

“Twenty-five years ago my two children were in their mid-teens. One had been born in Indonesia, and one in the UK, and my experiences of childbirth in both settings had led me deep into the mysteries of breastfeeding. Good as was the care I had received in other ways, anything in regard to breastfeeding was appalling. My mother had breastfed me and my 13-year younger brother, so I was appropriately prepared and determined to feed my own babies that way, but no one around me knew how to help. Somehow I figured it out, and learned what a desperate need there is for mothers to receive help for health professionals to know how to give it and how important it is. In all the settings in which I have been employed, paid or unpaid, and for the last 25 years in and out of WABA, making this happen, and advocating for others to do so, has been an important part of my work. Experience working with mothers and babies constantly reinforces my conviction that skilled help should be available for them all.



The 1970's was the time when we first became aware of the immunological properties of breastmilk, the risks of formula feeding, and the scandalous promotion of breastmilk substitutes by their manufacturers. This was also the time when breastfeeding rates all over the world had dropped drastically. The 1980's was the time when we learned about the mechanism of suckling, how babies remove milk, what can go wrong, and the crucial importance of the first hour after delivery. At the very least it was acknowledged that promotional posters are not effective by themselves, and that women need practical help and social support to enable them to breastfeed. ”

– Felicity Savage, current WABA Chairperson

A whole new approach to maternity services in hospital practices as well as physical and human infrastructure was needed to bring about a culture of support for breastfeeding. This was designed in the form of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative also known as the BFHI. Baby-Friendly Hospitals create an enabling environment that supports women in their desire to breastfeed their babies. The BFHI was launched by UNICEF and WHO in 1991 to encourage hospitals all around the world to revamp and revise their policies and practices to support breastfeeding, and to obtain the 'Baby-Friendly' certification.

To be accredited as a Baby-Friendly maternity service, every facility must meet all of the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*. (See: <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/tensteps.htm> and <http://www.tensteps.org/step-2-successful-breastfeeding.shtml>).