

despite focusing on the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls. To address this gap, WABA has in the past made a presence at three conferences, with increasing visibility in the last two.

The 2013 Conference in Kuala Lumpur provided the opportunity for WABA to be present in numbers, and involved a national breastfeeding organisation, the Malaysian Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor Association, to share their work. The startling invisibility of breastfeeding and IYCF issues was so loud that WABA representatives ran a petition-drive stating that WABA and other participants “Declare that breastfeeding is a vital part of Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and the Continuum of Care for both Mothers and Babies” and appealed for the Women Deliver organisers to include breastfeeding in the programme of future conferences. The petition attracted much attention from participants, many of whom agreed that breastfeeding should not be sidelined. The team collected over 350 signatures from delegates including representatives of various Governments, Ministries of Health and Women’s Affairs, NGOs/CSOs, Midwives and Nurses associations. The petition was subsequently sent to the President of Women Deliver to request for breastfeeding to be included as a topic in future conferences. Although WABA did not get an official response, the petition did have an impact as breastfeeding was widely featured in the 2016 programme.



*Breakout group at a WABA session, Women Deliver 2016.*

In 2016, WABA and the UNICEF Global Breastfeeding Advocacy (GBAI) partners made yet another significant presence at the Conference. Several side events were organised, such as a media roundtable; concurrent sessions with UNICEF, WABA and ABM; and an information booth. WABA delegates also contributed to the WD statement. The lesson learned here is that positive and consistent advocacy over the years does bring changes in attitudes and perspectives of those we target. Interestingly, the CEO of Women Deliver spoke to WABA’s Chairperson, Dr Felicity Savage, during the conference and reiterated that breastfeeding is central to its ‘Deliver for Good’ targets.

It is also true that WABA and the breastfeeding network will have to be consistently present at women’s platforms to speak and advocate for breastfeeding and child health issues. Milestones have been made over the past 25 years for WABA and breastfeeding issues have been accepted as part of more diverse women’s circles. Yet, the reality of the feminist and women’s movement’s plight and that of the growing agenda of women’s organisations means that the latter may not have space and human resources to take on breastfeeding and IYCF issues. Our presence will often be needed alongside that of feminists to ensure that the child’s needs and breastfeeding are not left out from these major global strategic discussions.