

2. The Birth of WABA

In 1991, UNICEF hosted a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) planning meeting in New York to follow up on the landmark *Innocenti Declaration* 1990. The Declaration calls on all governments to create an enabling environment for women to practice exclusive breastfeeding, through the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding. (See: <http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/innocenti.htm>)

The Innocenti Declaration was adopted by 32 governments and 10 UN agencies at the UNICEF/WHO meeting. The meeting was co-sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) on 1st August 1991 – a date that was later commemorated annually as the start of World Breastfeeding Week (WBW).

Many influential advocates of breastfeeding, global policy and decision-makers recognised that in order to achieve the operational targets set by the , a strategic and coordinated global effort was required. This would need to involve diverse actors at multiple levels to bring about the needed social change. What was apparent was that global social mobilisation was needed.

This recognition gave rise to the birth of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA). WABA was born on 14th February 1991 at the UNICEF headquarters in New York – an umbrella network of organisations and individuals who believe that breastfeeding is the right of children and mothers, and who dedicate themselves to protecting, promoting and supporting these rights.

The key groups that founded WABA included the American Public Health Association (APHA), International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU, now known as Consumers



The meeting in 1990 that led to the Innocenti Declaration, Florence, Italy.

Photo courtesy of Peggy Konitz Boober

WABA Steering Committee, 1993, Penang, Malaysia.

