



*Geneva Infant Feeding Association
International Baby Food Action Network*



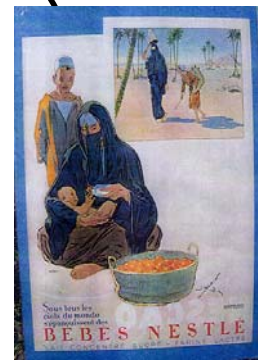
Celebrating 25 years of the International Code Protecting Babies and Young Children



Former members of the Third World Action Group, left to right, 1st row: Bruno Gurtner, Viktor Jenni, Konrad Rothenbühler, John Schmocker, Esther Enderli-Vögeli. Back row from 4th person: Walter Wyss, Brigitte Loderer, Andreas Enderli, Rudolf Strahm, - and IBFAN staff.

On 30 May 2006, IBFAN-GIFA organised a ceremony to commemorate two important events in the field of infant and young child feeding. First, the adoption of the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes* by governments of the World Health Assembly, in May 1981, 25 years ago. Second, the verdict in the case between the multinational food company Nestlé and the Swiss Third World Action Group, in June 1976, 30 years ago.

THE NESTLE TRIAL STARTED THE BALL ROLLING...



In the early 1970s, the Swiss Third World Action Group (Arbeitsgruppe Dritte Welt) translated the report "The baby killer" into German using the title "Nestlé tötet Babys" (Nestlé kills babies). It documented how aggressive marketing strategies were being used by baby food companies, and especially Nestlé, to promote breastmilk substitutes to parents, caregivers and health care professionals. Nestlé filed criminal charges of libel and defamation against 13 members of the Third World Action Group.

The two year trial turned public opinion against Nestlé. Finally the company had to drop most of the charges. The court fined the 13 accused a symbolic 300 Swiss francs each because Nestlé could not be held responsible for the infant deaths in terms of criminal law. But Nestlé was strongly advised to change its advertising strategies.



Infant's grave in Zambia, 1969

In his verdict the judge called on Nestlé to "fundamentally rethink its advertising policies" and said: "if the complainant in future wants to be spared the accusation of immoral and unethical conduct, he will have to change his advertising practices."

(Dr. jur. Jürg Sollberger, 1976)



"According to the World Health Organisation, 1.5 million babies still die every year because they are not breastfed." The sheer size of this number shows that the International Code is critical to the protection of a baby's right to the highest attainable standard of health, and to a mother's right to breastfeed without the aggressive pressure of the baby food industry.

Breastfeeding is considered by WHO, UNICEF and the international health community, to be **the** norm for optimal infant and young child feeding for the majority of children worldwide. The uniqueness of breastmilk, and the act of breastfeeding itself cannot be reproduced. There are well-documented negative health effects for both children and mothers, when babies are not breastfed or not given breastmilk. There are also negative economic and environmental consequences of bottle feeding, suffered by both families and societies.

25 YEARS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CODE

The May 2006 celebration, which was attended by 80 guests, highlighted the role of UN agencies such as UNICEF, WHO and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, who have each in their own way guarded the International Code over the years. It also stressed the role of NGOs such as IBFAN and GIFA, without whom the Code would probably have been buried long ago.



"Our civil society partners have worked tirelessly over many years to keep the Code high on the public health agenda and provided concrete assistance to many countries to give effect to the Code." Joy Phumaphi, Assistant Director General, WHO

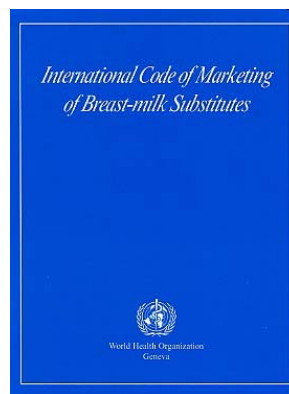
"Code provisions regulating the distribution of breast-milk substitutes in emergency relief operations are vital, given the greatly increased risk of infection among non-breastfed infants." Ann Veneman, Executive Director, UNICEF



"IBFAN's constant lobbying also helps to keep the Code alive and visible at the UN level. Little did we suspect in 1981 how hard it would be to maintain the momentum." Annelies Allain, Director ICDC-IBFAN



"Breastfeeding has a medium and long term preventive effect against infections, obesity, allergies and Type 1 diabetes in children, as well as the risk of postnatal haemorrhage and breast cancer in mothers." Liliane Maury-Pasquier, Midwife and National Councillor



"We also work with partners such as IBFAN whose watchdog activities to ensure adherence to the International Code and untiring efforts in the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding have been an important contribution to infants' and young people's health and survival." Philip O' Brien, Regional Director, UNICEF



"Our aim was to end the tragedy of children's death by informing the Swiss population." Rudolf Strahm and Konrad Rothenbühler, former activists of Third World Action Group



"The Code is but an instrument. Its value depends on how we use it and on the commitment of all parties to promote and protect breastfeeding and sound young child nutrition." Immita Cornaz, Swiss delegate to WHA, 1979-1986

"The Code is an international recommendation that protects breastfeeding against non-ethical marketing practices of industrial breastmilk substitutes. States that adopted it are obliged to implement it." Awa N'Deye Ouedraogo, Expert and Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child



"...the Geneva Infant Feeding Association has worked tirelessly to ensure that the Committee (on the Rights of the Child) has up-to-date information on the state of infant and young child feeding..." David Clark, Legal Advisor, UNICEF

IBFAN-GIFA HELPS TO KEEP THE CODE ALIVE AND KICKING

The International Code and subsequent resolutions form a unique international instrument, vital for the protection of children's lives and health – their survival, growth and healthy development. However it still needs to be implemented in the form of strong national legislation in most countries of the world. And company practices must still be monitored by governments and public interest NGOs because Code violations have not stopped in all these years.

Since 1979, IBFAN-GIFA has maintained its strong commitment to defending government policies that protect breastfeeding, and to fighting detrimental marketing practices – also in Switzerland.

IBFAN-GIFA's Goals

- To ensure that countries implement the provisions of the International Code and its resolutions in national laws.
- To monitor the baby food industry's marketing practices and their conformity with the provisions of the International Code and its resolutions.
- To publish and distribute scientific information on the value and importance of breastfeeding.
- To collaborate with other organisations in campaigning for breastfeeding promotion and denouncing harmful practices in the marketing of breastmilk substitutes.
- To serve as a meeting place and documentation centre for those persons or organisations wishing to promote the health and wellbeing of mother and child.

IBFAN-GIFA's Principles

- The right of infants everywhere to have the highest level of health.
- The right of families, and in particular women and children, to have enough nutritious food.
- The right of women to breastfeed and to make informed choices about infant feeding.
- The right of women to full support for successful breastfeeding and for sound infant feeding practices.
- The right of all people to health services which meet basic needs.
- The right of health workers and consumers to health care systems which are free of commercial pressures.
- The right of people to organise in international solidarity to secure changes which protect and promote basic health.

IBFAN-GIFA's Areas of work

- International Code implementation and monitoring marketing practices.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Standards set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- Maternity protection at work.
- Contaminants in baby foods.
- Infant Feeding in Emergencies.
- HIV/AIDS and breastfeeding.
- Transparency, sponsorship and conflict of interest in professional and international organisations.



GIFA Geneva Infant Feeding Association
Association Genevoise Pour l'Alimentation Infantile
Member of
International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)
Réseau International des Groupes d'Action pour l'Alimentation infantile

