Training on the Code

We are also providing online training on monitoring of the baby food industry. This training explains the protection we all have a right to expect, the standards that all companies are obligated to follow and the risks companies are prepared to take simply to capture new markets.

Warning of risks

In the summer we exposed Nestlé’s BabyNes formula - a new machine launched in Switzerland but with plans to go global. The marketing lures parents into thinking they can prepare a bottle in just one minute - just like a coffee.

After our campaigning companies are required to add warnings to labels that powdered formula is not sterile in the UK and elsewhere, but not yet in Switzerland - Nestlé’s home. We called on Nestlé to respect and follow the joint FACC/WHO Guidelines for the safe preparation, storage and handling of powdered infant formula and introduce the essential step needed to kill bacteria and to include the warnings on the packaging. Nestlé’s refusal shows that safety is not in its plan.

Worldwide studies have detected pathogenic bacteria such as Enterobacter sakazakii, Salmonella (now called Cronobacter and E. coli) in samples of powdered formula. Previous tests reported by the US Food and Drug Administration revealed that 14% of packages contained harmful bacteria. Laboratory analyses of the BabyNes formula capsules detected bacteria, proving that the milk powder in the capsules is not sterile.

Covers: Mother and children in Nepal by Rudi Bress.

Featured in the IBFAN 2010 Breastfeeding Calendar, available from the Baby Milk Action Virtual Shop.


**IBFAN**

- We are the UK members 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.

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

- We continued our email Nestlé campaign, calling on it to end practices such as claiming its formula “protects” babies, distributing promotional leaflets through health facilities and sponsoring health worker events. Nestlé executives dispute interpretation of the marketing requirements, so we proposed a meeting before a panel of mutually-agreed experts to resolve these questions. Nestlé is still refusing even to discuss the proposal.

- We monitor the baby food marketing in the UK with the help of people reporting violations through a form on the Baby Feeding Law Group website. We also supported people in registering complaints with the enforcement authorities. In January we launched the first module in our online monitoring training course.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

**Raising Awareness**

- We continued to pursue a joint complaint about Nestlé at the UN Global Compact Office on behalf of the coalition that we formed in setting up the Nestlé Critics website, a portal to information on all aspects of Nestlé’s business. The Global Compact Office (GCO) refuses to review Nestlé’s involvement, as required by the Integrity Measures. Nestlé is a partner sponsor of GCO events.

- We raised concerns about Nestlé baby milk advertising at Nestlé’s AGM in April in Lausanne and called on Ann Veneman, former UNICEF Executive Director, not to join the Nestlé board. She went ahead, saying she would work from within to try to stop violations. UNICEF said she is a private individual who had left the organisation and confirmed that “Nestlé violates the code.”

- Our annual demonstrations at Nestlé (UK) HQ in Croydon in May featured a new “Nestlé - Good Grief!” jingle (available as a ringtone and website widget) and a song from the book for children. A clip was posted to YouTube.

- The Infant Formula Explained DVD (overleaf) is now being used in health facilities and by mother support groups across the UK and health authorities in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and New Zealand under licence.

- We represent IBFAN at a UN meeting in Geneva for the World Health Assembly, and in Moscow in April and in New York in June and September meetings Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). We are on the Advocacy Task Force of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA).

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**Code Advocacy**

- Baby Milk Action works to ensure that breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child feeding is safeguarded, helping to promote IBFAN and NGO advocacy and networking at UK, EU and UN level.

- A key development in our campaign to stop promotional claims on foods for infants and young children was a vote in the EU Parliament in April. A majority of parliamentarians (MEPs) from all parties tried to stop a misleading claim about a long-chain fatty acid (DHA) appearing on follow-on formulas and baby foods. However, this was not enough to stop the claim going ahead. We are working closely with MEPs to ensure that the rules governing EU policy making are more accountable, transparent, democratic and protective of child health.

- With other NGOs we submitted comments to the Children’s Rights and Business Principles Initiative (CRBPI) a joint venture between Save the Children, UNICEF and the UN Global Compact. We called for the integration of strong accessibility measures (including independent monitoring of marketing) and greater focus the obligation of business to ‘respect’ child rights (rather than ‘to protect’ them) and governments’ obligations to regulate businesses.

- We represented IBFAN on the European Commission’s Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health attending several High Level Meetings. We called for EU legislation to be in line with WHA resolutions, for truly independent (rather than company-funded) monitoring and no food industry sponsorship of education.

- We attended the World Health Assembly in May for discussions on the Reform of WHO where we called on WHO to protect its independence, integrity and decision making according to its mandate and Constitution. We commented on WHO’s Action Plan on Maternal and Child Health Nutrition.

- We attended WHO’s Global Health Forum in Moscow in April on the control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) – diseases such as cancer, heart disease and obesity which are fuelled by the promotion of sugar, salt, fat, food, tobacco and alcohol. These companies ask to be partners in NCD control. In June and September, the NCD discussions moved to the United Nations in New York. We represented IBFAN and the International Consumer Food Organisations (IAFCO) helping to form the Conflict of Interest Coalition (see left).

- In November we attended the UN Codex nutrition meeting in Chile where the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) was pushing a market led approach to development, promoting fortified foods and supplements for babies.

- In September and October we attended the Labour and Conservative Party Political conferences.

**Networking**

- We are the Secretariat of the 23 Member UK Baby Feeding Law Group (BFLG) which includes the Royal Colleges of Midwives, Nursing and Midwifery, the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors’ Association and UNISON. BFLG advocates that the International Code and World Health Assembly Resolutions are incorporated into UK and EU legislation.

- We are members of the new Conflict of Interest Coalition (see left).

- We are a Trustee of Sustain, and member of the Children’s Food Bill, the UK Consortium on AIDS, the Case Privatisation Group, the Trade Justice Movement and the UK Food Group.

**Publishing and Marketing**

- Members are extremely important as multipliers and about 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.

- The website and the Campaign and Policy blogs are regularly updated. We received over 600,000 visitors in the course of the year. We are also on Facebook and Twitter.

- Our online Virtual Shop is now our main source of sales.