

# Campaign for ethical marketing



June 2003

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), reversing the decline in breastfeeding could save the lives of 1.5 million infants every year, yet baby food companies continue to market artificial foods in ways that undermine breastfeeding. The people responsible have names and addresses. You can help to stop them.

The *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* was adopted as a ‘minimum requirement’ for all countries by the World Health Assembly (which sets the policy of the World Health Organisation) in 1981. The *International Code* aims to protect breastfeeding by restricting company marketing practices and to ensure breastmilk substitutes are used properly when these are necessary. A number of Resolutions address questions of interpretation and changes in marketing practices and scientific knowledge, and have equal weight to the *International Code*.

## Nestlé pushes infant formula in Botswana with outrageous claims

**Background:** The leaflets on this page, found recently in Botswana, show how Nestlé idealizes artificial infant feeding and undermines breastfeeding, whilst claiming it is a ‘trusted’ company.

This Pelargon promotional leaflet claims that using Pelargon “diarrhoea and its side-effects are counteracted”. The scientific evidence does not support this claim and even a member of Nestlé’s own Nutrition Institute disputes it. Where water is unsafe, an artificially-fed infant is up to 25 times more likely to die as a result of diarrhoea than a breastfed child and to suggest formula counteracts diarrhoea is irresponsible.

“Growing is thirsty work” is the message on the front of this leaflet, feeding the idea that infants need additional fluids. In reality, breastmilk provides all the liquid an infant needs.

Note also how Nestlé is now using an enlarged and idealized image of its logo showing a bird feeding its chicks. This new logo has so far only appeared on infant feeding products.

Nestlé claims that its own ‘auditors’ ensure no violations take place and its Chief Executive Officer boasts that he personally investigates any hint of a violation.

Suggested letter to Peter Brabeck-Letmathé CEO, Nestlé S.A., Av. Nestlé 55, CH-1800 Vevey, Switzerland. Fax: 41 21 924 2813.

This leaflet was handed out on a public bus in Gaborone, Botswana in 2003. It suggests that Nestlé abides by the WHO Code and claims the company is “the most trusted name in nutrition for 130 years”. Seeking direct contact with mothers, to distribute leaflets such as this or for any other reason, is banned by the Code. This pertinent fact is not mentioned on the leaflet nor is the ban on promotion in the health care system. In itself the leaflet is promoting Nan infant formula.

Nestlé’s leaflets promoting its infant formula with slogans such as “Growing is thirsty work” and “diarrhoea and its side-effects are counteracted” demonstrate Nestlé’s contempt for the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* and subsequent, relevant Resolutions of the World Health Assembly.

Another leaflet, promoting Nan and Lactogen infant formula, whilst claiming that Nestlé complies with the ‘WHO Code’, has been distributed to members of the public in Botswana. Nestlé staff are prohibited from seeking direct or indirect contact with mothers.

Do the terms of reference for your so-called “auditors” permit the production and distribution of such leaflets? If so, why is this the case? If not, why have these leaflets been produced?

I call on you to stop such activities in Botswana and all other countries immediately.

## Nestlé promises on '6 months' do not stand up

**Background:** Following demonstrations at Nestlé sites around the UK - the '**Big Noise to Wake up Nestlé Management**' - Nestlé's Head of Corporate Affairs wrote to Baby Milk Action with a Nestlé statement claiming it had changed the labels of its complementary food labels to comply with the requirement that these are not marketed for use before 6 months of age. This has been a requirement since the World Health Assembly adopted Resolution 47.5 in 1994 and it has taken a great deal of campaigning - coupled with the introduction of national legislation in many countries - to bring about this shift.

However, Nestlé's claim to be '**leading the way**' needs closer examination. UNICEF **Hong Kong** wrote to Nestlé on 29 May 2003: "**We were pleased to note from the headlines of your International Code Action Report that Nestlé is taking the initiative on 6-month labelling. It was therefore with some disappointment to see that Nestlé Hong Kong is still promoting complementary food from 4 months onwards... the Department of Health of the Hong Kong Government has followed the WHO recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life.**"

Similar reports are coming in from other countries. For example, the IBFAN group in **Bulgaria** informed us that Nestlé has launched an advertising campaign in a June 2003 magazine promoting Nestlé **Sinlac** for use from 4 months of age. In **India**, where the government's legislation requires that products are not labelled for use before 6 months of age, Nestlé's new labels have appeared, but in the adverts the prominent age of use on the pack is obscured and the reference to 6 months appears only in small print.

Many thanks to everyone who wrote in support of our campaign to protect the Vietnam regulations from industry pressure. The Government has pressed ahead with its requirement that labels show cup rather than bottle feeding.



**Baby Milk Action coordinates the 20-country international Nestlé boycott which has prompted some improvements to**

**marketing practices. The boycott focuses on Nestlé because it controls about 40% of the world market in baby milks and uses its influence to undermine controls on marketing activities. Monitoring shows Nestlé to be the largest single source of violations worldwide. ⇒ If you are boycotting Nestlé products, such as Nescafé coffee, write and tell Nestlé.**



While Nestlé boasts that it is '**taking the lead**' in complying with the 6 month labelling requirement, it is simultaneously launching campaigns such as this in the Bulgarian parenting magazine "**Baby**".

This one says: "**Sinlac Baby Menu is a cereal for dietary uses with plant proteins, without gluten, lactose and milk proteins. For every baby over 4 months**".

Closer inspection of Nestlé's promise reveals that it will only abide by the 6 month requirement in countries of its own choosing - those where it is given no choice?

Suggested letter to Peter Brabeck-Letmathé CEO, Nestlé S.A., Av. Nestlé 55, CH-1800 Vevey, Switzerland. Fax: 41 21 924 2813.

Despite claims made in a recent public relations offensive by your company, Nestlé continues to promote complementary foods for use before 6 months of age. This violates Resolution 47.5 of the World Health Assembly, adopted as long ago as 1994. Your company's misleading claims only damage your reputation further. Please change your company's marketing policies and practices immediately to comply.

Suggested letter to the other main baby food companies, similarly marketing complementary foods for use before 6 months of age:

Miles D. White, CEO, Abbott Laboratories, 100 Abbott Park Road, Abbott Park, Illinois 60064-3500, USA. Fax: +1 8479371511.

Daniel Vasella, CEO (Novartis - parent of Gerber), Novartis, Lichtstrasse 35, CH-4002, Basel, Switzerland. Fax: +41 61 324 8001.

William R Johnson, CEO, HJ Heinz Co., PO Box 57, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15230-0057, USA.

Hans van der Wielen, CEO, NUMICO (Nutricia, Milupa, Cow&Gate), PO Box 1, 2700 MA Zoetermeer, The Netherlands. Fax: +31 79 353 9620.

Nestlé claims that it is '**taking the lead**' in complying with World Health Assembly Resolutions requiring that complementary foods are not marketed for use before 6 months of age. It claims that other companies are not yet showing the same commitment. Will you give a public undertaking to abide by the requirements of Resolution 47.5, adopted in 1994, as you have been repeatedly requested to do?

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