

**Workshop on “Maternity Entitlements: Theory and Practice”**  
*Convention on the Children's Right to Food*  
*April 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2006*  
*Hyderabad*

**Why Maternity Entitlements:** Exclusive breastfeeding for six months is crucial for the health of mothers and infants everywhere, not just among those who do not have access to clean water and cannot afford artificial breastmilk substitutes. Everywhere women are entering the work force in greater numbers and need special support to be able to breastfeed exclusively.

**Legal Framework:** Breastfeeding is a right of mothers and is a fundamental component in assuring a child's right to food, health and care. Governments and civil society should pursue full implementation of these as human rights. Integration of breastfeeding with other kinds of work requires new policies and actions to protect the rights of women, including the right to breastfeed.

**Maternity Entitlements support:** Much of women's work is informal, poorly paid, or unpaid, unrecognized, and unprotected by labour legislation. Women usually take responsibility for unpaid household work and the nurturing work of child rearing. Thus, work includes income-generating activities in the recognized labour market and in the informal sector, as well as unpaid, unrecognized household and volunteer work.

The protection, respect and fulfillment of these rights requires universal recognition of the importance of maternity as a social function supported by public funds. "Maternity protection is a precondition of genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women." (*International Labour Organization [ILO], Maternity Protection at Work, pg. 51, 1997*)

## Recommendations:

### 1) Implementation of Maternity Entitlements in Private/Corporate sector:

- ⇒ Conduct an assessment of Maternity Entitlements in Private and corporate sector
- ⇒ Unionise groups (trade union, labour, SHGs, PRIs.....) and build capacity to monitor and demand rights at local levels.
- ⇒ Build tripartite boards/associations (employer, employee and govt.) and also explore possibility of ESI covering unorganized labour.

### 2) Policy Framework:

- ⇒ Pressurise govt. to ratify ILO Convention
- ⇒ Janani Suraksha Yojna and NMBS both should go hand in hand/ JSY should cover all BPL women (including home delivery) in India.
- ⇒ Mobilize Public Fund or social insurance to cover all women with maternity entitlements

### 3) Communication strategies:

- ⇒ All Acts should be disseminated through various media in simple easy to understand language and mobilize community.
- ⇒ Make employers aware of the benefits of providing maternity entitlements.
- ⇒ Universalize the anganwadi center and expand staff for day care center or crèches.