

# Creating mother- friendly workplaces

THE MOTHER-FRIENDLY  
WORKPLACE  
INITIATIVE ACTION FOLDER

BREASTFEEDING thrives in mother-friendly workplaces. Few women work in mother-friendly workplaces, although they work in many different contexts. Their workplaces include informal settings such as streets, farms, plantations, markets and kitchens, and more formal settings such as offices, factories, schools and hospitals. Every workplace has unique resources and constraints, but can support women workers to breastfeed.

There are three essential requirements to ensure that every mother, regardless of whether she is formally employed or not, can combine breastfeeding and work successfully. These requirements are:

- Time
- Space/Proximity
- Support

Employers can provide these three requirements for women workers if they have the political will.

***Adequate provision for breastfeeding is an investment in the health of the present and future workforce. Today's babies are tomorrow's workers.***

## TIME

1. Provide at least four months paid maternity leave (with an ideal of six months) that begins after the baby is born. Offer other options such as longer maternity leave with partial pay.
2. Offer flexible work hours to breastfeeding women such as part-time schedules, longer lunch breaks, and job sharing.
3. Provide breastfeeding breaks of at least an hour a day.

## SPACE/ PROXIMITY

1. Support infant and child-care at or near the workplace, and provide transportation for mothers to join their babies. For rural worksites and seasonal work, use mobile child-care units.
2. Provide comfortable, private facilities for expressing and storing breastmilk.
3. Keep the work environment clean and safe from hazardous wastes and chemicals.

## SUPPORT

1. Inform women workers and unions about maternity benefits and provide information to support women's health.
2. Ensure that mothers have full job security.
3. Encourage co-workers and management to have a positive attitude toward breastfeeding in public.
4. Encourage a network of supportive women in unions or workers' groups who can help women to combine breastfeeding and work.