women migrating into cities lose the advantage of support from extended family and food production.
- Several examples were cited about how globalisation destroys jobs, e.g. coffee plantations in South America.

Key Outcomes/Conclusions

- Military conflict creates direct problems for women and breastfeeding
- Groups working on reproductive rights will include breastfeeding
- Women produce 80% of food – then why should they be hungry?
- Rural and urban women have difficulties protecting themselves from abuses of power.
- Answers to women's problems must come from within communities
- It is women's organizations who are mobilizing against globalisation
- Many reasons for not breastfeeding links to women's lack of confidence in their breastmilk.

Main Recommendations and/or Action Plans including who will act on them

- Demand that World Food Programme place pregnant and breastfeeding women as first priority for food (not food for work or schools).
- Training materials in simple, clear language for rural women
- Buy from fair trade only
- Develop links with the peace movement
- Caring work of producing and feeding children is productive work
- Ensure that all breastfeeding advocacy groups understand the struggle some women must overcome in order to breastfeed.

Workshop # 2 – Women’s Health, Reproductive Health Rights and Breastfeeding Support

Speakers: Rashidah Abdullah, ARROW, Malaysia and
Smita Bajpai, CHETNA, India
Facilitator: Lakshmi Menon, India, WABA, Malaysia

Key Issues Discussed

- Described the advocacy work of women’s health groups in Latin America, Africa and Asia for women’s rights to accessible, affordable, comprehensive, high quality and gender-sensitive women’s health services.
- Explained concepts of reproductive health and reproductive health rights.
- Breastfeeding to be regarded as a reproductive health right where women can make decisions regarding their bodies and control their lives.
- Cultural and religious beliefs which are barriers to the attainment of reproductive health rights.
- Examined the CHETNA experiences in breastfeeding promotion through addressing women’s reproductive health issues in rural and urban poor communities.

Key Outcomes/Conclusions

- Advocacy of reproductive health rights must be incorporated at all levels – the individual, family, community, healthcare system, the state and global level.
- Women must have appropriate information, services and support so they can make an informed choice on breastfeeding
- Breastfeeding information services must be recognised as an essential women’s health and reproductive health service.

Main Recommendations and/or Action Plans

Strategies for collaboration of breastfeeding activists and women’s NGOs to include:

- Breastfeeding activists genuinely take on advocacy for reproductive rights and women’s health rights with breastfeeding as one component. This will demonstrate commitment on improving women’s health and reproductive rights and assist women NGOs’ agendas.
- Women NGOs add breastfeeding services, advocacy on maternity legislation and support to their women’s health agenda as part of reproductive rights advocacy.
- Women’s NGOs and breastfeeding advocates could collaborate on research and monitoring studies which monitor quality and availability of breastfeeding services and women’s ability and desire to make fully informed decisions on breastfeeding practice.
- Regional women’s NGO networks and programmes such as LACWHN (Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Health Network) and ARROW (Asian-Pacific Research and Resource Centre for Women), meet with WABA and its partners to plan strategic alliances for common monitoring and advocacy agenda for women’s health and reproductive rights.
- WABA to be platform for dialogue on child’s health rights, women’s health rights and breastfeeding rights.
- Breastfeeding rights and women’s health rights should be “our” concerns, i.e. should be the concern of women’s groups as well as of breastfeeding groups.

Workshop # 4 - Towards a Common Advocacy Agenda.

Facilitators: Maria Zuniga Hamlin, People's Health Movement, Nicaragua,
Rashidah Abdullah, Asian Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and

Marta Trejos (IBFAN/CEFEMINA), Costa Rica

The participants of the workshop made the following statement:

Towards a Common Advocacy Agenda

Breastfeeding is a basic human right and it is agreed that the protection of women's right to breastfeed is shared position of the women's movement and breastfeeding movement. Women can fully exercise this right only where there exists an appropriate social and political environment whereby women's contribution to productive and reproductive work including nurturing is recognized.

Breastfeeding is a human right. Breastfeeding Support means Changes in all social environments and policies.

- Gender Equity is basic to breast feeding movement
- Right to life and survival
- Right to Choose free of commercial, medical and political pressure
- Right to Food, irrespective of race, class, caste, religion, region, age.

DEMANDS

Need for social transformation at all levels to bring about gender equality.

Women's groups and breastfeeding groups have decided to put on their advocacy agenda the following demands:

- To recognise the common concern of this adverse effect of globalisation and privatisation on healthcare services and the increasing feminisation of poverty.
- Women's right to accessible, affordable, comprehensible, high quality and gender-sensitive women's health services.
- Women's right to breastfeeding based on informed choice, free of commercial, medical and political pressure.
- Social recognition and value of women's work at home as care givers and nurturers
- Implementation of maternity protection for women at paid work in the formal and informal sectors
- Women's right to food, adequate nutrition, rest, safe water and shelter.

STRATEGIES

Collaboration with breastfeeding activists and women's groups with activities such as publications, gender training, research and monitoring, information exchange.

GOALS

Working out common activities for the following goals:

- To improve women's status so as to restore their self-esteem and ensure their well-being throughout their life cycle.
- Common actions on ensuring the right of survival of both mother and child.
- Protection of women workers during pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and caring.
- Collaboration on research and monitoring studies to monitor quality and availability of breastfeeding services.

Recommendations of four workshops in Theme 7 – Outreach to Women’s Groups held at the Second WABA Global Forum - *Nurturing the Future: Challenges to Breastfeeding in the 21st Century*, at Arusha, Tanzania, 23-27 September 2002.

Coordinators: Marta Trejos, CEFEMINA, Costa Rica and Lakshmi Menon, India, WABA, Malaysia

Women's organisations and breastfeeding groups need to collaborate with each other. They need to include the following in their work plan:

1. Promote the position that breastfeeding rights and women’s health rights should be “our” concerns, i.e. should be the concern of women’s groups as well as of breastfeeding groups.
 - a. Breastfeeding activists genuinely take on advocacy for reproductive rights and women’s health rights with breastfeeding as one component. This will demonstrate commitment on improving women’s health and reproductive rights and assist women NGOs’ agendas.
 - b. Women's organisations must add breastfeeding services, advocacy on maternity legislation and support for breastfeeding to their women’s health agenda as part of reproductive rights advocacy.
2. Ensure that all breastfeeding groups understand the problems women face in breastfeeding and working.
3. Women’s organisations and breastfeeding groups need to collaborate on research and monitoring studies to monitor quality and availability of health services and women’s ability and desire to make fully informed decisions on breastfeeding practice.
4. Regional women’s organisations and networks such as LACWHN (Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Health Network), Amanitaire (Africa) and ARROW (Asian-Pacific Research and Resource Centre for Women), should meet with WABA and its partners to plan strategic alliances for common advocacy agenda on children’s health and nutrition rights, as well as women’s health and reproductive rights.
5. WABA to serve as a platform for dialogue on child’s health rights, women’s health rights and breastfeeding rights.
6. Undertake more breastfeeding advocacy with rural women, while understanding their specific social/economic conditions and health needs, by using clear and simple training materials.
7. Actively recognise that caring work of producing and feeding children is productive work.
8. Ensure that pregnant and breastfeeding women are given first priority for food (not food for work or schools) in the World Food Programme.
9. Develop a listing of women’s organisations supportive of breastfeeding, and share list with breastfeeding network to establish and promote closer collaboration among the two movements.