



International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

Red internacional de grupos pro alimentación infantil

Réseau international des groupes d'action pour l'alimentation infantile

1998 RECIPIENT OF THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AWARD

Position Statement

Sponsorship and conflicts of interest

Because health care workers and health professionals¹ play an essential role in guiding infant and young child feeding practices;

Because encouraging and facilitating breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child feeding practices², and providing objective and consistent advice to parents about the superior value of breastfeeding is a major contribution to better public health and more particularly to improving child survival, health and development;

Because most manufacturers of baby milks and foods, feeding bottles and teats have been using the health care system as promotional channels;

Because the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*, adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2002, and by the UNICEF Executive Board in September 2002, calls for implementing programmes on infant and young child feeding to be consistent with accepted principles for avoiding conflict of interest³;

Because the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution 49.15 of 1996, calls upon governments to ensure that that “*financial support for professionals working in infant and young child health does not create conflicts of interest, especially with regard to the WHO UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative*”;

Because the 2005 World health Assembly (WHA) resolution 58.32, further urges Member States “*to ensure that financial support and other incentives for programmes and health professionals working in infant and young child health do not create conflict of interest*”;

Because open debate and discussion, undistorted by commercial influence, regarding scientific and programme-related information on infant and young child feeding and child health and development, assists health care workers and professionals to formulate effective strategies;

Because sponsorship by baby food manufacturing companies of research, conferences, seminars, workshops or other scientific meetings that deal with any aspect of infant and young child health and nutrition, can lead to potential conflict of interest; and

Because paragraph 44 of the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* delineates clearly the role of manufacturers, limiting it to full compliance with the Code and relevant WHA resolutions, and to meeting quality, safety and labelling standards of Codex Alimentarius;

IBFAN believes that:

Conference, seminars, workshops or other meetings that deal with any aspect of infant and young child health and nutrition should not be financially or materially sponsored in any way, directly or indirectly by companies that are engaged in the production, marketing or distribution of baby milks, foods or products represented to be used for infant or young child feeding.

IBFAN, therefore calls upon:

1. **Governments** to ensure that programmes related to child health and development are free from commercial interests and that health care workers and health professionals, especially those working in child health, are protected by preventing exposure to situations of potential conflict of interest;
2. **All health care workers including health professionals and their associations** to avoid accepting any donations or funds, offers of assistance in cash or kind from companies with a commercial interest in infant and young child health and development, particularly in the feeding of babies;
3. **Public-interest NGOs/civil society groups** to neither seek nor accept any donations or funds, offers of assistance in kind, requests for exhibition space, or requests to circulate promotional materials from companies with a commercial interest in infant and young child feeding;
4. **International organisations, donor agencies** to avoid participation in or support for any meetings that are in any way sponsored by companies with a commercial interest in infant and young child feeding.
5. **Commercial Sector** to follow Para 44 of the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* in letter and spirit and comply with the *International Code* and subsequent WHA resolutions as a minimum standard.

¹ Health professionals include doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, nutritionists, dieticians, administrators and staff in any public or private health facility.

² As a global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. Thereafter, to meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues for up to two years of age or beyond (*Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*, : WHA Resolution 55.25,2002)

³ “Professionals have a conflict of interest when their interests or commitments compromise their **independent judgement** or their **loyalty** to individuals [whom] they have [an ethical and/or legal] duty to serve”. Rodwin M.A. (1993) *Medicine, money and morals: physicians’ conflicts of interest*. New York and Oxford University Press (emphasis added).

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The International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) is a 1998 Right Livelihood Award recipient. It consists of more than 200 public interest groups working together around the world to save lives of infants and young children and bring lasting change in infant feeding practices at all levels. IBFAN aims to promote the health and well-being of infants and young children and their mothers through protection, promotion and support of optimal breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding practices. IBFAN works for the universal and full implementation of *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitute* and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions.