



**Pan American
Health
Organization**

Regional Office of the
World Health Organization

IN REPLY REFER TO:FCH/HL/cl/063/1

15 July 2010

**WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK
1-7 August 2010
Just 10 Steps! The Baby-Friendly Way**

The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) joins with the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) and the countries in the Region, in celebrating World Breastfeeding Week, from 1 to 7 August 2010. This year's theme is "Just 10 Steps! The Baby-Friendly Way." The ten Steps were developed by WHO/UNICEF in 1989 and published in the Joint Statement on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding: The Special Role of the Maternity Services. The *Innocenti Declaration* in 1990 called upon the world to fully implement the ten Steps in all maternities by 1995 and in 2003 the WHO Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding reaffirmed this important goal. Twenty years later, the majority of countries in our Region have Baby-friendly hospitals that have implemented the ten Steps; many also have national legislation for a Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

The hours and days immediately after birth is a period of high vulnerability for newborns. In the Americas, child mortality is increasingly concentrated during the first week and month of life. Early initiation of breastfeeding, within the first hour of life, and exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months can help to prevent needless illness and death. Unfortunately, in the Americas, the proportion of infants initiating breastfeeding within the first hour is less than 50% in more than half the countries for which nationally representative data are available. The prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding is also low, ranging from 8% to 64%, despite the fact that all infants in this age group should be exclusively breastfed.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), which certified hospitals as "Baby-Friendly" when they comply with the 10 Steps, ensures that mothers and newborns are born in an environment supportive of breastfeeding. However, certification does not ensure that quality standards continue to be met over time. Therefore, PAHO is urging that all hospitals certified as "Baby-Friendly" undergo a recertification process every 3 to 5 years. They should also perform a self-evaluation every year using the self-assessment tool in the recently revised BFHI materials.

PAHO takes pride in joining with its sister UN agencies, Member States, the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, bi-lateral organizations, non governmental organizations, communities, families and mothers and babies to work to ensure that the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative is revitalized and strengthened so that all mothers and babies receive the benefits of breastfeeding at birth and beyond.

Mirta Roses Periago
Director

www.paho.org