

UPDATE



Things to Remember:

- ✓ Mother should wear a mask
- ✓ Mother should be 6 feet away from the baby
- ✓ It is safe to give expressed breast milk to the new born after practising hand and breast hygiene

@nestlepakistan has stepped up to help families whose income has been impacted due to #lockdown Nestlé has donated water, juices, Nido, Milk Pack, Lactogrow and Cerelec which will be distributed by PDMA.



- companies exploit COVID-19 for profit
- worrying global initiatives
- ultra-processing - risks to health and biodiversity
- risks of multi-stakeholder partnerships
- astro-turfing - can you recognise it?

The Covid -19 pandemic continues to be devastating for everyone and shows why [UN bodies, especially WHO, should be protected from commercial and undue political influence](#) if they are to protect human rights, equitable access to treatments and a safer, more humane world. During the Aids pandemic, fear of transmission understandably led to [replacement feeding with subsequent increases in infant mortality](#). Commercial exploitation of the fear of COVID-19 transmission is now eclipsing evidence-based advice. Thankfully, [WHO](#) and [UNICEF](#) who are updating advice regularly, are [highlighting breastfeeding's life-saving importance](#) in helping destroy harmful pathogens, and build resistance to so many threats. They also warn of the risks of breastmilk substitutes. See cover to see how Nestlé's marketing implies – with no sound evidence, that its HMO (Human Milk Oligosaccharide) builds immunity. [WHO and UNICEF advise that mothers, including those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, be supported to remain with their infants and practice skin-to-skin](#). Although [many countries](#) have adopted their recommendations, breastfeeding rates have dropped by 40-50% in some hospitals. In India, before the pandemic, 41% of babies were breastfed in the first hour, but rates are now falling, fuelled by increased marketing. In a [BMJ report](#), IBFAN's Dr Arun Gupta, explains: *"It takes years to take breastfeeding rates up by even 1%... In the last 10 years the breastfeeding rate in India has gone up by 5%. The covid crisis could set us back many years"*. Brazenly flouting UN Guidance and the Indian Law, Danone's advice channel, [Voice of Experts](#) (see cover) instructs Covid positive mothers to stay six feet away from their babies. This section was removed after IBFAN exposed it. Danone said the views of the medical experts *"are their own."* Companies are also [promoting webinars, training medical students and distributing free formulas and unhealthy ultra-processed foods](#). A [UNICEF brief on food and beverage funding, warns against exploitation, co-branding and partnership language with companies selling unhealthy products during the pandemic](#).

Industry-friendly 'BMS Call to Action' gives companies a 10-year licence to harm children.

[IBFAN has denounced](#) a new cleverly-worded [Breastmilk Substitutes Call to Action](#) (BMS Call) which its supporters say is a *fresh – industry savvy* strategy to improve Code compliance. We believe this to be a false assertion that will instead usher in inappropriate partnerships that will derail and delay full Code compliance. The Call was drafted by the Meridian Institute and 6 non-governmental-organisations, many funded by food corporations, the Gates Foundation and other industry-linked philanthropies. More worryingly it is also backed by WHO and UNICEF before any government or the World Health Assembly has approved it. The Call gives companies a 10-year-license to continue marketing that harms children in exchange for a voluntary *'Commitment'*. The Call ignores [Conflicts of Interest](#), bottles, teats, baby foods and [formulas for mothers](#). It also ignores the unnecessary sweetened milks marketed for children aged 6-36 months which are cross-branded with infant formula. The CODEX standard for these products will be decided before the BMS call ends in 2030. Without these tricky issues and judgements handed to the Gates Foundation-funded [Access to Nutrition Initiative](#) (ATNI), companies should be able to concoct an acceptable commitment. Indeed, [Nestlé already claims to be code compliant](#). Although ATNI claims to be *'independent'* it was designed from the outset to whitewash companies and integrate company *"perspectives and expertise"* into its *"rigorous and comprehensive methodology"* in violation of [WHA Res 49.15 that forbids commercial influence on monitoring](#).

- [Nutrition for Growth \(N4G\)](#) is a funding initiative, spearheaded by the Japanese Government that aims to end malnutrition. However, the N4F criteria and principles mirror the [BMS Call](#) and [SUN \(P3\)](#) will worry all those working to respect human rights and build effective regulation of marketing environment.

Who should govern? Everyone is under greater financial pressure due to Covid and baby food companies are first in line to offer 'help' in any nutrition related projects. The initiatives on these pages give companies plenty of opportunities to cosy up to policy makers as partners – in exchange for *here today gone tomorrow* promises. Often forgotten is that 'partnerships' are, by definition, arrangements for *'shared governance'* to achieve *'shared goals and benefits.'* Indeed *shared decision-making* is their single most unifying feature. Since the primary duty of all corporations is to their shareholders - those wanting to protect health and the planet would wise to be careful. ([interview](#) on governance).

"The top strategic priority of many transnational marketing and media businesses (who have contributed to the NCD epidemic) is to change traditional food patterns and cultures in lower and middle-income countries." Prof Philip James, the founder of the Obesity Task Force, 2012



Codex Nutrition meeting in Germany, Nov 2019. US pushing for a lowering of safeguards alongside some of the world's large exporters of UPFs. IBFAN is always present at these meetings. Photo: Codex Alimentarius.

The obesity crisis is, at last, prompting several governments to take action on the marketing of foods high in salt, sugar and fat. However, the wider [risks of UPFs on health, biodiversity and the environment](#) are more difficult, so often overlooked. However, a new classification based on the degree of processing of food and nutrient content, *Nova*, despite being challenged by the Brazilian government is gaining support – see [Petition](#). To be globally traded UPFs need a long shelflife and the addition of non-food ingredients to stabilize, emulsify, thicken and regulate acidity. Perishable ingredients must be removed along with many essential micronutrients. [UPFs are often so highly processed](#) that they no longer resemble their plant or animal sources. These added ingredients are *permitted* by Codex Alimentarius, not on the basis of independent and convincing evidence but on political consensus and claims of “*history of safe use*.” When micronutrients are added (to be more accurate - *restored*) they invariably carry promotional *fortification* claims that mask the risks of the whole product. Many BMS are UPFs, especially the unnecessary milks for babies 6-36 months that share branding with infant formulas. Many contain palm oil derived from [deforestation](#) (land-grabbing) and are sold in single-use non-biodegradable plastic. Their Greenhouse Gas Emissions add to the [environmental burden](#). See [IBFAN's Codex](#), [UPF presentation](#), [UK plans to ban supermarkets from selling commodities sourced from illegally deforested land](#), [Mexico's Oaxaca state recently banned junk food and sugary drinks to children](#).



When the SUN casts a Shadow

IBFAN has been concerned about the risks of multi-stakeholder partnerships and in particular, [Scaling up Nutrition \(SUN\) for many years](#). Our research and analysis with FIAN and SID, [When the Sun Casts a Shadow](#), explores SUN's human rights risks in Guatemala, Uganda and India and was finally published in February. We found that SUN's market-led approach:

- favors short-term medicalised and technical solutions, supplements, fortification, promotional claims (forbidden for all foods for infants and young children by WHA Res 63.23) in ways that can undermine confidence in breastfeeding and biodiverse, culturally appropriate local foods.
- promotes intensive agriculture and technologies that benefit food and agro-industry. (*Biofortification is a deceptive term covering all forms of agriculture, including GM, was rejected by the Codex Nutrition Committee.*)
- SUN's interpretation of inclusiveness enhances and legitimises corporate influence on nutrition policy setting and public affairs in line with the [World Economic Forum's Global Redesign Initiative](#)
- ignores the commerciogenic causes of malnutrition and the concerns of communities most affected by hunger and malnutrition
- attempts to appear a broad and inclusive people's 'movement' but is a public-private hybrid;
- undermines effective conflict of interest regulations..

Infant feeding in Emergencies

We are a founder member of the [Infant Feeding in Emergencies Group \(IFE\)](#) set up in 1999 to ensure good emergency preparedness responses. Emergencies are useful entry points for companies establishing markets. (1994 [Bosnian appeal](#).) In order to protect IFE's essential work we helped establish a COI policy for IFE members.



We are very grateful to [First Steps Nutrition](#) for taking over the Secretariat of the Baby Feeding Law Group,

the coalition of health professional and mother-support groups that we founded in 1997. The [First Steps website](#) has important and *independent* information.

- We work with many networks on trade. See our [presentation on US UK trade agreements at the All Party Parliamentary Group on infant feeding and inequalities](#), our [No deal](#) and other blogs.

- **Conflicts of Interest success:**

The UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) was a founder member of the BFLG and has played a key role in [strengthening EU legislation over the years](#). However its funding policy weakened under the Presidency of Prof Modi, who joined Nestlé's Advisory Board at the end of 2018. After her Presidency ended the RCPCH decided to end all [funding from formula companies](#) in February 2019. [The BMJ followed suit in April 2019](#). Thanks to all who helped campaign for this change.

- We hope the Brazilian Pediatric Society will distance itself from the [Nestlé J.Pedia e-learning programme](#) for young medical students.

Useful links:

[India: Webinar on Covid and Breastfeeding What you need to know about UPFs](#)
Bangladesh: Environmental issues and UPFs [UPFs impact on health](#) [The Politics of UPFs](#)
[How UPFs took over our shopping baskets](#)
The rise of UPFs - why they're really bad for health
[The brands turning Indonesian Instagram into ads](#)
[US Petition on-toddler-milks](#)
[IBFAN and EU NGOs leave EU Diet Platform](#)
[IBFAN statement of World Food Safety Day June 7, 2020](#)
[Interference in public health policy: the tobacco playbook](#)
[Compilation of audience actions to Tiggers](#)
[Mothers and babies separated in India \(BMJ\)](#)
[WBTI Evaluation - Tracking National actions in Europe and more](#)
[NGOs support WHO following US threats to withdraw funding](#)
[Bill Gates' investment on lab-produced breast milk](#)
First Steps [infant formula claims](#)...
[Selling second best: how infant formula marketing works - Hastings et al.](#) *There is an urgent need to shed more light on the harm being done by infant formula marketing; its extent is revelatory to all but a small group of public health experts. Even the marketing practitioners who had worked in the industry were taken aback by it and began to express overt regrets about their past actions.*



The 3rd joint report by WHO, UNICEF and IBFAN reveals that 136 (70%) of the 194 countries analysed, have in place some form of legal measure related to the Code with 44 improving their laws in the last two years. Where these laws are strong and well implemented, health workers and families are protected. Clearly more must be done – but difficult when [companies pressurise governments](#) to rely on voluntary promises or laws full of loopholes (see left). [Link to report and launch recording](#)



Wikipedia: [Astroturfing](#) is the practice of masking the sponsors of a message or organization (e.g., political, advertising, religious or public relations) to make it appear as though it originates from and is supported by grassroots participants. It is a practice intended to give the statements or organizations credibility by withholding information about the source's financial connection.'

Is 'Zero Separation' Astrofturfing?

[Zero Separation](#) is a campaign launched by the [European Foundation for the Care of Newborn infants](#) (EFCNI). The campaign calls for mothers and babies to be kept together – something we would all support (see Cover and page 2). However a closer look reveals that the US baby food company Abbott was its first funder in 2008, followed by the Nestlé Nutrition Institute, DSM, [Prolacta Bioscience@ Inc](#) and others who push fortifiers, bottles etc. The EFCNI Funding Policy is misleading and falsely reassuring: *"The EFCNI ...will not enter into initiatives which contravene [the Code]... EFCNI accepts financial donations from milk manufacturers. EFCNI will not provide direct endorsement of infant milk products e.g. logo on packaging or promotions which promote infant formula instead of breastfeeding."* Thanks to the [Global Breastfeeding Collective](#) for not promoting [Zero Separation](#) during [World Breastfeeding Week](#).

[Update 49](#) includes a selection of stories from Patti Rundall's [Policy Blog](#). Baby Milk Action does not accept corporate funding so our members' support is important for our independence and freedom to speak out.

To join or donate: www.babymilkaction.org/shop