



Rukhsana Haider at the Global Breastfeeding Partners Forum, 2010, Penang.

With this initiative, WABA had directly engaged non-traditional partners such as the trade unions, women's organisations and employers in order to make real change. The momentum of the MFWI was kept alive through the activities of WABA's Women and Work Task Force, such as the Seed Grants project, as it continued to champion the rights of women to integrate breastfeeding with productive and reproductive regardless of work setting.

*In 1993, appreciating my concerns for the challenges that working women faced during breastfeeding, Professor MQK Talukder, Head of the Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF), entrusted me with the responsibility of setting up a new subcommittee so that we could organise the World Breastfeeding Week that year, the theme being "Mother-Friendly Workplace Initiative", and then implement relevant activities. We started advocacy for increasing paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 20 weeks. It took several years, but we were thrilled when Bangladesh got an extension to 16 weeks maternity leave with an option to take an additional four weeks of annual leave after resuming work. Encouragement from the WABA secretariat and members was so important! Colleagues later continued the advocacy for better legislation, and 24 weeks maternity leave was approved in 2011! Unfortunately this is applicable only to government employees, whereas the majority of the female workforce is in the garment factories, the private and informal sectors.*

*– Rukhsana Haider, current WABA SC co-chair*

Over the years, WABA has revisited this theme supporting women's right to breastfeed and work. This was evident in the 1995 WBW campaign theme "Breastfeeding Empowering Women", in 2000 with the campaign theme "Breastfeeding and Human Rights", and again in 2015 with the slogan "Breastfeeding and Work: Let's Make it Work".

*The women-at-work issue had heated up by the time of the second WABA Global Forum in 2002. Women from the US, unique in the world for not requiring that employers offer women paid maternity leave, widely considered breastfeeding a burden for mothers and a barricade to career development. Private areas at the workplace where women could pump and store their milk was what they wanted to battle for, feeling that paid maternity leave was a hopeless goal to strive for, often to the bewilderment of women from elsewhere. I attempted to find a way to avoid head-to-head conflict on this issue by pointing out that, like many issues, this one could have both short-term and long-term goals. I presented these ideas with my co-workers from Uppsala University, as well as staff from UNICEF at WABA Global Forum II. See: (<http://www.tedgreiner.info/?p=829>).*

*– Ted Greiner, former WABA Steering Committee and Research Task Force Coordinator*