Face financial cutbacks WHO is under increasing pressure to accept Private Sector funding, especially for its NCD work. At the same time it is aware of and Member States are stressing again and again the need to protect WHO’s’ norms and standards setting processes. A Resolution passed in May 2012 (WHA 65.6) calls for specific conflicts of interest safeguards for policy development and implementation of nutrition programmes. This should apply not just at country level but also in Public Private Partnerships and global alliances such as the Scaling Up Nutrition Initiative and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) both of which are now focusing on infant and young child nutrition and have serious conflicts of interest at a core level.

Whether this will lead to the development and implementation of a coherent and effective policy remains to be seen. The COI Coalition statement was also useful at the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health in Rio de Janeiro in October. Although the declaration was disappointing for failing to include many of the proposals of WHO’s own expert Commission it did include wording on safeguarding against conflict of interest where collaboration and participation with the private sector were mentioned.

Baby Milk Action set out its own recommendations in an article published in the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition journal in January, which we gave the title: Governments Should Govern - Corporations Should Follow the Rules.

The COI Coalition statement was also useful at the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health in Rio de Janeiro in October. Although the declaration was disappointing for failing to include many of the proposals of WHO’s own expert Commission it did include wording on safeguarding against conflict of interest where collaboration and participation with the private sector were mentioned.

Baby Milk Action set out its own recommendations in an article published in the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition journal in January, which we gave the title: Governments Should Govern - Corporations Should Follow the Rules.
IBFAN

We are 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. Our Policy Director is one of 5 members of IBFAN’s Global Council.

IBFAN produced a DVD and youtube film on its work (screen shots right).

Monitoring and Reporting

- We produce the Campaign for Ethical Marketing action sheets, exposing marketing malpractice around the world and ran campaigns supporting partners in Armenia and the Philippines as they tackled malpractice.
- As a direct result of our campaigns, Danone agreed in May to stop distributing materials intended for parents in the health care system everywhere in the world. Dobakers, however, has not been doing this in the first place - and has a lot more to sort out if it is to escape a consumer boycott.
- In September we won an important case in the UK at the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) against advertising by Pizer/Wyeth for SMA formula, which had been headlined “What’s the best milk after Kate?” The ASA ruled the answer is not SMA formula. Unfortunately there are no fines and no requirement to print corrections under the ASA voluntary system. We have been encouraging Trading Standards to take legal action over this and other cases. Nestle has since completed its takeover of Pizer/ Wyeth and we are calling on it to respect this and other rulings.
- We coordinate the Baby Feeding Law Group monitoring project and website, where the public can contribute to us. We raise cases with the companies and enforcement authorities. In January we released the second module in our online monitoring training course.

Raising Awareness

- Members and supporters were essential in raising awareness of the importance of breastfeeding optimal infant and young child health. Area contacts and staff held stalls and workshops at events in the UK including the Associations of Breastfeeding Mothers, Baby Friendly Initiative and the Ulverston Breastfeeding Festival.
- 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.
- Our annual demonstrations at Nestle’s UK HQ in Craydon in May featured the Nestlé monster (cover). We promoted International Nestlé-Free Week at the end of October, launching an iPhone app for promoting the boycott (right). We updated the Nestlé boycott product list card in September ready for the 2012 week.
- We raised concerns about Nestle’s baby milk marketing at Nestle’s AGM in April in Lausanne, including the Indian Government’s position that targeting of health workers breaks its laws. Nestle Chairman responded: “It is not for Baby Milk Action to tell me what to do and then shoved a prepared film boasting of training health workers - including in India. No shame!
- We continue to pursue cases against Nestle under the UN Global Compact and to expose the ineffectiveness of this voluntary scheme. We asked the UN Secretary General to investigate why even the actions that could be taken against Nestle had not been taken. In November our article Governments Should Govern - Corporations Should Follow the Rules was published in the UN journal SCN News.
- We decided to take direct action to enforce the marketing requirements when we learned that Pizer/Wyeth was planning to tour UK shopping centres with the SMA Baby Know How roadshow in June and July to launch new formula packaging. Email campaigns were sufficient to persuade shopping centres to pull out, though demonstrations were planned. The events were cancelled before they began. In May we had launched a campaign No Promotion - Cheaper Formula. The reminder that it is people who buy formula that fund company promotional activities.

BABY MILK ACTION

BABY MILK Action aims to save infant lives and to end the avoidable suffering caused by inappropriate infant feeding.

We work within the global network, IBFAN, to stop the Pfizer/Wyeth SMA Baby Know How roadshow. As the yooroadshow.com website (left) explains, in Ireland a specially adapted bus with a mini cinema and bottle preparation and nutrition advice centre has been on tour since April. In September we were invited to Ireland to provide advice on defending the marketing requirements.

Knowing UK authorities only act after the event, if at all, we took direct action to stop the Pizer/Wyeth SMA Baby Know How roadshow. As the yourroadshow.com website explains, we found a specially adapted bus with a mini cinema and bottle preparation and nutrition advice centre has been on tour since April. In September we were invited to Ireland to provide advice on defending the marketing requirements.

2011 BABY MILK ACTION

- We continued to represent IBFAN in the European Commission’s controversial Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. This encourages voluntary commitments by industry and others. We highlighted the need for the EU to follow WHO Resolutions, the importance of independent monitoring and the risks of corporate sponsorship of education. An evaluation of the Platform found no concrete impact from the voluntary approach over 7 years!
- We represented IBFAN as part of the Consumers International team at WHO’s Executive Board meeting and Assembly in January and May. A strong Resolutions tackling conflicts of interest and nutrition targets also called on WHO to develop guidelines on the marketing of baby foods.
- We responded to numerous consultations on WHO Reform, Non-Communicable Diseases and on WHO’s Targets for Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition.

Code Advocacy

- Baby Milk Action works to ensure that the International Code and resolutions were implemented in UK, EU, and United Nations policy setting. We have a lead role in the coordination of NGO advocacy and we are the Secretariat of the Baby Feeding Law Group that works to strengthen EU and UK legislation, specifically on health claims and the review of the EU Framework Directive called PARNUTS.
- We continued to represent IBFAN in the European Commission’s controversial Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. This encourages voluntary commitments by industry and others. We highlighted the need for the EU to follow WHO Resolutions, the importance of independent monitoring and the risks of corporate sponsorship of education. An evaluation of the Platform found no concrete impact from the voluntary approach over 7 years!
- We represented IBFAN as part of the Consumers International team at WHO’s Executive Board meeting and Assembly in January and May. A strong Resolutions tackling conflicts of interest and nutrition targets also called on WHO to develop guidelines on the marketing of baby foods.
- We responded to numerous consultations on WHO Reform, Non-Communicable Diseases and on WHO’s Targets for Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition.

Networking

- We are the Secretariat of the 23 Member UK Baby Feeding Law Group (BFLG) which includes the Royal Colleges of Midwives, Nursing and Paediatrics, the Coordinating Committee, and the WHO’s Feeding Law Group (IBFAN).
- We are a Trustee of Sustain, and member of the Children’s Food Bill, the UK Consortium on student food and the UK Adult Diet Group.

Practising and Marketing

- Members are extremely important for spreading the word about our work and supporting our campaign. Over half of our income comes from membership, donations and merchandise sales. We launched a new range of t-shirts with the Nestlé Monster logo (see cover).
- In April we sent our supporters in the UK and 86 countries electronic and hard copies of Update newsletter. The website is regularly updated and received over 700,000 visitors in the course of the year. We are also on Facebook and Twitter.
- Our popular Infant Formula Explained DVD was licensed for use by more health facilities in the UK and elsewhere.
- We attended the UN Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting in Geneva, December, blocking the attempts of companies and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition to legitimise promotion claims.
- We continued to highlight concerns about the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative and the involvement of businesses in its policy setting.
- In November and March we took part in European Food Safety Authority consultations, helping to strengthen its conflicts of interest rules.
- With IBFAN’s Geneva office, OWA, we coordinated advocacy to strengthen the Children’s Rights and Business Principles Initiative. While problems remain, several changes were made, not least that companies should comply with WHO’s codes.
- With Dr Arun Gupta, Coordinator of IBFAN Asia, we developed a UNICEF/WHO policy to support and monitor companies in Asia that are active in third countries.
- We attended IBFAN’s Complimentary Feeding meeting in Thailand in November and in February briefed the Thai Government about infant feeding legislation.