

**World Health Organization Western Pacific Region
Healthy Cities Recognition 2014**

Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding

Background

Optimal breastfeeding currently saves millions of lives, and could be saving millions more worldwide. If all mothers were enabled to optimally breastfeed worldwide, there would be about a 20% reduction in child deaths from preventable causes. Studies from around the world, in developing and developed countries alike, have shown that breastfeeding not only dramatically reduces the risk of dying, but also reduces the risk of infectious diseases in children, and lifelong chronic diseases among both children and their breastfeeding mothers.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women recognize breastfeeding as a way of improving survival and the quality of life of children, and recognize the right of the child to be breastfed and the mother to make an informed decision on and have support for feeding her child. There is recognition of the impact that support has on breastfeeding rates. For example, the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiatives as well as other baby friendly initiatives.

The International Labour Organization, recognizing the need to support working women in breastfeeding, revised Convention C183 on Maternity Protection in 2000 and issued the R191 Maternity Protection Recommendation. These documents include maternity leave of not less than 14 weeks, the right of the woman to one or more daily breaks or daily reduction of hours of work, and steps taken to establish facilities for nursing under adequate hygienic conditions at or near the workplace.

Overwhelming evidence shows that almost all mothers can breastfeed, if they are provided accurate and necessary information, guidance and support. Studies show that the main reasons for mothers to not exclusively breastfeed their infants in the critical first months include returning back to work, influence of pediatricians and other health workers who promote sub-optimal feeding practices, and aggressive marketing that glamorizes infant formula.



Recognition of Best Practice

Recognition is given for innovative examples and outstanding practices for promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding within cities. Examples may focus on strengthening baby friendly hospital or community initiatives within city health facilities and/or neighborhoods, innovative approaches to protect, promote and support breastfeeding within workplaces, including strengthening maternity protection.

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