



# Organising a Maternity Protection Campaign

Here is a sample plan for a maternity protection campaign. It is divided into nine steps, but in reality you will find at times that you are shifting back and forth between the steps. The process of assessing, analysing, planning, acting, and evaluating will keep cycling throughout your campaign. For example, finding allies will be something you do repeatedly as people enter and leave your action group and as new projects come up. Or you may skip certain steps depending on your starting point.

The amount of work will probably appear enormous. It underlines the importance of working with others to share tasks and responsibilities. No one can carry out a campaign alone.

Advocacy and problem solving are highly creative, and it is easy to be swept away by overly ambitious plans. It is important therefore to be as specific and concrete as possible in planning activities, to begin with small goals that are reasonably attainable, and to evaluate progress often. Advocates want to see that they are making a difference. Starting with small steps is one way to reach early success.

The materials in this section are based largely on the experiences of IBFAN groups in Africa, which held training and planning sessions on Maternity Protection in 2001 and 2002.

## SECTION 6 a

# Nine Steps to a Successful Maternity Protection Campaign

## Step 1. Reviewing your resources

*Before you begin, it is essential to know your own group.*

Before starting a campaign, it is important to review your own group's ability in terms of previous successes/problems, amount of time and expertise available and financial resources. It is important to also carry out a stakeholder analysis in order to find out who the core partners will be and make contacts with the main stakeholders (governments, ministries of labour usually, trade unions, employers and other stakeholders such as women's organisations, health and nutrition groups, international organisations, etc.). A useful tool for this exercise could be a SWOT analysis (see table below).

It is important to find out who is working on maternity protection in your country. Your project should complement what is already going on and avoid duplication. You can find out about their work by contacting the various relevant groups, collecting information about them, their objectives and activities, and the name of the contact person for discussions on joint activities.

As a breastfeeding group you can provide updated information on various aspects of breastfeeding, such as health, environment, economics, gender and rights. It is important to bring the breastfeeding perspective into maternity protection debate since it is sometimes neglected or forgotten, especially where breastfeeding rates are low.

## Step 2. Assessing the national situation

*Begin by doing a rapid assessment of maternity protection at the national level.*

The rapid assessment can be the first step of information gathering. It will help you identify the broad outlines of the problems that working women and their families are facing.

Making a national assessment will help you decide where to focus your efforts to have the greatest effect. If your group already has good contacts with other stakeholders, the process of information gathering will be much shorter and more effective. (See Campaign Tool 1 – *Rapid Assessment of Current Status of Maternity Protection in Zimbabwe.*)

SWOT ANALYSIS	
<p><b>Strengths +</b> (List here the positive aspects this group has developed so far.)</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses -</b> (List here the negative aspects that have accumulated over time and that influence the group's present functioning.)</p>
<p><b>Opportunities +</b> (List here the external positive aspects, situations or trends the group should take advantage of in order to make progress in future.)</p>	<p><b>Threats -</b> (List here the external negative points that may occur and may therefore have clear repercussions on the group's programme implementation.)</p>

A SWOT analysis of your country situation can also be valuable. For instance, breastfeeding advocates in Sweden, where maternity and parental leave policies are first-rate, found that gender discrimination in the workplace was still an issue that could attract the attention of trade unions, women's groups and the media. In Country A, the best strategy might be to emphasise the health outcomes. In Country B, it may be the economic value of maternity protection. In Country C, human rights focusing on breastfeeding might be the key issue.

### Step 3. Forming an action group

*The goal is to assemble a multi-disciplinary national action group where all stakeholders have a chance to participate.*

You can skip this step if you already have a group. Sometimes there is no need to start a new group as you can work with an existing group.

When you form an action group you will probably want to bring your potential members together to discuss the conditions in your country revealed in the rapid assessment. As the participants begin to form an action group, it would be useful to do a SWOT self-assessment of the new group. It is essential to collect information, discuss ideals and share the work, so as to become a stronger negotiating force.

### Step 4. Doing an in-depth national assessment

*To expand on information from the rapid assessment, a more comprehensive information-gathering and information-sharing effort can be undertaken.*

An in-depth national assessment is necessary in order to obtain information about your national situation and to understand problems concerning adopting and implementing maternity protection at the workplace. The rapid assessment suggested in Step 2 will have helped you to get a broad idea of the national situation. Step 2 and Step 4 may be combined depending on when and how you begin information collection. For instance, organising a workshop or seminar that includes various stakeholders: representatives from

trade unions, employers associations, ministries of labour and women's affairs, health groups, women's organisations, and law and human rights organisations will act as a "one-stop" opportunity to obtain information. These stakeholders can provide you with information on the state of C183 ratification, maternity protection laws, regulations, collective bargaining agreements, the situation of working mothers and their needs regarding breastfeeding breaks and crèches at the workplace. Meetings and workshops will also help in developing partnerships and in reinforcing your group, thus facilitating information exchange and lobbying.

Hence, it is important to:

- 1) Contact as many sources as possible to get a wide range of information. This information will help you make an in-depth assessment of the national situation (See Box – *In-depth National Assessment*.)
- 2) Collect all the information possible on maternity protection in your country. Campaign Tool 2 – *Some Methods of Data Collection* will guide you on methods of information gathering and what kind of information you will need.
- 3) Obtain a copy of the *official report of your country's maternity protection laws*. This report was required of all ILO Member States following the adoption of C183. It is a survey of the country's existing laws that cover maternity protection, comparing them to the provisions of C183. The government is supposed to make this survey available to the workers and employers' organisations.
- 4) Check how well maternity protection laws are implemented. Even if your national laws are good, you will probably want to find out how well they are practised. For example, you can find out from the trade unions, statistics bureaus, or university departments if there are any surveys of how women have combined motherhood and breastfeeding with work. The ICFTU/PSI/EI trade union kit includes a sample survey questionnaire (See Campaign Tool 5). Your group may collaborate with the unions to include some more breastfeeding questions in any planned surveys.

**TIPS FOR IN-DEPTH NATIONAL ASSESSMENT**

- In most countries, the Ministry of Labour is responsible for the labour laws under which maternity protection usually falls. Other government ministries and offices that may be involved are Health, Trade, Social Security, Occupational Health, Public Health, Women, Family, or Gender Equality. If your government sent a delegation to the ILO Committee on Maternity Protection in 1999 and 2000, the delegates who went to Geneva could be a good source of information.
- Maternity protection regulations might be found under other names than "labour" laws. You can look under employment acts, maternity/parental/family leave legislation, public health or occupational health laws, social security bills, gender equity legislation, anti-discrimination laws, national, regional, and international Conventions (including other ILO Conventions), collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), or the workplace policies of individual firms and institutions.
- It is important to remember that getting a law passed is only the first step to changing behaviour. Once on the books, laws are turned into regulations. Then they are put into practice, and usually they are tested in the courts before they reach full acceptance. Court decisions on labour laws would be a good topic to explore with a government expert or a legal advisor to a trade union.
- Trade unions know the situation in your country, especially the large international unions that are active in supporting maternity protection at ILO: EI (Education International), ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), PSI (Public Services International) and WCL (World Confederation of Labour). These have affiliates in most countries. (See *Directory of Key Contacts* in Section 9, *Resources*.)
- Contacts in an employers' association may be able to give valuable information. In some countries there are inter-ministerial bodies. For instance, a Food & Nutrition Institute would have an interest in how women's work affects women's and children's nutrition.
- Many universities have research departments devoted to women's issues or gender studies.
- Women's organisations could also provide information about the difficulties that women face regarding maternity protection at work.
- If there is a national or regional ILO office in your country, it would be useful to see what kind of assistance they can provide. Likewise, a national or regional WHO or UNICEF office may be helpful.

Source: IBFAN Africa

## Step 5. Working with our key partner – the trade unions

It is important to recognise the need to work with trade unions. They are our key partners and allies in advocating, negotiating and implementing maternity protection at the workplace. Trade unions are usually well organised and represent large numbers of workers. They have political power, they bargain collectively for agreements on behalf of their members, they have experience in mobilising workers, and they have the human and other resources to conduct campaigns efficiently. Some trade unions also have a women's bureau or a women's desk, and many are open to the ideas we promote – it is often a question of raising their awareness about our issues.

As we reach out to trade unions, however, it is important to keep in mind that maternity protection is not always their top priority. Trade unions are known to be male dominated in many countries, as men form the majority of active members in trade union activity. Most trade union leaders are also men. Not many women are able to participate actively in trade unions or even attend their meetings regularly on account of their domestic responsibilities. The majority of women workers have to rush home immediately after work to attend to their family meals, take care of their children and do other household tasks. Owing to the inadequate participation of women in trade union meetings, women's issues are not well represented in trade unions. Thus maternity protection is hardly a priority, especially in developing countries where there are many other pressing issues such as higher wages, bonus, illegal dismissals, lockouts, etc.

We need to raise awareness on the specific breastfeeding issues related to C183. As breastfeeding advocates, we can assist our allies with solid arguments

for why protecting maternity and breastfeeding at the workplace benefits everyone in the end.

### EDUCATING WORKERS ON C183 IN THE PHILIPPINES

Here is an innovative example of a breastfeeding promotion group's efforts at collaborating with a trade union in the Philippines using a popular medium (radio) to raise awareness of breastfeeding and maternity protection at the workplace. Advocates took into consideration women workers' multiple burdens of domestic work and responsibilities and their inability to participate in trade union meetings, workshops and other activities after work.

Radio is very popular in the Philippines; you will find the radio blaring pop music, news, interviews, and advertisements in homes, buses, taxis, private cars, in markets, in factories, and even in offices.

Radio is a good medium to hold people's attention and also distract them from the boredom of long journeys to work and traffic jams and also to lighten the burden of household chores and routine jobs.

Recognising this, many employers too have installed piped music in factories where women workers have tedious and repetitive jobs which involve being nimble with their fingers, e.g. in the electronics and garment industries, or dull work such as folding, labelling, packaging.

In the light of this, a trade union, the Women Workers Foundation of the Philippines in co-operation with Arugaan, an NGO in the Philippines and WABA, initiated a project to address advocacy on working women's rights and breastfeeding in a creative way. The project produced three audio cassette tapes to educate and entertain women workers on C183, first at the workplace, but also while going to and from work, and at home. All the tapes were produced in English and played during work as well as on bus journeys. They were also given to women to listen to at home during their household chores.

Trade union members interviewed women workers in two factories and a large downtown department store twice – before listening to the tapes, and then afterwards. This is what they learned.

A majority of the women interviewed **before listening to the tape** agreed that, health-wise, breastmilk was best for babies, but they did not really know why.

A majority of the workers agreed that a woman worker could breastfeed when she returned to work after maternity leave. *However, they also started bottle-feeding because they were returning to work.* One of the reasons was that many of them did not know that expressing breastmilk was possible.

Therefore giving infant formula milk seemed a natural thing for them to do. Also, in the Philippines, mothers have only eight weeks of maternity leave. The working mothers breastfed only when they were at home in the mornings and evenings, and eventually their milk supply decreased.

Because they were away so long between feeds, breast engorgement was a common problem for all of them. While at work, several of them just put towels on their breasts to keep the milk from dripping or wetting their blouses. Some of them expressed milk and threw it away in the toilet.

They did not understand why breastfeeding breaks during work hours were important. Even if they had known about milk expression, in most cases they would not have had enough time to express their milk, nor would they have had a place to do so except in the toilet.

On the other hand, a majority of them saw the need to extend maternity leave beyond eight weeks.

**After listening to the audio tapes**, their views changed radically.

They understood how valuable breastmilk was and how important extending maternity leave was to both mother and child.

They also considered that it was feasible to ask management for breastfeeding breaks and a breastfeeding corner to express their milk. They thought this could possibly be negotiated at factory level.

Moreover, they expressed the need to set up crèches at the workplace and in the community where they lived, in particular for workers whose babies had been sent back to their grandparents in the provinces because no one could care for them in the city.

In conclusion, this story shows the importance of working with trade unions because they have a mass base. With trade union support we can reach out to workers and disseminate widely the basic information about breastfeeding and maternity protection at the workplace. A massive information drive among workers is a must. Also this experience reveals how awareness was raised in a creative way without women having to spend additional time outside their work hours, attending meetings or reading lot of materials.

*Source:* Edited and extracted from a report by Bobbie Jopson, Philippines, 2002.

## Step 6. Developing a plan of action

You can develop a plan of action by organising the information you have collected in your national assessment. You can compare your national laws with C183 and R191 and make comments about how they measure up. These should help you see what needs to be done. Your comments can go beyond what is written in the laws to include possible allies, or remarks on how the general political or economic situation affect people's attitudes toward expanding maternity protection at the workplace. (See Campaign Tool 3 – *Comparison and Analysis of C183 with National Laws and Practices*.)

Based on your comprehensive assessment, you can now determine which long-term, middle-term, and short-term goals you want to attain, which strategies you will adopt to meet them, and what actions you should undertake. (See Campaign Tool 4 - *Country Plan of Action – Zimbabwe as an example*.)

### Strategy Options

The action group should aim to set realistic goals, which may be long-term or short-term, but they should always be feasible.

- An important decision is *whether to* push for ratification of Convention 183, and if yes, *when*. This depends on how close your national laws come to the standard set by C183. If your action group decides it is realistic to call for ratification, you will need to learn how ratification works in your country. (See Ratification Process and Ghana example in Section 4 - *ILO and the Ratification Process*.) It is important to know the points in the ratification process where public comments are accepted. Your plans should take advantage of these opportunities to raise public awareness, to draw media attention, mobilise trade unions and lobby political leaders.
- If your national laws are very far from complying with C183, then you may decide to devote your efforts and resources to areas where early success is more likely. Therefore, improving various specific aspects of your country's maternity protection laws may be your first priority. Ratification then remains your long-term goal.
- To help in this decision, you may want to examine

the different levels of action where you need to focus your efforts (see Section 3 – *Intervention Instruments and levels for Maternity Protection at Work*). Depending on the status of the law and the specific political situation in your country, you may choose to target your national law, your state legislation, your city bylaws or the regulations of an individual enterprise.

- All this information will help you determine your actions. For instance, to widen the scope of a law to cover more women; to extend the length or flexibility of maternity leave; to propose a new scheme for financing benefits; to spread information about health risks and health protection in the workplace to more women; and to sensitise all workers to the issues of harassment and discrimination. Remember that most countries will need to improve some existing maternity protection provisions in order for ratification to take place.
- Another strategy is to focus on a particular sector of the workforce and help make it a model for others. In your country, is there a strong union, perhaps a nurses' or teachers' union representing many female members? A shortage of trained workers can motivate the employers to offer a better package of benefits. In such conditions, it may be possible for the union to bargain collectively for a model maternity protection agreement. Once one is in place, it can be held up as an example.

## Step 7. Carrying out the plan of action

*You will need to consider budget, time-line, And ways to mobilise your group membership to carry out your campaign.*

After deciding what strategy/ies to use you will need to work out a plan of action. The activities you choose to do must be relevant, timely and feasible. Your activities may be broadly in the areas of research and information, communications and lobbying.

*Information and communication:* are crucial for a campaign to be effective. The following activities are suggested:

- Research may be needed to collect information, for instance, about the conditions of working women in your country so as to determine gaps. Information should be collected on how far the

legislation is implemented, which women in the informal sector are covered, whether nursing breaks are provided, why women do not wish to bring their babies to workplace – is it because of long distance and inadequate transport, or unhealthy conditions, or lack of breastfeeding facilities at the workplace?

- Information may be collected by doing a survey (See Campaign Tool 5 – *Sample survey – maternity protection*).
- It is essential to inform people, especially workers about maternity protection and the Convention 183. As you make alliances with new groups and trade unions, you may find that you need to educate them about breastfeeding, exploring how it fits into their agenda. Breastfeeding may be a new subject for a union organiser or a gender equity activist. Since you may also be unfamiliar with your new ally’s main issues, you may consider holding a joint training session with their group. There you can brief each other on each group’s specific concerns and consider common themes together.
- In addition there are other target groups to contact: people who have power, such as legislators, the media, potential adversaries, and also the general public. (See Campaign Tool 6 – *Contacting people and organisations* for sample letter and a press release.)
- You may want to find opportunities to get people talking about how women are coping. For example, hold a speak-out in public or on-line, or organise a call-in radio interview. As you hear good stories, ask for permission to share them in your campaign. It is also important to involve people by asking them to sign a petition or to write to their elected representatives.
- You may want to target a specific sector. For example, a breastfeeding advocacy group in India held a luncheon meeting for press people who cover the “women’s news”. During lunch they briefed this specialised press corps about breastfeeding, maternity protection, and C183. In Bolivia a group of medical students were starting a project to distribute health information to rural community leaders, teachers, and heads of mothers’ associations. A breastfeeding group trained more than one hundred of these students on maternity protection.

*Lobbying:* Lobbying is an important campaign activity in maternity protection. It is a way of entering into discussion with high officials, policy-makers and decision-makers who are often considered to be “unreachable”. Lobbying is a tool for getting breastfeeding information to them, convincing them of the importance of maternity protection and moving towards ratification of C183. Here are some useful tips for lobbying.

- As government officials and political leaders are often very busy, it is important to carefully plan and prepare the information you want to give them.
- It would be useful to be prepared for objections. (See Campaign Tool 7 – *Arguments and counter-arguments*.)
- Choose a time when the information you are distributing will be relevant, for example, when a maternity protection bill is being debated.
- Lobbying the right person with the right information at the right time will prove fruitful. For a concrete example of successful lobbying, see the advocacy strategy of the Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation in extending the length of maternity leave, Section 7 – Showcasing Imaginative Legislation.

## Step 8. Monitoring and evaluating the work accomplished

*You need to know what progress you are making and the impact of your campaign.*

Monitoring your campaign is useful to measure the progress of your campaign. It is important for the campaign and good for the morale of the group to see not only that you are “doing something”, but also whether you are having the effect you wanted. As a maternity protection campaign is a long-term project, it will be necessary to break it into a number of steps to keep your action group inspired. Short-term accomplishments give a sense of progress and make news that can be shared with your members, your allies, your sponsors, and the public. If donors are funding your projects/activities, you will need to show them your results.

Evaluation is an important element of a campaign. It will help the group to see if there were any problems and what those problems were. Midway evaluation is

useful to ensure that the campaign is in the right direction, and if not, to change plans accordingly. Evaluation will also help to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the group and will help to plan the next campaign for better impact.

**Step 9. Following up and reporting on activities**

*A written report is a powerful tool for future planning.*

It is useful to prepare a report, even if it is only a brief one, for every project as it ends. The process of making the report gives the writer a chance to think through the planning and implementation processes and to reflect upon ways to improve them.

The report serves many purposes. It is important to document the various stages of the campaign process, difficulties faced, solutions suggested and implemented, changes made to original plans, gains and losses, etc. Records of costs help prepare for future budgeting. The report can be turned into a news write-up and shared with allies. A copy may be kept for future planning or to be showcased as a good example of how a campaign is organised.

When preparing a report, it is advisable to adopt a standard format.

There are more ideas for campaigning in *Maternity Protection ILO Convention No.183: a New Standard for the New Century*, 2001, the campaign kit that is published by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Public Services International (PSI) and Education International (EI). Visit their website: [http://www.world-psi.org/Content/ContentGroups/English7/Equality\\_and\\_Rights/Gender\\_Equality1/Maternity\\_Protection\\_Campaign/En\\_Maternity\\_Protection\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.world-psi.org/Content/ContentGroups/English7/Equality_and_Rights/Gender_Equality1/Maternity_Protection_Campaign/En_Maternity_Protection_lowres.pdf).

**PREPARING A REPORT**

- When and where did the project take place?  
What was accomplished?
- Who was involved in the project?
- Who were the allies? Who were the adversaries?
- What did it cost?
- What were the objectives? How well were they met?
- What still remains to be done?
- What was learned from doing the project?
- What new ideas have resulted for new projects, or for improving this one?
- Should this project be repeated?

**NOTES**

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