From ICDC’s desk in Penang...

After spending 2013 researching companies, analysing our database and collating information, ICDC is proud and relieved to announce the completion of our latest global monitoring report, “Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2014” (BTR)

Yes, we actually reached the finishing line. Phew!

2013 has been an exceptionally busy year. The second half of 2013 sent ICDC for Code advocacy and training to Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Laos and Greece. To finish the BTR by our deadline of December 2013, the office had to turn away a few jobs. We apologise to the groups and countries that requested our service in the last quarter and were asked to wait. The BTR had to be given priority as groups and individuals who contributed to our database deserved to have their monitoring efforts recorded. One way or another, Code violators must be named and held to account.

BTR 2014 is the result of three years of collective voluntary effort by individuals and IBFAN groups from all continents. After sieving out materials which failed our legal analysis and the more common violations, we counted 803 entries from 81 countries covering 27 companies.

Regretfully, as this is such a massive report we cannot afford to print. We are putting every chapter of the electronic reporting for sale. We hope our friends and supporters will help publicise the report to generate sales. If you believe in naming and shaming these companies and to keep monitoring alive, please help us to promote this report.

Since the entire report is 237 pages, we will be working on a smaller edition for advocacy purposes. We plan to launch it at this year’s World Health Assembly and will send the summary version to all contributors and IBFAN groups. If you belong to either group and want to read the whopping full report, you can write to us at our new official email address: code@ibfan-icdc.org

To whet your appetite, the companies in BTR 2014 are:

**Baby Foods**: Abbott • Arla • Aspen • Danone • Fonterra • Friesland • Hero • Heinz • Hipp • Humana • Lactalis (Celia) • Liptis • Mead Johnson • Nestlé • Novalac • Wyeth

**Feeding bottles and teats**: Avent • Bare • Breastflow • Chicco • Dr Brown’s • Doctor-baby • Japlo • Mam • Medela • Nuk • Pigeon • Tommee Tippee

We also are happy to announce our very own IBFAN-ICDC website after years of squatting on the main IBFAN website. We can still be located there if you dig deep enough but do pay a visit to www.ibfan-icdc.org and give us your feedback.

In the meantime, we give you the BTR highlights. Enjoy but be prepared to get upset, dismayed, outraged or incensed!

The Publication Team, IBFAN-ICDC.
Conventional modes of promotion continue and a recent study confirms that the decision to formula feed is strongly associated with exposure to advertising.

Product advertisements in newspapers and parenting magazines prevail. Increasingly, these ads ride on the goodness of breastmilk. Companies are brazenly venturing into public places like shopping malls, exhibition halls to peddle their products. One company, Friesland, unveiled its new product packaging in metro stations and on an open top tram car. The same products in old packaging are then given away as samples. It also organised competitions for parents who purchase their products.

Feeding bottle and teat companies are no better at Code compliance as shown by the shop banners on the right.

Social media – Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Google+ - provide a new avenue for companies to break the rules. These mobile and web-based technologies offer companies a plethora of opportunities to interact directly with pregnant women and mothers. Mobile software “apps” to be downloaded onto smart phones, tablets, laptops and PCs are used as direct promotional tools.

Exposure by China’s official TV station caused quite a stir when investigations revealed corrupt practices that systematically prevent babies from being breastfed.

Danone’s Code violations in health care facilities are not confined to China. In other parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, the company has been found to be unabashedly promoting its products as well.

Danone getting caught in China is just the tip of the iceberg but it serves as a wake-up call to all companies to rein in their misbehaviour everywhere they do business.

Practices such as free supplies, gifts and incentives to health workers finally received the bad publicity they deserve on Chinese TV September 2013. In one Chinese city alone, bribes were paid to 116 doctors and nurses across 85 medical institutions. The company in question, Danone - Dumex, had to accept full responsibility for the scandal. Danone blamed staff mismanagement and heads rolled but it is obvious that its marketing policy is not Code compliant.

(ii) Danone markets in hospitals in Cameroon under the guise of providing product information to mothers. In Ethiopia (right insert), Danone provides nurses uniforms which bear the company name. Alert nurses took to covering the Danone logo with a piece of cloth pinned to their uniforms (as modelled here by ICDC staff).

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Labels have undergone changes across the board, sometimes to get around legal restrictions; other times to give a tired image a makeover. What persist are misleading and unsubstantiated claims.

Rosco, the Similac mascot, is being replaced by the Early Shield promotional device. Both symbols are idealising.

Playing on “high”, attributes Chinese parents treasure, words such as “health”, “intelligence” and “learning” are woven into the Chinese brand names of infant formula, follow-on formula and growing-up formula.

This newly launched US product - Enfamil Newborn for infants 0-3 months - has the endorsement, “#1 Pediatrician recommended brand” and the claim, “patterned after breastmilk.”

In the UK, SMA pushes for mixed feeding with this statement - “When baby is not breastfed” or “to combination feed with breast milk”

Forget the claims, even the brand name Hi-Q is idealising formula found in Laos.

Companies aggressively promote mixed feeding and draw similarities between their products and breastmilk in their information and educational materials.

The Abbott website states that Similac infant formulas are designed to mimic the biological performance of breastfed infants “There’s a Similac formula that’s right for all babies.”

This Nestlé Gerber Chart in the US offers advice on how to achieve “supplementing goals in 1 to 14 days”. Mums will be trapped into thinking that they will be able to maintain milk supply by supplementing when the opposite is true.

Information on complementary feeding steers parents towards early supplementation. Parents are encouraged to look for developmental milestones identified as “stages” which normally appear before a child reaches 6 months. Very often, companies like Nestlé send out the message that babies are ready for complementary feeding around 4 months.

A banner at a midwifery fair in Cameroon uses the image of newborn feet held by adult hands to promote an entire range of Cerelac products. The image contradicts global public health recommendations on infant and young child feeding.
The World Health Assembly in resolution 63.23 [2010] specifically called on governments to end inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children and to ensure that nutrition and health claims are not permitted. No form of promotion involving foods for infants and young children can be considered “appropriate”. However, to illustrate the resolution, the “Inappropriate promotion” section in BTR focuses on growing-up milks (GUMs), the fastest growing segment of baby foods. It shows how GUMs promotion is anchored by prohibited claims. As the global recommendation for breastfeeding is to continue up to two years or beyond, GUMs, which do not bring additional value to a balanced diet for young children, come under the scope of the Code. Hence, promotion of GUMs are Code violations.

Companies forge links with health professionals by providing them with contributions for their professional development. Their attendance at professional conferences and the perks that come with such events are amazingly easy to find now that such information can be easily tracked on Facebook and other electronic communication channels.

Current market liberalisation policies have ushered in an era of new relationships between the state and markets. The private sector is increasingly being invited to participate in health programmes. When companies support health authorities in their programmes, it conveys an impression of the company as being “health giving” even if their products may cause net harm to children’s health. Accepting sponsorship helps burnish the image of companies whose products contribute to cause of problems.

In Malaysia as elsewhere, the “science” behind bright kids is choked with claims and mostly on the mind. A play on the psychology of parents with purchasing power who want ‘the best’ for their kids.

In Thailand and Malaysia, Mead Johnson introduced a new campaign called Enfa Brain Expo Mind Maps. Exhibitions on the human brain and workshops for children on Mind Mapping show how to unlock the 4 traits of a genius – BETTER problem solving, SHARPER visual acuity, HIGHER intellectual development and FASTER language skills. All of that of course with the help from Enfagrow.

Heinz promotes Nurture Gold as “The only toddler milk drink in Australia with both prebiotics and probiotics to support healthy digestion.” Happy digestion means a happy baby.

Glamour sells. In Myanmar, an ad uses two famous local celebrities and their first child to promote a range of Dumex growing-up milks.

In Ethiopia, a Wyeth leaflet proclaims, “Her teacher says she’s always asking questions in class.” It equates intelligence with S-26 Progress Gold 3. “Feed her imagination” the leaflet tells mums, “while we nurture her mind”. The leaflet claims that S-26 Progress Gold 3 contains Biofactors System, a unique combination of nutrients to support the child’s growth at every stage of life. To cap it all, the Wyeth promotional slogan, “Feed their potential” appears on the leaflet.

Contrary to global public health recommendations, the emphasis on this Zimbabwean MoH/Nestlé leaflet is on breastfeeding for the first 6 months only. There is no mention about the importance of continued and sustained breastfeeding.

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