



International Baby Food Action Network

A69/10 - Agenda Item 12.4

Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important subject, and in particular the Global Coordinating Mechanism. IBFAN has consistently expressed its reservations about the GCM's status, governance and poor terms of reference. NGO concerns have been downplayed by GCM chairs and described by some as paranoid.

Instead of following WHO's existing rules on conflicts of interest, GCM has set harmful precedents that threaten WHO's credibility, integrity and effectiveness. Apart from tobacco, GCM seems open to just about any business - including members of the World Economic Forum – but access is denied to some critical NGOs.

Annex 4 of the Report describes a model loosely based on the EU Platform on Diet – that after 9 years has failed to make any significant progress in curbing harmful marketing practices, wasting precious time and resources.

GCM proposes to invite corporations to voluntarily submit evidence of action with no independent scrutiny or assessment of its quality. The report warns that contributions should not be used to “serve their interests or promote their brand, products, views or activity with limited or no benefits for the prevention and control of NCDs” but its proposed solution is merely to “clearly define the parameters of what constitutes a contribution and what does not.” Is it wise to trust the corporations most responsible for NCDs to monitor themselves and not exploit WHO's name?

Even though there is no evidence of their effectiveness GCM promotes partnerships with corporations that are not only promoting unhealthy foods, but land-grabbing, mono-cropping and undermining access to bio-diverse wholesome foods - strategies that all contribute to climate change.

Bad diet is acknowledged to be the biggest cause of death and disability. Instead of wasting time on ill-conceived diversionary schemes, we urge WHO and Member States to focus on effective legislation to control harmful marketing.
