



*International Baby Food Action Network  
Red internacional de grupos pro alimentación infantil  
Réseau international des groupes d'action pour l'alimentation infantile*

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**1998 RECIPIENT OF THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AWARD**

Rosario Robles Berlanga  
Secretaria de Desarrollo Social,  
SEDESOL  
Av. Paseo de la Reforma 116, Col. Juárez  
Delegación Cuauhtémoc  
México Distrito Federal, CP.06600

Dear Madam Secretary,

**Request for a meeting regarding the Crusade Against Hunger Project**

I am writing to request an urgent meeting with you to discuss our concerns about the *Crusade Against Hunger Project*, which has already received quite a bit of media coverage.

As a politician with a long history of defending the rights to social justice for Mexican people, I know you have a great understanding about rural development and women's rights. Therefore I wanted to explain in person to you that the decision to involve large food corporations in this Project took me completely by surprise. My visit to Mexico was organized by *El Poder del Consumidor*, specifically to raise awareness of the problems of Conflicts of Interest in policy setting and programmes.

With my colleagues in IBFAN (a member of Mexico's *Nutrition Health Alliance*) we were about to send a letter congratulating you for including the promotion and protection of breastfeeding in this initiative. We heard about the involvement with industry on Monday evening, so when asked by journalists the next day I had to say how worried and shocked I was.

Seeing the resulting media coverage and your response, I wanted to say that I am sure that you genuinely want to do the right thing, and am delighted that in the *Reforma* article, you say that the Government will retain control of the programme. This is so important. However, I really would like to have the opportunity to discuss with you how this can work in practice, and to understand how you will manage to do the right thing - to protect health of the Mexican population - when some of the world's most problematic industries such as Pepsi and Nestlé (companies that are driving the chronic disease pandemic) are being taken on as partners.

Such companies are the very ones who need to be regulated.

I have had experience over the past 30 years, at the World Health Assembly, Codex Alimentarius, the UN, with many governments, the European Commission and EU Parliament, trying to ensure that food corporations end practices that we know harm children. Indeed for the last 6 years I have represented IBFAN on the *European Platform for Action on Diet and Physical Activity*, which included all the major food and advertising corporations, so know well the risks of Platforms and Partnerships involving industry and the difficulty of reaching consensus on any intervention (such as regulation of marketing) that limits corporate activities.

Through this experience I have seen that the top strategic priority of the food industry is to change traditional food patterns in countries such as Mexico and they do this by pretending that they are at heart concerned about health. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth, as monitoring reports (when independently funded and managed) so clearly show.<sup>i</sup>

Mexico's cuisine has been recognised by UNESCO as an *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. "*Traditional Mexican cuisine is a comprehensive cultural model comprising farming, ritual practices, age-old skills, culinary techniques and ancestral community customs and manners.*"<sup>ii</sup>

IBFAN has seen time and again how such knowledge, culture and skills, including breastfeeding cultures, can easily be lost within just one generation, by marketing tactics that present unnecessary and harmful ultra-processed packaged foods as having added value, while concealing the risks to health.

I am sure that you share my concern to protect Mexico's people from such misinformation, so have changed my flight in the hope that I could meet you tomorrow, Monday 15th April. I know this is very short notice but I do think that it would be useful for us to meet to try to understand each other's perspectives, and to discuss how to ensure that the aim of the Crusade is reached and not undermined by those who have entirely different objectives.

With very best wishes,

Warmly,



Patti Rundall, OBE  
Policy Director, Baby Milk Action,  
Co-Chair, IBFAN Global Council  
Member of the Conflict of Interest Coalition.<sup>iii</sup>

Please reply to: [prundall@babymilkaction.org](mailto:prundall@babymilkaction.org) +44 7786 523493

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<sup>i</sup> **Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2010** ICDC/IBFAN Monitoring reports of the marketing practices of the baby feeding industry. <http://www.ibfan.org> <http://www.ibfan.org/news-2010-1224.html>

**Superfood for Babies, How overcoming barriers to breastfeeding will save children's lives.** Save the Children 2013  
**Superfood for Babies, How overcoming barriers to breastfeeding will save children's lives.** Save the Children 2013  
<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/superfood-babies>

La "Coca-Colización" de México. A short film showing how corporations damage food cultures.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH5SeWZCEqU>

**FAO European Union (EU) Food Facility Project -- Cambodia: Healthy Food, Healthy Child** a short film documentary presenting an activity of the FAO EU Food Facility Project in Cambodia, to improve dietary diversity and family feeding practices, starting with infant and young children. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rUX6F7ieVY>

<sup>ii</sup> **UNESCO criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:**

R.1: *Traditional Mexican cuisine is central to the cultural identity of the communities that practise and transmit it from generation to generation;* R.2: *Its inscription on the Representative List could enhance the visibility of intangible cultural heritage and promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity;*

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/RL/00400?lg=en&pg=00173#TOC1>

<sup>iii</sup> **Conflict of Interest Coalition** - 161 civil society networks and organisations united by the common objective of safeguarding public health policy-making against commercial conflicts of interest through the development of a Code of Conduct and Ethical Framework for interactions with the private sector. <http://coicoalition.blogspot.com>