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## Dear Colleague,

*Here we are with IBFAN's first News Bulletin for 2011. We hope that it will provide interesting reading. But remember that it can only be as interesting as you make it — so please keep sending us your news and updates!*

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY—100 YEARS STILL STRONG

**Theme: *Equal access to education, training and technology: pathways to decent work for women.***

IBFAN Africa joined the rest of the world in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the International Women's Day (IWD). IWD is a global day celebrating the social, economic and political achievements of women from all walks of life. The world celebrated what women have accomplished in spite of sexism and further highlighted that continual gender inequalities still needed to be addressed even in 2011, the centenary year for IWD. The global theme for 2011 is: ***equal access to education, training and technology: pathways to decent work for women***

Although women in the world, and especially in Africa, still face major challenges with a huge need in the areas of education, health and economic empowerment, there is much encouraging evidence of progress. Multiple initiatives are launched every day by African women as they participate in the development of their countries. Women are now found in all spheres of life, as social entrepreneurs, micro financiers, education and health specialists among others. They understand that they have to play a role in lifting themselves up in society and breaking the circle of poverty for themselves, their families and communities.

IBFAN Africa salutes this phenomenal achievement by women in their productive role as contributors to the economies of their countries however; the International Women's Day also serves to remind us that women play another important role – that of reproduction for their societies. Where these two roles intersect, we call on governments to strengthen or put in place policies and programmes that make it conducive for women to exercise their rights in these two areas. In order to undertake their reproductive roles adequately, women need support to enable them to optimally nourish their infants through breastfeeding. This entails the provision of adequate maternity leave, and subsequent breastfeeding breaks on return to work. The International Labour Organisation in the Maternity Protection Convention 183 of 2000 stipulated a minimum period of 14 weeks paid leave and 2 half hour breastfeeding breaks when the woman returns to work. Many women still find themselves inadequately provided for in many countries.

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YEARS



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IBFAN Africa reaffirms its commitment to promote gender equality and women empowerment. We also urge all relevant parties including national governments and civil society to ensure that the rights of women are protected in both their productive and reproductive roles.

## IBFAN FUNDING POLICY & SEVEN PRINCIPLES

The IBFAN Coordinating Council (IBCOCO), the highest making policy making body of the Global Network held its bi-annual meeting in October 2010, in Penang, Malaysia. In view of the serious funding situation affecting most organisations including the UN which is earnestly promoting Public - Private Partnerships (PPPs) with consortiums such as GAIN, IBCOCO came up with a clear position regarding its funding policy in this respect and it further took the opportunity to revise the seven IBFAN Principles.

### **IBFAN FUNDING POLICY:**

In line with its 7 Principles, IBFAN does not seek or accept funds, donations, gifts or sponsorship from manufacturers or distributors (or their trusts or foundations) of infant and young child feeding and related products.

### **Considerations supporting our funding policy:**

#### **1. IBFAN's independence:**

**Rationale:** Relations with commercial actors and the private sector may create conflicts of interest, lead to biased judgment and decisions, and damage IBFAN's ability to:

1. Advocate for women's right to impartial information on infant and young child feeding;
2. Advocate for realization of the child's right to the highest attainable standard of health; and
3. Hold corporations accountable for their actions and demand compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.

#### **2. IBFAN's integrity and reputation:**

**Rationale:** Funding from any for-profit entities can lead to loss of reputation and raise questions about IBFAN's integrity.

#### **3. Solidarity with other social movement partners:**

**Rationale:** IBFAN's work on breastfeeding and young child feeding is just one element in the global action to ensure an environment in which children can survive and reach the highest attainable standard of health.

**Advisory note:** In addition, IBFAN groups are encouraged not to accept funding from any other for-profit companies, especially food and drinks, alcohol, tobacco, arms, pharmaceutical and pesticide companies, and those that employ child labor or use violence against people. If any entity is considered for funding, IBFAN groups are expected to thoroughly check for bad practices and social implications of its actions. IBFAN groups should consult with their Regional Coordinating Offices on such matters.

*IBFAN values its independence and groups are required to give a written undertaking not to seek or accept funds, donations or sponsorship from the infant feeding and related products industry. IBFAN groups should aim to include a clause to this effect in their constitution or statutes. Many IBFAN groups refuse any kind of commercial support as links between companies are not always obvious. In addition, our NGO partners working on other campaigns may have difficulties with a particular company and accepting funding from it may undermine their work. We cannot be too vigilant in this matter.*

**IBFAN's Policy regarding possible funding, gifts or sponsorship from the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN):** none acceptable.

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**Seven Revised IBFAN Principles:**

1. Infants everywhere to have the right to the highest attainable standard of health.
2. Families, and in particular women and children, to have the right to access adequate and nutritious food and water.
3. Women have the right to breastfeed and to make informed decisions about infant and young child feeding.
4. Women have the right to full support to breastfeed for two years or more and to exclusively breastfeed for the first six months.
5. All people have the right to access quality health care services and information free of commercial influence.
6. Health workers and consumers have the right to be protected from commercial influence which may distort their judgment and decisions.
7. People have the right to advocate for change which protects, promotes and supports basic health, in international solidarity.

*Adopted By IBCOCO: October 2010*

**Genetically modified cows produce 'human' milk**

Scientists from China claim to have successfully introduced human genes into cows to produce milk that has the same nutrients as breastmilk. Professor Ning Li, the scientist who led the research insisted that the genetically modified milk would be safe to drink. Writing in the scientific peer-reviewed journal *Public Library of Science One*, the researchers claim that they were able to create cows that produced milk containing a human protein called lysozyme. Lysozyme is an antimicrobial protein naturally found in large quantities in human breast milk. It helps to protect infants from bacterial infections during their early days of life. They created cows that produce another protein from human milk called lactoferrin, which helps to boost the numbers of immune cells in babies. A third human milk protein called alpha-lactalbumin was also produced by the cows. The scientists also revealed at an exhibition at the China Agricultural University that they have boosted milk fat content by around 20 per cent and have also changed the levels of milk solids, making it closer to the composition of human milk as well as having the same immune-boosting properties.

However there have been concerns by various organisations such as the Royal Society for protection of animals. A spokesperson from this organization said they were extremely concerned about how the GM cows have been produced. Offspring's of cloned animals often suffer health welfare problems, hence this was cause for concern.

The animal society is not the only organization that is concerned, IBFAN network and its partners were equally appalled by the recent reports. How possible is it to replace God given human nature? Human nature can never be replaced emphasized IBFAN Africa Regional Coordinator. She felt that the children are put in danger unnecessarily, why make “alternative” breastmilk when the mother is there to breastfeed her infant. Does this so called milk have the first milk, colostrum, that we all know is important since it is the first immunization of the child, she asked not expecting an answer from anyone. Our children should be protected from this, they should not be used in experiments that could harm them. Breastmilk contains over a hundred more components which these cows will not be able to clone. Professor Ning Li claims the milk tastes stronger than the normal milk—— isn't that a problem on its own? As a concerned organization we hope that this milk does not pour into the consumers cup as they wish in the next 10 years. This has to be stopped as soon as possible because what they are doing is not right to the animals or our children.

## MEPs authorise omega—3 infant health eye claim

Members of the European Parliament in March moved to block a baby food company from using a health claim on labels of follow-on formula. The European Parliament's committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI) voted to stop the claim that DHA, a long-chain fatty acid found in breastmilk, when added to follow-on formulas and baby foods improves babies' vision. A Resolution was forwarded to the full Plenary in Strasbourg and unfortunately Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) vote had a narrow lead which was not sufficient to prohibit a European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and European Commission (EC)-approved DHA omega-3 eye health claim on breast milk substitute products.

With 328 votes in favour, 323 against and 26 abstentions, the motion by Glenis Willmott (S&D, UK) and others to ban the claim failed to gain the necessary level of support after weeks of intense lobbying by breastfeeding advocates such as Baby Milk Action to have the claim de-authorized due to safety and efficacy concerns. The vote means Mead Johnson's claim: "*DHA intake contributes to the normal visual development of infants up to 12 months of age*" can now enter the EU legislature and be used on breast milk substitute products like follow-on formulas aimed at infants between the ages of 6-12 months. Infant formulas aimed at 0-6 month-olds will not be able to carry the claims and must continue to contain statements about the superiority of breast feeding.

Patti Rundall OBE, policy director of Baby Milk Action, said: "Authorisation of this claim hands the industry the marketing tool they desired - and brings the important process relating to health claims into disrepute. Although we lost today - the majority vote should have sent a really important signal to the Commission that the rules relating to infant foods are simply not good enough. If there really was evidence to support this claim, it should have triggered a review of the composition requirements to remove inferior formulas from the market."

IBFAN Africa Regional Coordinator reiterated on Ms. Rundall disappointment. "We are greatly disappointed by the vote more especially because last year (2010) WHA 63.23 resolution clearly stated that inappropriate promotion of infant and young children food must come to an end except where specifically provided for, relevant to Code Alimentarius standards or national legislation. This just undermines the efforts that have been made by the WHA to protect our children", she said.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

7th April  
22nd April  
1st May  
9th May  
21st May

World Health Day  
World Earth Day  
International Labour Day  
Mothers Day  
30th Anniversary of the Code



### IBFAN Africa News

The Jan— June Newsletter is currently being compiled. Please help us make it a success by submitting your articles and photos as soon as possible. We welcome articles on any topic — from the community health worker who is dedicated to the promotion of breastfeeding in the community to the university professor who is conducting research on MTCT, to a rural hospital striving to be Baby Friendly.