



Breastfeeding: A Community Responsibility (WBW 1996)

This theme advocated for a community approach to breastfeeding. Whilst the decision to breastfeed a child lies with the mother, in reality her decision and ability to carry out that decision is influenced by many factors. These include family members, healthcare workers, the media, her community, traditional practices and beliefs, education, peers, religious leaders and more. All these factors can have a bearing on a woman's decision to breastfeed, and her ability to continue breastfeeding.

A woman should be able to count on full support from those around her to enable her to breastfeed her child. In reality this notion is far from ideal. Hence, the call by WABA to each and every sector of the community to look at how they can take steps to create a more conducive environment for women in their community to breastfeed their children.¹⁷ The community includes such spaces as schools and institutions of higher learning, public places like shopping malls, community centres, religious houses, business and workplaces.



About 45 years ago, I was just a mother looking for information and support to nourish my children. I only received information from the paediatrician, who said that it was fine to breastfeed. However, I should complement with baby formula because breastmilk was not enough. So I gave my two first babies both breastmilk and formula until they were about eight or nine months of age. I said to myself I am not a good breastmilk producer!

After a few years, when I got pregnant with my third and fourth children, I found La Leche League (LLL) and they gave me the information and support I needed to do what my intuition as a mother was looking for. Since that time, I realised that mothers around the world need the relationship with other mothers in order to share experiences, and receive information and emotional support to bring up our children. I got involved in LLL as much as I could, to return in kind what I had received and thus started my path as a mother who promotes, supports and protects the art of breastfeeding. On this path I have been serving several organisations including LLLI, IBLCE, LINKAGES Project, MOH in Guatemala, and more recently, WABA.

My last dream as an activist defending women's rights was to become a WABA SC member. Making my dream come true has empowered me to represent an organisation that not only promotes breastfeeding, but also protects the rights of women and families around the world to enjoy their role as parents, and see their babies become healthier and happier people.

– Mimi de Maza, current WABA SC member

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