

ALERT to Asia-Pacific

What in the world is APIYCNA? And why is it a danger to breastfeeding?

Thanks to some good "intelligence" gathering, we now know there is a new entity on the block: the **Asia Pacific Infant and Young Child Nutrition Association (APIYCNA)**, located in Singapore, where PR firm Edelman takes care of its agenda. Although it sounds like an innocent NGO, APIYCNA is a Business NGO, a BINGO we call it; its members are: **Pfizer, Nestlé, Danone, Fonterra, Friesland, Abbott and Mead Johnson.**

These are practically all the big formula shots operating on the Asia-Pacific market. Pfizer owns Wyeth (S-26, SMA) and Danone owns about a dozen sub-companies, including Dumex, Nutricia, Milupa and Sari Husada. Nestlé (Bear Brand, Lactogen, etc.) owns Gerber. They are all competitors, yes, so why are they getting together? No doubt for strategic reasons. Sales in Asia are projected to grow by 39% by 2015...

APIYCNA is as unpronounceable as it is insidious. APIYCNA confidently proclaims that *"the Association partners with a number of stakeholders in the region including government, NGOs and healthcare professionals to improve the nutritional wellbeing of infants and young children in the region."*

APIYCNA is likely to have been created by all these individual companies to protect their profits which is incompatible with our quest to promote, protect and support breastfeeding. We fear that this BINGO is aiming to roll back any meaningful form of marketing control in the region. Instead of suffering probable backlash by approaching governments as manufacturers, companies can now take cover under the benign Association name. They can collect information, pinpoint opinion leaders and infiltrate government circles. The Association can single-handedly re-interpret the Code as it suits its members and dismantle amendments to laws based on the Code and WHA resolutions.

A brief background to all of this starts with an Open letter to Nestlé, in May 2011, signed by 18 international NGOs in Laos, saying: *No, we won't be applying for your prize money, Nestlé. Your marketing of formula milk still jeopardizes the health of infants and children in Laos.* That letter was picked up by hundreds of newspapers around the world – NGOs saying NO to half a million \$. The publicity sent Nestlé scurrying to do damage control by designating its auditing firm **Bureau Véritas** to meet the NGOs and government officials in Lao PDR. Fortunately, Véritas was not granted relevant permissions. Next was the Nestlé company rep from Bangkok, politely asking for interviews; he too was given the cold shoulder. So, now here comes Bingo.

Another background element is that the Lao government realized that its weakened Agreement, based on the Code, needed amending and made enforceable. Other countries in the region (Vietnam, China) are also actively reviewing their laws and Thailand is considering drafting a new one. No wonder the companies got worried and are using APIYCNA. Through the PR company, Edelman, some of you will be approached to discuss IYCF. This company specialises in "forming relationships"; they will present very smoothly. Your background will have been checked and if you are considered to be significantly influential, they will come knocking, asking for an interview by phone.

The baby food companies are fast and clever, so please, do not be taken in by this newly created front, inform government officials, health professionals, decision makers.

Watch out for APIYCNA and Edelman and know where they are coming from. Please do inform us if you are contacted so others in the region can also be fore-warned.