



odd years later, I became a dad. It was a home birth and there were complications. The midwife passed my newborn daughter to me and said “Keep her warm – put her on your chest.” This was the only way she would settle down for months and months after that.

I was very lucky to have had ‘parental leave’ from work, which when combined with my annual leave, allowed me to spend about six months either away from work, or working reduced hours. Taking ‘parental leave’ seemed even more essential when my son was born some three years later. Both my children required additional care at the early stages. By the time my son was born, my daughter had a toddler’s needs. It was not just about ‘mother support’ any more, but how as parents we could manage our shared responsibilities together.

We were fortunate to live in a tight-knit community. Neighbours had become friends and on a day-to-day level, were more involved in our lives than our respective families who were some distance away. The saying ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ is recognition that there are many factors that contribute to making a world where children are not just born, but can thrive.

As human beings, we don’t always make rational choices about what is best for us. Breastfeeding is one such challenge and I am very happy and proud to be involved in an organisation that is about enabling people, mothers and fathers, families and friends, to be supported in doing what is best. It is a continuing wonder to me that such a seemingly small and intimate act can be the source of such good, and hold the potential for such positive societal change.

– Jay Sharma, Co-Executive Director, WABA

Outreach to Women’s Organisations and Feminist Platforms

Perhaps the most consistent and prolific outreach that WABA has engaged in over its 25 years has been to women’s organisations, whether women’s health networks, the larger women and development movement or just a variety of national women’s groups. WABA’s advocacy with this diverse group of women – from hard core feminists to more mainstream women’s activists, and from global to local allies – all depended on the strategic opportunities available and if potential impact was promising. A key criteria or aim in doing so has been to ensure that breastfeeding would be a visible part of the women’s agenda, that those fighting for women’s rights and well-being would acknowledge breastfeeding as part and parcel of women’s reproductive health, and an essential part of her human rights. Interestingly, the discourse to place breastfeeding as part of the women’s agenda has shifted and become more sophisticated over the years. Yet, the underlying message is that a woman