Liaison Report

Organization: World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)

Meeting or Event: WABA-North America organizational meeting

ILCA Representatives: Chris Mulford

Date: March 27-29, 2009

Location: Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Background Information about the meeting:
The meeting was organized by Rebecca Magalhães of LLLI and Miriam Labbok of the Carolina Breastfeeding Institute. LLLI is WABA’s “Regional Focal Point” (RFP) for North America, and Miriam is the North American representative on the WABA Steering Committee.

This was the second meeting held for the purpose of organizing WABA endorsers in the North American region. The first meeting took place in Schaumburg, Illinois, USA in June 2008.

Attendees: 25 people attended, 2 from Mexico, 7 from Canada, 15 from USA, and 1 from Malaysia (Sarah Amin, WABA Co-Director).

Purposes of organizing at the regional level:
1. WABA’s global structure already groups nations into regions. Some of the other regions already have provided input at WABA Global Partners meetings. We believe that North America should also have a voice.
2. Our three nations have different strengths and weaknesses. We believe we can learn by dialoguing with each other.
3. Our three nations sometimes enter into international agreements such as NAFTA. Breastfeeding advocates want to understand how these international links affect breastfeeding families and affect how we work in our three countries.
4. We believe there is a need for North American breastfeeding activists to address the role of our region as a site of research, a source of technological change and a center for education (and often mis-education) of healthcare professionals.

We have agreed on the name “WABA-NA,” to be spelled out officially as WABA North America, WABA Amérique du Nord, WABA Norte América.

Miriam designed the following description as a starter:
The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action - North America (WABA-NA) is an alliance of individuals and organizations in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, working together to support the WABA vision and mission across the region and globally.

La World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action – Norte América (WABA-NA) es una alianza de organizaciones e individuos que colaboran en Canadá, Estados Unidos y México para apoyar la visión y la misión de WABA en la región y a nivel global.

**WABA’s Vision & Mission:**
WABA’s vision is of a world where breastfeeding is the cultural norm, where mothers and families are enabled to feed and care optimally for their infants and young children, thus contributing to a just and healthy society.

WABA’s mission is to protect, promote and support breastfeeding worldwide in the framework of the Innocenti Declarations (1990 and 2005) and the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding through networking and facilitating collaborative efforts in social mobilisation, advocacy, information dissemination and capacity building.

**Languages:** We agreed to present WABA-NA’s official written materials (e.g. website, organizing documents) in French, English, and Spanish; volunteers among the members will provide the translations. This will be a guiding principle of how we hope to work as a region. The translation process is part of the mental process of linking and requires us to examine what our words really mean in a cultural context.

We did not envision a separate organizational structure for WABA-NA. Instead, we agreed to communicate electronically for now and re-evaluate at the Global Forum 3.

We divided into **working groups** to plan WABA-NA’s next action steps.

1. A “Communications Group” to set up a WABA-NA electronic communications system. This consists of three parts: a) a WABA-NA webpage on the WABA website; b) a chat room (perhaps a Facebook Cause) where WABA-NA members can discuss issues of
interest in French, English, or Spanish; c) a database of WABA endorsers in the region, with the capability of informing them about time-critical issues via “blast email.” A fourth part of the communications system in the future could be text messaging.

2. A “Gender Working Group” to examine the intersection of breastfeeding, social justice and feminism, for the purpose of finding common ground to support better maternity protection as the desired outcome.

3. A “Code Working Group” to look for ways of implementing the International Code and subsequent WHA resolutions. Legislation and regulation with consequences are the general goal.

4. A “Milk and Nurture Group” to work on ways to discuss the value of human milk vs breastfeeding as emotional nurturing. WABA’s position paper on gadgets, which is nearing completion, will be a key part of this discussion.

**General actions and agreements:**

1. We aim to post a report about WABA-NA on the WABA webpage by mid-April.
2. Any WABA endorser in North America can be a member of WABA-NA.
3. Penny Van Esterik will start a list of key breastfeeding terms in our three languages, with footnotes to explain where caution is needed in translating concepts and well as words.
4. We need a WABA-NA discussion about the upcoming WABA position statement on Public Private Partnerships.

There was considerable discussion about WABA’s plans for the Global Forum 3, to be held in Quebec City in June 2010. We will plan the next meeting for WABA-NA in conjunction with the Global Forum.

**Report Submitted by:**
Chris Mulford, acting ILCA representative to WABA