

Baby Milk Action thanks the URC for supporting its work.

BABY MILK
ACTION

Mothers and babies need you to keep up the pressure on Nestlé now more than ever - look at what it is really doing.



Why target Nestlé with the boycott?

1. Nestlé is the biggest and most aggressive of the baby food companies. Baby Milk Action works to stop malpractice by all companies. With Nestlé, extra pressure is needed as it drives down standards. Its competitors even tried, unsuccessfully, to stop it advertising in South African supermarkets in 2008.

2. Nestlé has rejected Baby Milk Action's four-point plan aimed at saving infant lives and ultimately ending the boycott. Baby Milk Action put a similar plan to Danone when it jumped to second place in the market after taking over other companies in 2007. Danone promised a 'root-and-branch review' of activities and the next global monitoring report from the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), due in 2010, will show if it has changed or if further action is needed.

3. One of Nestlé's current marketing strategies is to undermine the 'breastfeeding is best' warnings the boycott brought in. It is adding colourful logos to labels claiming its baby milk 'protects' babies, but babies fed on it are more likely to become sick than breastfed babies and, in conditions of poverty, more likely to die.

4. Nestlé latest leaflets targeting health workers claim its formula is 'The new "Gold Standard" in infant feeding', 'reduces diarrhoea', 'aids brain and eye development' and 'strengthens the immune system'. Don't take our word - look at Nestlé's materials (the leaflet above was being used by Nestlé in Egypt, June 2010 - also see the website). Nestlé's claims do not stand up to investigation and are prohibited by the marketing standards adopted by the World Health Assembly.

Look at what Nestlé does - not what it says it does

5. In its report on Nestlé for the URC, ethical investment organisation EIRIS cites examples of "total or substantial violation of the International Code of Marketing Breast-Milk Substitutes" (URC review Appendix 9, December 2009). Nestlé produces impressive policy statements and reports, but it is what it is actually doing that harms health. When violations are reported, Nestlé dismisses them. Baby Milk Action is in on-going communication with Nestlé, and executives are defending its 'protect' marketing campaign, which has been rolled out in 120 countries. The detail here is from a tin purchased in Malawi, Africa, in July 2009. We've stopped similar practices in the past - and we hope you will help us to again.



6. FTSE4Good confirmed last week that it does not include Nestlé in its ethical investment lists - and this does not stop executives 'engaging' to discuss what needs to change. Invest (or call off the boycott) without real change, and leverage is lost. If the new 'ethical investment policy' would allow investment despite Nestlé malpractice, surely this needs revising. For example, to consider independent monitoring evidence.

7. The 2007 decision of the Methodist Church Central Finance Board to invest has proved harmful. Its ethics committee acknowledged "continuing concern" that "may cause some through conscience to maintain a consumer boycott of Nestlé products" - but Nestlé has cited the investment when trying to divert criticism of its activities. The URC Ethical Investment Advisory Group review itself quotes a Methodist representative (Appendix 5) warning that: "the Methodist change in policy had been used by the company and misrepresented them."

The World Health Assembly restated in May 2010 that it "CALLS UPON infant food manufacturers and distributors to comply fully with their responsibilities under the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions;" and expressed 'deep concern over persistent reports of violations'. Improvements to breastfeeding rates and complementary feeding practices "could save annually the lives of 1.5 million children".

For further information and references see: www.babymilkaction.org