

International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

71st session of the World Health Assembly

Item: 12.6

Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition: biennial report (Document A71/22)

Safeguarding against possible conflicts of interest in nutrition programmes (Document A71/23)



IBFAN
defending breastfeeding

Comprehensive implementation plan on MIYCN should be addressed as strategic priority matter, instead of just technical. It is alarming that 60% of infants are still not exclusively breastfed, and that the indicator for sustained BF to 2y or beyond is not included in the target. IBFAN's WBTi report reflects that median duration of BF, BF initiation within 1st hour, appropriate complementary feeding, policies on infant feeding in emergencies, maternity leave, breastfeeding and childcare facilities at work, and maternity protection in informal sector are inadequate or lagging, and should be included when assessing progress.

We appreciate WHO's work on Code implementation through NETCODE, as IBFAN's independent global monitoring shows companies are aggressively promoting. Only 36 countries have implemented all provisions of the International Code as law. Quality of national measures is uneven and problems with monitoring and enforcement persist. Those that have reviewed existing measures, with few exceptions, ended up eroded. Having worked with 148 countries directly on Code implementation, IBFAN has witnessed industry wielding its influence to obstruct fresh or renewed national attempts to curtail inappropriate marketing practices. Hence, the urgency to strengthen Code implementation and monitoring, and to ensure monitoring and enforcement are free from commercial influence.

WHO's Col guidance is fundamentally problematic. It defines COI as conflicts between actors with diverging interests, instead of conflicts within a person or an institution between their obligations and secondary interests - adding to the confusion created by FENSA and the SUN's Col guidance. If left uncorrected, it will allow areas of conflicts to be turned into common ground, leading to harmful redefinition at national level, increasing rather than reducing risks of COI and undue influences. IBFAN hopes that the Assembly will not allow field-testing of this poorly conceptualized approach.

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