



Director General, Madame Audrey Azoulay
UNESCO
7 place Fontenoy
75007 Paris, France.

12th September 2025

IBFAN concerns regarding UNESCO's collaboration with Nestlé.

Dear Madame Director-General,

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) to express our concern about a forthcoming event related to the "*UNESCO x Nestlé Global Youth Grant Scheme 'Youth Impact - Because you matter: For environmental Sustainability and Climate action.'*"ⁱ

IBFAN values UNESCO's role in promoting and setting global norms and standards in education, science, culture and peace and safeguarding access to free quality education for all. We believe that education that is free from undue political and commercial influence should also be considered a fundamental human right and that this is essential if tomorrow's health professionals and leaders are to make wise decisions about our common future.ⁱⁱ

As a 46-year old global network that has been at the forefront of the monitoring and criticism of Nestlé's deceptive marketing of baby foods, its poor quality, safety, ethical and environmental standards and its disproportionate influence over food systems and legislation, we respectfully urge you to reconsider this collaboration – from which Nestlé has everything to gain while UNESCO and our children have everything to lose.

Education materials are a more complex problem than straightforward product advertising because they blur the boundaries between advertising, marketing and independent information. All corporations understand their effectiveness, especially when projects are linked to prestigious institutions. The 'halo' effect gains the trust of children, teachers and parents and diverts attention from a company's anti-social actions. Nestlé has been running its *Healthy Kids* programs in schools since the early 1990s and has admitted that its key purpose is to '*improve the company's reputation*' and '*legitimately communicate its socially responsible intentions to adults.*'

Below are a few examples of why UNESCO's collaboration with Nestlé is misleading:

1. **Nestlé's refusal to abide by the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes*,** adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981 and strengthened by 21 subsequent WHA Resolutions, remains a serious threat to infant and young child health and survival.

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IBFAN Global Advocacy

 **IBFAN Global Council** - c/o Baby Milk Action
34 Blinco Grove, Cambridge, CB1 7TS, UK
 ibfan@ibfan.org
 www.ibfan.org
 [@ibfanglobal](https://twitter.com/ibfanglobal)   

Its egregious marketing undermines breastfeeding, a resilient practice that provides food, care, immune support and protection including during the worst of emergency conditions. Nestlé also undermines confidence in and use of bio-diverse family foods by flooding markets with poor quality ultra-processed snacks, drinks and foods.ⁱⁱⁱ

2. **Nestlé has poor quality, safety, ethical and environmental standards** across much of its 2000 brand portfolio, 50-70% of which are deemed to be unhealthy. Nestlé shareholders refused a call to change the marketing strategy at its 2024 Annual Assembly.^{iv}
3. **Nestlé's Labour standards** include ongoing charges of child slavery.^v
4. **Nestlé exacerbates the causes of the climate crisis.** Its production, transport, plastic packaging and intensive marketing of its food, commercial formulas and bottle-feeding products involves intensive agriculture, risky technologies, mono-cropping, deforestation and land-and-sea-grabbing. Women and children are especially impacted by climate change, environmental pollution and depleted water levels. Infant feeding products and plastic packaging are inherently risky and contain Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals that impact on babies' immune, reproductive and endocrine systems.
5. **Nestlé's water business.** The company has already been fined 2 million Euros for illegal treatment of its bottled mineral water brands, in a 3 billion Euros consumer fraud that lasted over 15 years. Nestlé paid this fine to avoid legal action.^{vi} Nestlé is currently facing criminal proceedings in France this November, with charges of illegal waste disposal and contamination linked to pollution by plastic bottles. We are concerned that the event in Paris on September 18th could be used to influence the criminal proceedings in this court hearing.^{vii}
6. **Digital marketing.** Resolution HRC/RES/59/9 *on the right to education*, passed in July at the UN Human Rights Council, noted the predominance of privately-funded education and warned about the *"potential misuse and unintended negative effects of digital technologies that include artificial intelligence, such as disinformation..."*^{viii} Digital marketing and social media are now the dominant form of marketing used by Nestlé and the baby food industry. Mothers are bombarded with misleading commercial messages that bypass and replace health authority advice. IBFAN is working to ensure that WHA78.18 is adopted as law in all countries.^{ix}

In this time of climate crisis, when poverty rates, economic disparity, conflicts and hunger are rising, it is more important than ever that the UN and all norm-setting institutions adopt and follow due diligence procedures and promote legal frameworks that prevent interference and undue influence from health harming industries. In this context IBFAN believes that a company with such an extensive dossier of human health and climate damage should not be involved in the education of young people, especially on the issue of sustainability and climate resilience.

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INTERNATIONAL BABY FOOD ACTION NETWORK (IBFAN)
Red Internacional de Grupos pro Alimentación Infantil
Réseau International des Groupes d'Action pour l'Alimentation Infantile
1998 RECIPIENT OF THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AWARD

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this letter. We would be more than happy to meet you to these concerns

Yours sincerely,

Tshimi Lynn Moeng, Chair of **IBFAN's Global Council**
Dr Marina Rea, IBFAN Latin America and the Caribbean,
Elisabeth Sterken, IBFAN North America,
Dr Magdalena Whoolery, IBFAN South East Asia
Patti Rundall, IBFAN Global Advocacy

Alison Linnecar, IBFAN Global Working Group Environment, Climate and Health
Dr Adriano Cattaneo, IBFAN Working Group on Research

ⁱ <https://unesco.nestleyouthentrepreneurship.com>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nestle.com/media/news/nestle-unesco-global-initiative>

ⁱⁱⁱ Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Kishore Singh, expressed concern "...at the rapid increase in the number of private education providers and the resulting commercialization of education." *Protecting the right to education against commercialization** June 2015

^{iv} United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Feeding Profit. How food environments are failing children*. Child Nutrition Report 2025, Report Brief, UNICEF, New York, September 2025. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/feeding-profit>

^v [https://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/media/action-on-salt/WASSHShareAction-Summary-Report-\(1\).pdf](https://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/media/action-on-salt/WASSHShareAction-Summary-Report-(1).pdf)

^{vi} *KitKat owner Nestlé fights off push to cut back on unhealthy products* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/apr/18/nestle-vote-sugar-salt-fats> "The coalition claimed Nestlé gets 75% of its global sales from products containing high levels of salt, sugar and fat..."

^{vii} <https://www.fooddive.com/news/nestle-investors-lesser-dependence-on-unhealthy-foods/710290/> Food Dive 14 Mar 2024

^{viii} <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57522186>, Mars, Nestlé and Hershey to face child slavery lawsuit in US. *Guardian* Fri 12 Feb 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/feb/12/mars-nestle-and-hershey-to-face-landmark-child-slavery-lawsuit-in-us>

^{ix} <https://www.corpwatch.org/sites/default/files/Tangled%20Up%20In%20Blue.pdf>

^x <https://www.foodbev.com/news/nestle-c3a9-watergate-french-mineral-water-brands-face-trials-over-illegal-treatments-and-microplastic>

^{xi} UN Human Rights Council. [Resolution A/HRC/RES/59/9 on the right to education](#) 7 July 2025, acknowledges that 'privately funded supply [of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)] is predominant in most countries at the global level ...the need to invest in public, sufficient, free, inclusive and equitable quality early childhood care and education ...the importance of safe, nutritious and sufficient school feeding programmes ... "academic freedom, at all levels of education ... is at the heart of scientific progress and contributes to building knowledge as a public and common good"... "the potential misuse and unintended negative effects of digital technologies that include artificial intelligence, such as disinformation, arbitrary or unlawful surveillance, censorship, automated decision-making, inhibition of critical thinking... exploitation and abuse, and algorithm bias..."

^{xii} [Resolution WHA78.18](#) on the [Regulation of Digital Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes](#) 27 May 2025

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