

**58<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF  
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

*Dhaka, Bangladesh  
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**AGENDA ITEM 1: THEME TOPIC**

**WORK FLEXIBILITY FOR NURSING MOTHERS IN THE  
AVIATION INDUSTRY**

(Presented by Malaysia)

**SUMMARY**

The aviation industry plays a crucial role in global connectivity, trade, and transportation. Within this industry, various roles require round-the-clock operations, often involving irregular and demanding work schedules. One segment of the workforce facing unique challenges is nursing mothers. This discussion paper delves into the difficulties faced by nursing mothers working in the aviation industry particularly those who work in shift-based environments such as pilots, aircraft engineers, and air traffic controllers.

## **WORK FLEXIBILITY FOR NURSING MOTHERS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The aviation industry, a cornerstone of global connectivity, demands a workforce that navigates rigorous schedules and complex responsibilities. This discussion paper centers on nursing mothers in key aviation roles, addressing the challenges they encounter, and suggesting strategies to overcome them. By fostering an environment of understanding and support, we can ensure that nursing mothers excel in their careers while fulfilling their maternal roles.

### **2. DISCUSSION**

#### **2.1 Importance of nursing a child**

2.1.1 The well-being of the future generation, which includes the physical, mental, and emotional health of children, is strongly influenced by the choices and practices of nursing mothers during the early stages of a child's life.

2.1.2 Breastfeeding, being a natural and optimal source of nutrition for infants, plays a crucial role in the well-being and development of babies. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a baby's life, followed by continued breastfeeding alongside appropriate complementary foods for up to two years or beyond. This recommendation is based on extensive research demonstrating the numerous health benefits of breastfeeding for both infants and mothers.

2.1.3 Breastfeeding provides optimal nutrition and is associated with numerous health benefits for infants, including reduced risks of infections, allergies, obesity, and certain chronic diseases. Breastfeeding also promotes bonding between mother and child and has emotional and cognitive developmental benefits.

2.1.4 WHO also emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive environment for nursing mothers. This includes policies that protect and support breastfeeding in workplaces and public spaces, as well as providing accurate and timely information to mothers about breastfeeding practices. However, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), less than half of all newborns around the world (44 percent) are exclusively breastfed during the first five months of their lives. This number can be attributed to a combination of factors that vary across different regions and communities, such as workplace and employment factors, lack of support, economic constraints, and lack of awareness.

#### **2.2 Challenges faced by nursing mothers in the aviation industry**

##### **a) Irregular Work Schedules**

Shift-based roles in the aviation industry often require employees to work during odd hours, disrupting traditional caregiving routines and making it difficult for nursing mothers to adhere to a consistent feeding and pumping schedule. This can lead to discomfort, decreased milk supply, and emotional strain.

##### **b) Physical and Mental Demands**

The nature of aviation roles, such as pilot, aircraft engineer, and air traffic controller, demands high levels of focus, precision, and alertness. For nursing mothers, balancing these demands with the physical and emotional toll of breastfeeding and childcare can be overwhelming.

c) Limited Lactation Facilities

The aviation industry typically lacks private and comfortable spaces for nursing mothers to express breast milk during their shifts. This lack of appropriate facilities can deter mothers from continuing to breastfeed upon their return to work

d) Social Stigma and Isolation

Nursing mothers working in male-dominated aviation roles may encounter social stigma and isolation due to their unique needs. This can result in feelings of being unsupported and unheard, negatively impacting job satisfaction and mental well-being.

2.3 To address these challenges, a multi-faceted approach is required to provide nursing mothers in the aviation industry with the support they need to excel in their careers and care for their families.

a) Flexible Work Arrangements

Airlines and aviation organizations should adopt flexible work arrangements, including remote work options and adjustable shift patterns, to accommodate the needs of nursing mothers. This would allow them to balance their work commitments with their caregiving responsibilities more effectively.

b) Dedicated Lactation Facilities

Aviation facilities should invest in designated lactation rooms equipped with comfortable seating, refrigeration, and privacy. These facilities would enable nursing mothers to comfortably pump and store breast milk during their shifts.

c) Supportive Work Culture

Establishing a supportive and inclusive work culture is essential. This could involve implementing awareness campaigns, training programs, and support groups to address any stigma or discrimination nursing mothers may face within the aviation industry.

d) Mentorship Programs

Creating mentorship programs and peer networks specifically for nursing mothers in aviation roles can offer them guidance, advice, and a sense of belonging, helping them navigate the challenges more effectively to cater the demands of their roles while balancing family responsibilities.

e) Industry-wide Policies:

Organizations and regulatory bodies should collaborate to develop policies that mandate appropriate accommodations for nursing mothers in all aviation roles. These policies could include guidelines for breastfeeding breaks, pumping facilities, work-hour adjustments and flexible scheduling options.

2.4 **Role of ICAO and aviation authorities**

2.4.1 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as the global aviation regulatory body, can play a pivotal role in advocating for and implementing policies that promote work flexibility for nursing mothers. By collaborating with aviation authorities, ICAO can ensure the integration of these policies at the national and international levels. Aviation authorities are urged to incorporate the unique needs of nursing mothers into their regulations and guidelines, thereby fostering an environment of gender equality and support within their respective jurisdictions.

2.4.2 Both ICAO and aviation authorities can contribute significantly by strategizing policies and recommendations that address the needs of nursing mothers. This could involve convening

international discussions, conducting research, and working with State members and industry stakeholders to integrate nursing-friendly policies into existing regulations.

**3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE**

3.1 The Conference is invited to:

- a) Take note of the information contained in the paper;
- b) Discuss on how authorities can ensure the integration of work flexibility policies for nursing mothers at the national and international levels;
- c) Discuss on how authorities should incorporate the unique needs of nursing mothers into their regulations and guidelines, thereby fostering an environment of gender equality and support within their respective jurisdictions; and
- d) Consider actions that will enable nursing mothers to excel in their aviation careers while fulfilling their vital maternal roles nurturing the future generation.

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