



International Baby Food Action Network
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Statement read by Ina Verzivoli

**Statement of Geneva Infant Feeding Association – International Baby Food Action Network on
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

Chairperson, this is the first time we address the UPR working group, therefore on behalf of the International Baby Food Action Network – IBFAN- I would like to thank you for this opportunity.

Our statement will focus on the rights of children to adequate nutrition and feeding practices for infants and young children, and breastfeeding in particular in the United Arab Emirates.

Optimal infant and young child feeding is key to child health development and growth. The World Health Organization recommends that women breastfeed their children until they are six months old, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up until the age of two years or older. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has underlined the importance of protecting and promoting adequate nutrition and food as part of the child's right to health, to survival and development.

1. Baby –Friendly Hospital Initiative

We wish to recognize that the country has very high rate of institutionalized births: 100% of births take place in a health facility.

Good progress has been made in making these hospitals baby friendly, and 10 out of 65 Hospitals and one maternity center have been certified as having baby friendly practices. We also note with appreciation that Sharja will be announced a Baby-friendly emirate in 2015.

In line with recommendations by Cuba and Venezuela, we urge the country to continue this work and ensure that all hospitals have best practices for infant and young child feeding.

2. Situation of infants and children of migrant workers

Given the high number of migrant workers residing in the country, we are worried on the consequences that the living and working conditions of these workers, are often not in the best interest of their children.

Many migrant workers, mainly female workers, are obliged to leave their newborns and older children behind and are not offered annual leaves to go back home which results in a lack of

adequate care and nutrition for many of these children compromising their healthy growth and development.

Therefore, we welcome recommendations to put in place laws and policies allowing for decent working and living conditions for migrant workers, women workers in particular. Above all, we urge the government of UAE to improve maternity protection situation of these women workers in order to promote gender equality and strengthen their rights; and to enact policies and programmes that allow parents, mothers in particular to stay together with their infants and young children.

3. Maternity Protection

Maternity protection situation should improve for all the working women, in order to ensure gender equality and empower women. The current duration of **maternity leave** is very short: 45-60 days of paid leave. The government should extend maternity leave to at least 14 weeks in compliance with ILO Convention 183.

Moreover, the **benefits** are paid by the employer and the law identifies no guaranteed right to return to work for women upon return from maternity leave. This is of concern as may result in discriminatory employment practices against women and discourage women to claim their maternity entitlements.

4. International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes

Finally, we support recommendations that call for a stronger protection of children's rights, and in particular the right to health. In this respect we urge the government to regulate marketing of breastmilk substitutes and other unhealthy foods in order to protect children from aggressive and harmful marketing of such food products, and adopt into a law the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and relevant WHA resolutions.