

Press Release

21 Years of World Breastfeeding Week
1-7 August 2013



World Alliance for
Breastfeeding Action

PO Box 1200
10850 Penang, Malaysia
Tel: (604) 658 4816
Fax: (604) 657 2655
Email: waba@waba.org.my
www.waba.org.my

'BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT: CLOSE TO MOTHERS'!

Even when mothers are able to get off to a good start with breastfeeding, all too often in the weeks or months after delivery there is a sharp decline in breastfeeding rates and deterioration of practices, particularly exclusive breastfeeding. The period when mothers do not visit a healthcare facility is the time when a community support system for mothers is essential. As noted by the World Health Organisation, "The key to best breastfeeding practices is continued day-to-day support for the breastfeeding mother within her home and community."ⁱ

Between 1-7 August this year, WABA and breastfeeding advocates in over 174 countries worldwide will be celebrating the WBW theme 'BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT: CLOSE TO MOTHERS', highlighting breastfeeding peer counselling.

"Women are often drawn to other women with whom they share life experiences, especially when those experiences relate to parenting. When new mothers have someone who can understand and identify with their experiences, they can better enjoy and cope with parenthood. A peer counsellor is an invaluable partner with mothers in their journey through parenthood, helping them gain confidence in their ability to breastfeed" states Anne Batterjee of La Leche League International, and key writer of the theme-related WBW Action Folder produced by WABA.

Continued support to sustain breastfeeding can be provided in a variety of ways. Traditionally, support is provided by the family. As societies change, however, in particular with urbanization, support for mothers from a wider circle is needed, whether it is provided by trained health workers, doulas, lactation consultants, community leaders, or from friends who are also mothers, or from fathers and partners. Peer counselling is also a cost effective intervention for increasing exclusive and continued breastfeeding rates.

"Peer counselling is a cost effective way to make skilled help available to mothers, and enables mothers to have more support than health professionals alone can provide. Peer Counsellors, or peer supporters, are usually women from the community who are trained to support breastfeeding, regardless of their educational background. They can be available near the mother's home, and they can give vital day-to-day help", notes WABA Chairperson, Dr. Felicity Savage.

Describing La Leche League International's role in spearheading this vital aspect of support for mothers, *"fifty seven years ago, seven breastfeeding mothers came together and realized that their abilities to breastfeed their own infants came from being provided with information, education and emotional support from each other. Many other mothers who longed to breastfeed could be enabled to do so if only those around them, their peers, had the knowledge and skills to be supportive. La Leche League International was launched spearheading the mother to mother support breastfeeding movement."*

OBJECTIVES OF WBW 2013

- To draw attention to the importance of Peer Support in helping mothers to establish and sustain breastfeeding.
- To inform people of the highly effective benefits of peer counselling, and unite efforts to expand peer counselling programmes.
- To encourage breastfeeding supporters, regardless of their educational background, to step forward and be trained to support mothers and babies.
- To identify local community support contacts for breastfeeding mothers that women can go to for help and support after giving birth.
- To call on governments and maternity facilities globally to actively implement the Ten Steps, in particular Step 10, to improve duration and rates of exclusive breastfeeding.

Twenty one years ago the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) launched the World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) campaign to focus and facilitate actions to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Since then, each year, WBW has put the spotlight on various breastfeeding issues by not only coordinating the campaign but also producing a wealth of materials for people to use to take action.

WBW 2013 Action Folder provides a variety of information on the issue of peer counselling from how it is a key component of the "Ten Steps To Successful Breastfeeding In BFHI"ⁱⁱ; pointers on what makes for effective peer counselling; the different kinds of mother support providers (traditional or professional) that there are; the responsibilities of a Peer Counsellor; successful case studies of peer counselling from around the world; and suggestions for actions to promote peer counselling.

Once again WABA has also created a special Website to coordinate and link people on the theme (see: <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>). This website is a one stop centre where celebrants will be able to download WBW 2013 materials such as the Calendar Announcement, the above mentioned Action Folder and the related Poster, and translations of these materials. WABA encourages all celebrants to utilise this site and make their pledges for their events so that we will be able to share these activities with the world!

WABA looks forward to collaborating with celebrants around the world to make World Breastfeeding Week 2013 a great success in promoting peer counselling as a vital way in which mothers can get support close to where they are.

For further information contact:

Jennifer Mourin, WBW Global Coordinator: jennifer.mourin@waba.org.my

And/or, World Breastfeeding Week Coordination: wbw@waba.org.my



WABA, PO Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia

Tel: 60-4-658 4816 Fax: 60-4-657 2655

Email: waba@waba.org.my

Web: <http://www.waba.org.my/>

Past WBWs site: <http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.net/>

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. WABA action is based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF & an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

ⁱ Reference: Saadeh RJ, editor with Miriam H. Labbok, Kristin A. Cooney, Peggy Koniz-Booher (1993), Breast-feeding: the Technical Basis and Recommendations for Action: Role of Mother Support Groups, Geneva, World Health Organization, 62-74.

ⁱⁱ Originally presented to the world in the 1989 as the WHO/UNICEF Joint Statement on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding: The special role of the Maternity Services.