



# IBFAN

defending breastfeeding

## International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

144 EB January 2019

### Agenda Item 5.5 Universal Health Coverage. Primary Health Care

*As one of WHO's longest-standing public interest partners IBFAN strongly supports the principle of publicly funded UHC and welcomes WHO's acknowledgement that primary health care is its foundation.*

*However, that so little attention is paid to the need for conflict of Interest safeguards is worrying. WHO's keenness to involve the corporations and its fear of being seen as 'risk averse' now seems more evident than its concern about being seen as cavalier, even negligent.*

*Of course WHO cannot police what happens at country level, however it does have an obligation to warn Member States of the risks of inappropriate commercial involvement in health care services. If it doesn't the public might surely question its independence, integrity and trustworthiness.*

*There are countless examples of patient being misled and health being harmed because of such involvement. To take just one - baby food company phone apps that advise mothers how to feed their babies. If WHO does not want to be seen as endorsing such things it needs to repeatedly warn of the risks of inappropriate sponsorship.*

*Innovation that can genuinely advance health is to be welcomed - but corporations do not have a monopoly on innovative ideas. Unless their interventions are carefully screened and monitored by truly independent bodies, their risks to health and increased costs to services can sabotage public health goals.*

*If corporations are involved in monitoring and reporting – as they might be in a Public Private Partnership - the benefits of interventions are likely to be promoted above the risks. Companies are soon trusted to help with health care planning, given access to personal data and everything else they need to expand their markets.*

*Meanwhile the publicly funded health care systems that exist in many countries are under attack from those pushing privatised systems.*

*This is a slippery slope that needs to be navigated very carefully and WHO has a key role to play in getting it right. Thank you*