

3. Connecting People, Building Bridges, Linking Movements

“When I first heard that WABA was “a NETWORK of NETWORKS” years ago, I had a light-bulb moment. “Yes, of course!” I thought.

A network can be like a fishing net, strong, with each cord contributing to the strength and flexibility of the whole. The materials are fit for the purpose. The net I see is community-owned by the village or the extended family. No one says, “this is mine,” for it is OURS. When there are a small number of fisher folk working the net, the net is small and, however plentiful the fish in the sea, only those that the net can scoop in will be pulled in to the beach. With more workers, the network is added to and the net is extended. It grows to meet new needs.

If it is damaged, clever fingers work together to repair it. Those with net-making skills weave the strands of fibre together, assisted by those who learn the skills. Others support them with food or materials. Not everyone in the network has the same skills, but all contribute. When a net has been mended many times, some sections are original, some are new, but they are all part of the whole, working together.

Other images or concepts of networks are about telecommunication, computer and social media networks. Whatever type of network we visualize in this extended metaphor, COMMUNICATION between contributors is important, whether non-verbal communication among fisher folk at the seashore, or verbal or electronic communications in this age of mobile devices, Skype, and social media.

It is this network structure that, in my view, is a great strength of WABA. It is how, time after time, WABA makes the seemingly impossible, possible. ”

– Virginia Thorley, WABA International Advisory Council (IAC)

From the outset, WABA’s goals were to re-establish and maintain a global breastfeeding culture. WABA’s mission was to eliminate obstacles to breastfeeding, to promote regional and national cooperation and to advocate for breastfeeding, as well as to link to areas of development, women’s rights, environment and human rights.