We launched a joint report: Nestlé's Shared Value reports cover up malpractice and bring the UN voluntary initiative for corporate responsibility into disrepute. This document shows how Nestlé is responsible for ‘aggravated violations’ of the UN Global Compact principles and uses the initiative as part of its Public Relations strategy to divert criticism. We sent the report to the UN Global Compact Office with a call for Nestlé to be excluded. The failure of this initiative to stop corporate malpractice can be summed up by this comment from the Office in the course of our ongoing communications: “Of course, abuses of the 10 Principles do occur; however we believe that such abuses only indicate that it is important for the company to remain in the Compact and learn from its mistakes.”

Corporations benefit when misleading reports are published on the Global Compact website and launched at joint events. They also try to link with the UN in many other ways. For example, Peter Brabeck, Chairman of Nestlé, is on the Board of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Swiss ‘not-for-profit’ NGO with 1,000 members, most with turnovers of more than $5bn. WEF is now seeking to influence WHO's health policy-setting process. In the coming period we will be working with the Nestlé Critics and others to show that much more care is needed to minimise conflicts of interest and protect the UN system before it is rendered toothless. There is no doubt that whatever the outcome, public action is essential to hold corporations to account.
Raising Awareness

- Members and supporters were essential in raising awareness of the importance of protecting infant and young child health.
- We coordinate the international boycott of Nestlé, the company responsible for more aggressive baby food promotion than any other.
- We also monitor other companies such as Danone, the world’s second largest baby food manufacturer since its takeover of Nutricia. It also markets products aggressively.
- In October we promoted International Nestlé-Free Week.
- We launched the Nestlé Critics website with links to information on all aspects of Nestle’s unethical business practices.
- We made a joint complaint about Nestlé to the UN Global Compact Office. Its refusal to take any action demonstrates the need to reform or replace this system (see right and overleaf).
- We were invited by the Swiss group ATTAC to speak in Zurich in January at the Other Davos meeting (see overleaf).
- ATTAC joined us at Nestlé’s AGM in April in Lausanne, where we questioned the Nestle Board about ongoing marketing violations. Our supporters turned out once again for the annual demonstration at Nestlé (UK) HQ in Craydon in May and listened to the alternative Chairman’s speech.
- Patti Rundall, our Policy Director, was invited for a speaking tour of California in June, starting with the California Childhood Obesity Conference in Los Angeles.
- The trip was sponsored by the welfare scheme, Women Infants and Children, the Prevention Institute and other US groups.
- With Campaign Coordinator, Mike Brady’s blogs, this trip helped revive interest in the Boycott in the USA.

IBFAN

- We are the UK member of IBFAN (the International Baby Food Action Network) which has more than 200 groups in over 100 countries. We are responsible for company campaigns and Code advocacy in Europe.
- In October we promoted the ONE MILLION CAMPAIGN organised by the IBFAN’s Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI). In August Patti Rundall was a speaker in the BPNI Conference on Nutrition and Sustainability in Delhi.
- We attended IBFAN’s Coordinating Council meeting in Egypt in November and during 2009 promoted the World Breastfeeding Week theme: Breastfeeding: A Vital Emergency Response.
- We supported our partners efforts to strengthen legislation in countries such as the Philippines and South Africa.

Monitoring and Reporting

- We produce the Campaign for Ethical Marketing action sheets, exposing marketing malpractice around the world by all baby food companies and helping supporters write letters to company executives.
- In July we contacted Nestlé about its new global strategy of promoting formula with the claim that it protects babies – it doesn’t, they are more likely to become sick than breastfed babies and, in conditions of poverty, more likely to die.
- Our public campaign prompted Nestlé to issue a response but this defends the practice. More pressure is needed.
- Monitoring in the UK continued to be a major focus. We produced several reports for the Baby Feeding Law Group on the strategies used by formula companies in the UK.

BABY MILK ACTION

- Baby Milk Action tries to ensure that breastfeeding and the International Code are safeguarded in UK, EU and Universal policy setting. For example:
- Our Baby Feeding Law Group (BFLG) work led to Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Department of Health setting up an Independent Review Panel (IRP) to examine the effectiveness of the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations. We submitted reports documenting company marketing practices (see below left) and are campaigning for a strong response. We raised questions about the IRP, health claims and FSA independence at the FSA Board meetings in February and July.
- In May we highlighted the importance of breastfeeding and independent monitoring, and the risks of public-private partnerships and industry sponsorship of education at the European Commission’s Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and High Level Group meetings with EU Member States. We have called for the Platform, which aims to halt the obesity epidemic by involving all the major food industries and NGOs, to be evaluated.
- The European Ombudsman did not uphold our complaint that the EU Commission failed to protect public health in its handling of the EU Directive. The Commission’s failure to recognise the universality of the Code, led to weak formula laws across Europe. We are calling for the Framework Directive which governs the legal process to be replaced by a more transparent and accountable procedure.
- On behalf of the BFIC we have called on the European Food Safety Authority and the EU Commission not to permit health and nutrition claims on baby milks and foods (see left).
- Following 10 years of our input to the UN’s Codex Alliance on Infant Formula’s, we used the Codex meeting in Cape Town, South Africa in November, as new work began on baby foods.
- Our calls for Danone to be removed from the Board of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) succeeded.
- We have helped strengthen WHO’s Recommendations on Marketing of Foods and non-alcoholic Beverages to Children.
- We represented Save the Children at the World Health Assembly in May, supporting IBFAN’s call for breastfeeding as a progress indicator for the Millennium Development Goals.
- We attended Party Conferences in September and took part in consultations including Start for Life, the Impact of the Commercial World on Children and the Marmot Review of Health Inequalities.

Network

- We are the Secretariat of the UK Baby Feeding Law Group which includes the Royal Colleges of Midwives, Nursing and Midwifery, the Community Practitioners, the Health Visitors’ Association and UNISON. We are also on the Steering Group of the Breastfeeding Manifesto Coalition leading on one of its seven objectives, Code advocacy and implementation.
- We are a Trustee and member of NGO networks such as Sustain (The Children’s Food Bill), the UK Consortium on AIDS, the CASE Privatisation Group, CORE, the Trade Justice Movement and the UK Food Group.
- Sponsored by IBFAN, we attended the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) meeting in Malaysia in October. Patti Rundall is now WABA’s Advocacy Task Force Coordinator.

Publishing and Marketing

- Members are extremely important as multipliers and over half of our income comes from membership, donations and merchandise sales.
- In November we sent our supporters in the UK and 86 countries copies of Update newsletter (see centre left).
- The website and Campaigns Coordinator’s blog continued to be regularly updated and are a source of free information. Our main website received about 550,000 visitors in the course of the year.

2008 BABY MILK ACTION 2009

CODE ADVOCACY

Above: We challenged misleading claims for synthetic ingredients in formula, such as this Mead Johnson claim about DHA and eyesight.

Above: In August we helped Prof. Michael Kramer correct misleading media reports.

Above: our Infant Feeding and Obesity poster, our briefing, Tackling Obesity, How the Strategies used by Formula companies can make us fat, (WABA) meeting in Malaysia in October Patti Rundall is now WABA’s Advocacy Task Force Coordinator).

Above: We produced the Campaign for Ethical Marketing action sheets, exposing marketing malpractice around the world by all baby food companies and helping supporters write letters to company executives.


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