



## Honouring the Life of Dr. Elisabet Helsing

June 1940 - January 2019

The deeply sad loss of Elisabet Helsing on 26th January 2019 marks the end of an era. She was by profession a nutritionist, becoming a major leader in the whole breastfeeding movement from the 1960s, as a founder of the mother-to-mother support group Ammehjelpen in Norway and working for the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. She recognised the urgent need to improve health care practices and was concerned with the education and training of health workers in lactation management. While working for WHO she participated in the Innocenti Declaration and helped to lay the foundations of the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative.

Elisabet was a good friend to me and had a powerful influence on my own interest in breastfeeding. She came to visit us in Indonesia, shortly after my first child was born when I was muddling along among all the practicalities, difficulties and delights of breastfeeding my baby. She was angry about the ignorance of most doctors on the subject and had started to write an evidence-based book to bring them up to date more effectively than mothers' group publications could. She wanted some help from an Anglophone to perfect her already excellent English. I was easily recruited to the task, and together we wrote "Breastfeeding in Practice", published by OUP in 1982, getting the latest teaching about positioning the baby at the breast into the book at the proof-reading stage. In the process, I learned a great deal from her about all aspects

of breastfeeding and became totally fascinated. She had a greater breadth of knowledge about the political, social, and clinical aspects, the history and domestic practicalities than almost anybody in the field, and applied her brilliance and knowledge to great effect.

Later she was elected to the Steering Committee of WABA as the European Representative, a baton which she eventually passed on to me, and she then moved on to become Co-Chair of the WABA International Advisory Council, in which role she attended many SC meetings. My last memories of her are swimming and reminiscing in the Paradise Hotel pool in Penang, soon after she had received surgery which had proved very helpful; and sharing a platform with her at the first World Breastfeeding Conference in Delhi, when she spoke with her usual force, despite her disabilities. She contributed a great deal to WABA through her wisdom and guidance, including donating to WABA the proceeds from the sale of the English edition of her book "Understanding breastfeeding and How to succeed" written with Anna-Pia Haggkvist.

The world of breastfeeding has much to thank Elisabet for and leaves us with great memories. We send our condolences and warmest wishes to her husband and wonderful family.

Dr. Felicity Savage, Chairperson of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide based on the Innocenti Declarations, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are international Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). WABA is incorporated in Malaysia as World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action Bhd (847762-P), a non-profit company limited by guarantee.



---

Copyright © 2019 World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.