



**International Baby Food Action Network - IBFAN**  
Red internacional de grupos pro alimentación infantil  
Réseau international des groupes d'action pour  
l'alimentation infantile

**Geneva Infant Feeding Association - GIFA**

**1998 Recipient of the Right Livelihood Award**



## **IBFAN-GIFA Recommendations to CEDAW regarding Maternal Health and Work-related issues,**

### **Panama**

#### **Session 45, January 2010**

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Members of the CEDAW Committee

Geneva, 11 January 2010

Dear Members of the CEDAW Committee,

For the very first time we would like to send your Committee a very brief report concerning information related to CEDAW articles 11 and 12 in **Panama**.

#### **1) Data (from UNICEF Breastfeeding indicators, State of the World Children, 2008)**

Exclusive breastfeeding:	Before 6 months:	25%
Timely complementary feeding:	6-9 months:	38%
Continued breastfeeding rate	20-23 months:	21%

These rates are very low. They seem to indicate the lack of access of parents - mothers in particular - to information concerning optimal infant and young child feeding and the risks of not breastfeeding, including for their own health and child spacing.

The CRC Committee (session 36, June 2004) was concerned in relation to breastfeeding issues. It raised the issue of the small numbers of Baby Friendly Hospitals-certified maternity centres (14 out of approximately 300 birthing hospitals and clinics) and the training of professional midwives and doctors attending births.

Moreover, CRC Committee strongly recommended to the State party "*to continue to strengthen its efforts in health reform, in particular with regard to primary health care, ensuring accessibility of quality health care in all areas in the country including far reaching programmes, training of local villagers on safe midwifery and providing adequate prenatal care. The Committee further recommends that the State parts **encourage exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months** after birth with addition of appropriate infant diet thereafter.*"

#### **2) Data on Maternal mortality rate (from UNICEF Breastfeeding indicators, State of the World Children, 2008)**

2003-2008 reported	60
Adjusted	130
Lifetime risk of maternal death: 1 in:	270

The rates of maternal mortality are very high and there is a significant discrepancy in the mortality indicators between urban and rural areas.

**3) Maternity Protection at work and Family responsibilities (Source: IBFAN-GIFA report, sent to CRC in Sept 2004, session 37)**

Maternity protection covers all women, providing them with maternity leave for 6 weeks before and 8 weeks after birth. Breastfeeding breaks for working mothers are guaranteed by law (No 50) for a period of 6 months after returning to work.

However, there is a problem with the implementation of laws that protect maternity in Panama. In 2004, the CRC Committee was concerned with the fact that maternity legislation did exist but was not implemented and monitored in reality.

The CRC Committee (session 36, June 2004) urged Panama to develop and implement a comprehensive policy for the family to protect their children's rights which would include, among others:

- *"Measures to make fathers more aware of their **parental responsibilities** and to ensure that they provide the necessary financial child support;*
- *Provision of decentralized services accessible and affordable to families, e.g. at the local level, which give them support, inter alia on conflict mediation, for maintenance of the child, particularly in cases where the father does not or cannot provide for that maintenance".*

**4) IBFAN-GIFA's recommendations:**

- **Strengthen health care services, including ante and post-natal care. Ensure accessibility to quality service for all women, with particular attention to the rural areas.**
- **Promote optimal feeding practices for infants and young children, including information on the proper breastfeeding practices and the benefits of breastfeeding for mothers and children's health.**
- **Ensure full implementation of maternity protection laws.**

We thank you for your assistance and understanding, and hope that it will be possible to bring up these issues during the country review.

Yours sincerely,

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