

Global Breastfeeding Collective 40th Anniversary of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes event

Social Media Briefing Kit

Background and context

On 21 May 2021, the World celebrates the 40th Anniversary of the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (otherwise known as the Code) by the 34th World Health Assembly on 21 May 1981. The Code aims to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants by the protection and promotion of breast-feeding, and by ensuring the proper use of breast-milk substitutes by restricting promotions that target the general public, mothers and health workers.

Event

In collaboration with UNICEF, the WHO, and partners, the Global Breastfeeding Collective will host [a virtual meeting via Zoom to celebrate this milestone](#). This event aims to engage and equip delegates to strengthen country-level implementation of the Code, including its subsequent resolutions. As one in a series of major global events in the Year of Action on Nutrition, midway through the United Nations (UN) Decade of Action on Nutrition, the Code at 40 Celebration will focus on protecting babies' health by calling on governments to make specific, measurable, time-bound (SMART) policy commitments to implement and enforce the Code, including subsequent resolutions. This event marks the beginning of a year of outputs and events focusing on strengthening implementation of the Code undertaken by the Global Breastfeeding Collective partners and its partner organisations.

TALKING POINTS

- Aggressive and predatory marketing of breastmilk substitutes, including formula milks, creates a major barrier to breastfeeding in high as well as low and middle income countries.
- As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the World Health Assembly's adoption of the International CODE of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (CODE), we mark an important milestone in our global efforts to protect infants from predatory marketing that places profits before health.
- Implementing the CODE protects all infants – breastfed, not-breastfed, and mixed fed – by prohibiting marketing practices that inflate the price of 'premium' formula milks that are no better than cheaper formula milk products.
- Since 1981, the World Health Assembly has revisited and updated the Code through subsequent resolutions that clarify the provisions of the Code to address emerging marketing techniques and novel products- companies use.
- 136 countries have enacted legal measures that give effect to Code.
BUT
- 80% of these missing key provisions of the Code, leaving important loopholes for industry to exploit. And enforcement of the Code laws is often inadequate. Impressive though this is, we must do more

- The baby food industry continues to use many of the promotional tactics they did in the 1970s but have become even more sophisticated in pushing breastmilk substitutes through online social clubs, targeted ads, and hosting contests to be a formula “influencer”.
- Protecting society’s most vulnerable citizens from exploitation by commercial interests requires the baby food industry to stop putting profits before public health. Governments must act **and enforce** effective national laws and regulations to make this happen.
- The Global Breastfeeding Collective and its partners call on all governments to protect mothers and babies from commercial exploitation by enacting and enforcing strong national legislation and stand ready to support you in that process.

primary hashtag*:

#BMSCodeAt40

*Use this for promoting the event and for live-tweeting during the event.

secondary hashtags** (key messages):

#BabiesBeforeProfits

#BMSCode

**Use these to gather relevant messages and link our messages to those pushed by our partner organisations.

KEY MESSAGES

Register to attend the 40th anniversary of the Code virtual celebration 🎉 We’ll reflect on our successes to make the next 40 years even stronger. #BMSCodeAt40 <https://bit.ly/335G0ms> (Use invitation tile below)

Join us for the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Code! Forty years ago, the world took a stand to say #BabiesBeforeProfit. Forty years on, it’s time to end the promotion of foods for infants and young children. <https://bit.ly/335G0ms> (Use invitation tile below)

Predatory formula marketing  harms the health & development of babies. Join us for #BMSCode40 to find out how we can stop it. #BMSCode #BabiesBeforeProfits <https://bit.ly/335G0ms> (Use invitation tile below)

Companies exploit women’s fears and vulnerabilities during the #COVID19 pandemic as they always do in emergencies. Governments must enforce the #BMSCode to protect our babies. #BabiesBeforeProfits

2021 = #NutritionYearOfAction. Governments must commit to adopt and enforce #BMSCode legislation. Please put #BabiesBeforeProfits

It is past time to put #BabiesBeforeProfits. Thank you to the Global Breastfeeding Collective, @UNICEF & @WHO for today’s celebration of the #BMSCodeAt40. Let’s enact and enforce #BMSCode legislation.

The 40th Anniversary of the #BMSCode is a powerful reminder of what happens when the 🌐 comes together to protect the youngest lives. This #NutritionYearOfAction, Governments can once again pledge to safeguard children’s lives by #ProtectingBreastfeeding + putting #BabiesBeforeBusiness.

Tweets (<141 characters)

Enacting & enforcing #BMSCode legislation stops formula companies preying on mothers who want the best for their babies. #BabiesBeforeProfits

#BMSCode legislation protects families from formula companies that exploit gaps in support for breastfeeding. #BabiesBeforeProfits

#BMSCode legislation ONLY protects families from predatory formula marketing when governments ENFORCE it. #BabiesBeforeProfits

Formula companies spend more on marketing than governments spend on breastfeeding support. #BabiesBeforeProfits

58 countries still need legislation 40 years after #WHO adopted the #BMSCode. The time to put #BabiesBeforeProfits has come.

The #BMSCode ONLY protects families from predatory formula marketing when governments act on it. #BabiesBeforeProfits

80% of #BMSCode legislation is missing key provisions of the CODE. Close loopholes. Protect babies Put #BabiesBeforeProfits

Mothers want freedom from predatory marketing. Enacting and enforcing #BMSCode legislation puts #BabiesBeforeProfits.

Images



GLOBALBREASTFEEDINGCOLLECTIVE.ORG



A Quick Guide to WHO Code Basics

What does the Code cover?

- Formula milk
- Any food or drink that would substitute for breastfeeding eg teas or foods aimed at babies under six months, or formula aimed at any age
- Bottles
- Teats or nipples

Who is expected to follow the Code?

- Manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of any of the above items
- Health care workers, both professionals and volunteers
- Health care facilities—hospitals, clinics, etc

What must be on the label?

- Labels must be in the local language
- Information must include the hazards associated with artificial feeding
- Labels cannot use idealising language or images eg a happy baby sleeping, or a protective shield suggesting baby is in a protected bubble against disease

What IS allowed under the Code?

- ✓ Use of formula with safe preparation, for babies who need it
- ✓ Sale of products with technical information eg “125 ml polycarbonate bottle”
- ✓ Scientific and factual information for health professionals eg contains certain proteins
- ✓ Accurate information on safe formula preparation is required on all labels

What is NOT allowed under the Code?

- ✗ Promotion to parents: advertising, free samples
- ✗ Promotion to health professionals: gifts, free samples
- ✗ Promotion in health facilities: posters, free formula, gifts
- ✗ Promotion of unsuitable products for babies (such as sweetened condensed milk)





(Image credit: UNICEF)



(Image credit: UNICEF)



(Image credit: UNICEF)



(Image credit: Alive & Thrive)



(image credit: Alive & Thrive)



(image credit: UNICEF)



(image credit: UNICEF)



(Image credit: UNICEF)

Resources & Links

[Event Landing page](#)

[The BMS Code resources from the Global Breastfeeding Collective](#)

[Capitalizing on fears, companies promote breastmilk substitutes during the pandemic](#) | Alive & ThriveCode FAQs

[Marketing of breast milk substitutes: national implementation of the international code, status report 2020](#)

<https://www.lli.org/quick-guide-international-code-2/>