

WHA 77 Side event on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition – with special focus on Digital marketing of baby feeding products

Warwick Hotel, 14, Rue de Lausanne, 1201 Geneva 6.30 -8 pm, 28^h May 2024, followed by a reception

Co-organisers: IBFAN, ILCA, Save the Children and UNICEF

Target audience: Member States, Civil Society, UN personnel

Background:

2024 is a reporting year for [Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition](#) (MIYCN) and an important opportunity to highlight the pivotal role that breastfeeding, a resilient practice that provides food, nurturing care and immune support plays in child survival, and in the achievement of the global nutrition targets.

The Assembly provides a ready-made platform and audience to hear the clear evidence of exploitative marketing tactics that were not envisaged when the [International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#) was adopted in 1981. This side event will focus on how to accelerate the implementation of WHO's [Guidance on regulatory measures aimed at restricting digital marketing of breastmilk substitutes](#)¹ (BMS) a key part of WHO's comprehensive package of materials that have been designed to help Member States tackle misleading marketing and achieve their national public health goals.

Digital marketing has become pervasive in all parts of our lives and is of particular concern in relation to its impact on children and its prevalence in promoting baby feeding products worldwide. Companies employ influencer partnerships, algorithmic targeting, and deceptive tactics to engage pregnant and lactating women, often leading them to believe that costly, risky, and environmentally unsustainable products are indispensable for their children's well-being and development. This raises significant ethical considerations regarding the empowerment and informed decision-making of parents.

During the 154th EB, many Member States, including 47 African states, congratulated WHO on the Guidance and requested help in implementing it. [Brazil](#) emphasised its view that *regulation on this issue is crucial to guarantee that public health interests prevail* and proposed to submit a Resolution to WHA with a co-sponsor.

This event offers an opportunity to share experiences and discuss solutions for Member States to meet the challenge of digital marketing of BMS. Moreover, the event will contribute to the increasing momentum for stronger regulation both at the international and at the national level to the benefit of public health interests.

Objectives:

1. **Raise awareness** about the prevalence of exploitive digital marketing tactics used to promote baby feeding products.
2. **Promote the implementation** of WHO's Guidance, identifying areas where further support is needed for effective implementation.
3. **Share best practices, resources, and experiences** to strengthen collaboration between Member States and Civil Society.
4. **Advocate for concrete action** at the global level, potentially through the adoption of a WHA Resolution, and the strengthening of national regulations to prevent disinformation at source and safeguard maternal and child health.

The side event will include presentations and panel discussions on WHO's Guidance on digital marketing, the 2024 State of the Code Report and new evidence of digital marketing of baby feeding products.

¹ The Guidance was published in November 2023, and followed WHO's usual strict procedures and a comprehensive review of evidence that was provided to the 75th WHA in 2022. 65 Member States and Civil Society Organisations responded to an [open public consultation](#) that took place in September 2023.