



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,

The Netherlands

Session 45, January 2010

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 articles 11 and 12 in **the Netherlands**.

1) Data (National Data Collection Survey)

Exclusive breastfeeding:	Before 6 months:	13%
Timely complementary feeding:	6-9 months:	No data
Continued breastfeeding rate	12-15 months:	No data

The exclusive breastfeeding rate is very low and has decreased since 2004. It is also interesting to note that there is little data on breastfeeding as such. Breastfeeding rates are higher among women who gave birth in a Baby Friendly-certified facility.

The CRC Committee (session 50, Jan 2009) was concerned with the low rates of **breastfeeding** (Netherlands have not implemented the World Health Assembly recommendations) despite the high number of Baby-friendly hospitals and with the implementation of the International Code of the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes in the Netherlands. It made firm recommendations on these issues.

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

2003-2008 reported	7
Adjusted	6
Lifetime risk of maternal death: 1 in:	10200

The CRC Committee's recommendations (session 50, Jan 2009) referred to reproductive health rights: financial and human resources; age appropriate and gender sensitive reproductive health education and services including for teenage girls; awareness-raising in general population (paras 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58).

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

Of the total population of women, in 2007 60,7% were working. As indicated in the table on the following page, 32% of mothers have no paid work while most of the others work part-time.

<http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/arbeid-sociale-zekerheid/cijfers/extra/werkende-moeders.htm>

Number of women's working hours	% of mothers
No paid job	32%
< 12 hrs	6%
12-19 hrs	15%
20-27 hrs	24%
28-34 hrs	12%
>35 hrs	11%
Total	100%

Maternity leave:

- Total of 16 weeks, 4 weeks before and 12 weeks after giving birth
- Benefits amount to 100% of salary
- Paid by the government
- Since July 2008 there is a maternity leave for 'zelfstandigen', provided they worked at least 1,225 hours in the year before birth.
- Since 2008 Members of Parliament can take a maternity leave while their post is filled by someone else from the same political party.

Unpaid leave:

- Apart from this, there is unpaid maternity/paternity leave for employees. It is based on the number of hours one works per week and is calculated over a period of 13 weeks. Example: with a 24 hrs/week job the parent is entitled to $24 \times 13 = 312$ hours leave.
- This leave must be taken within one 6-month period before the child's 8th birthday, but this period can be extended with the employer's consent.
- The number of leave hours per week cannot exceed half of the normal number of working hours. E.g. with a working week of 24 hours one could take a maximum leave of 12 hours per week.

Breastfeeding breaks:

- Breastfeeding mothers are entitled to fully paid breastfeeding breaks up to $\frac{1}{4}$ of their working time.
- It is not clear however if the woman is also entitled to diminish her workload accordingly; and she often feels that she must finish the job anyway in order not to burden her colleagues.

Generally speaking, although the Dutch maternity protection law is rather strong, it is hardly ever promoted by employers, who often do not even know its details themselves. Breastfeeding is seen as the woman's choice and responsibility. **We feel that the government should do more to improve the knowledge and interest of employers to implement this law.**

Also, to really improve breastfeeding figures and thus infant and maternal health, a longer maternity leave is needed. Returning to work 12 weeks after delivery is far too early for the majority of women.



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4) IBFAN-GIFA's recommendations:

- **Foster the implementation of the law on breastfeeding breaks by informing employers of its provisions, stressing their responsibility in supporting women to use their right to continue.**
- **Lengthen maternity leave to six months after delivery (at least to 20 weeks as being suggested by the new EU Directive 2010).**

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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