



It was during the gender training at WABA Secretariat in Penang, Malaysia, that the foundation stone of the Men's Initiative was laid. I, as the coordinator of the Men's Initiative, had experience in writing articles on reproductive health and the importance of breastfeeding, but knew very little about blogs or websites. Yet, with the assistance of the WABA webmaster-consultant, I was able to start up and design the 'Not For Fathers Only Blog', highlighting the value and role of fathers and how fathers can support their partners. The second tool I coordinated together with the Secretariat was the WABA Men's Initiative Newsletter published every six months through the collection of contributions from different regions and country networking groups. Through this vehicle, WABA motivated fathers and men in general to become a strong and more successful team of players in the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.

– James Archanyi, Coordinator, a leading breastfeeding advocate in Cameroon

Reaching out to men and men's groups has not been the easiest task for WABA. It requires a gender equality approach which also looks at the broader issues of fatherhood, child care, shared responsibilities, managing sexual needs, violence against women and more. There have been some exceptions, of course, and more enlightened men like James Archanyi, Peter Briefe, and Per Gunnar from the Swedish Fathers Group have made a difference in WABA's Men's outreach work. Some of the activities over the years included the dissemination of specific information about the advantages of men's involvement in breastfeeding protection, promotion and support through conferences, workshops, and media (radio, television, newsprint), and the production of the Men's Initiative e-newsletter. In Cameroon especially, where the MWG coordinator is based, some of the notable activities include the creation of a new website for greater outreach at www.cameroonlink.org; and the improvement of online radio link for urban and rural community outreach and feedback at <http://www.speaker.com/user/8661689/reactions-on-un-sec-gens-address-on-iwd>

More recently, Jay Sharma, the Co-Executive Director of WABA has advocated for stronger engagement of men and men's groups given his own personal experience as a supportive father:

I learnt about 'mother support' from my mother. Going against the prevailing culture, I was encouraged to be involved in caring for my sister, born some ten years after me. It was not just in the fun things, like making her laugh playing peek-a-boo, I was also involved in nappy changing, bathing and later, feeding duties. I learnt that with the delight of a newborn, came the extra work. It did not seem right for mum to have to do it all by herself. Some twenty