The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes
Why do we need a Code?

Suboptimum breastfeeding still accounts for an estimated 1.4 million deaths in children under five annually (Lancet 2008 Nutrition Series).

Most recent data indicate only 38 per cent of 0-5 month olds in the developing world are exclusively breastfed.
Promotion of bms influences infant feeding behaviour

Study examining relationship between advertising in a parenting magazine and breastfeeding between 1972 and 2000 found when frequency of adverts for artificial feeding increased, percentage change in breastfeeding rates decreased.¹

2006 study by the US Congressional Accountability Office found a majority of studies that examine giving free formula samples to mothers at hospital discharge found lower breastfeeding rates among mothers receiving samples.²

¹ Foss, K. and Southwell, B. International Breastfeeding Journal 2006, 1:10
Early recognition of negative impact of marketing

“...misguided propaganda on infant feeding should be punished as the most criminal form of sedition, and those deaths should be regarded as murder”

Speech to the Rotary Club, Singapore
1939 – Dr. Cicely Williams

In 1968, Dr. Derrick Jelliffe (Food & Nutrition Institute, Jamaica) wrote about “commerciogenic malnutrition”, linking product promotion to morbidity.
Code timeline


1976 NGO found guilty, but receives token fine. Judge warns Nestlé that it will have to change marketing practices. In USA, order of nuns files suit against Bristol-Myers.
1978 - Bristol-Myers settles law suit out of court and agrees to halt all direct consumer advertising of baby milks.

US Senate holds hearings, chaired by Sen. Edward Kennedy, on inappropriate marketing of artificial feeding in developing countries.

1979 - Joint WHO/UNICEF meeting on infant and young child feeding.
Joint WHO/UNICEF Meeting on Infant & Young Child Feeding (Geneva, October 1979)

Statement and Recommendations:

It is therefore a responsibility of society to provide breastfeeding and to protect pregnant and lactating mothers from any influences that could disrupt it.

The importance of an adequate basis on which women can have a true and objective choice emphasises the need for ... the establishment of measures ... to protect women against misinformation.
WHA adopted Code in 1981 to counteract negative impact of promotion of bms.

“In view of the vulnerability of infants in the early months of life and the risks involved in inappropriate feeding practices, including the unnecessary and improper use of breastmilk substitutes, the marketing of breastmilk substitutes requires special treatment, which makes usual marketing practices unsuitable for these products.”

What is the Code?

• global recommendation - All States urged to incorporate into national legislation.

• companies urged to ensure their practices comply with the Code at all levels.

• Code further clarified and augmented through subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions
In May 2006 World Healthy Assembly recognised:

• that 2006 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and

• its increased relevance in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, rising frequency of complex human and natural emergencies, and concerns about the risks of intrinsic contamination of powdered infant formula;”
Progress in Code Implementation


Source: UNICEF 2008
There are significant international variations in the regulations governing the marketing of milk formula, which are reflected in sales differences across countries.

"The industry is fighting a rearguard action against regulation on a country-by-country basis".

UNICEF, 05 Oct 2009
Indian Market Constrained by Regulatory Barriers

- The huge disparity in the retail value of milk formula sales between China and India is mainly due to the significant differences between their official regulatory regimes.

Milk Formula Retail Value Sales in India and China 2002-2008

Source: Euromonitor International
International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes:
No advertising of breastmilk substitutes, bottles or teats to the public.

“Almost a Breastmilk.”
No free samples to mothers

Indonesia

UNICEF, 05 Oct 2009
No promotion in shops
No gifts to mothers

“I love my Nestlé mum”
No free or low-cost supplies in healthcare facilities
No promotion in healthcare facilities
No direct or indirect contact with mothers
No gifts or personal samples to health workers. Health workers should never pass samples on to mothers.
No pictures of infants, or other words or pictures idealising artificial feeding, on labels

Recommended for use from one week.
Information on artificial feeding should explain benefits & superiority of breastfeeding, & costs & dangers of artificial feeding.

“Closer to breastmilk”

Vietnam

Lactogen ... good for brain, bones and body
Information to health workers should be restricted to scientific and factual information.
Other ways to promote artificial feeding!

Breast feeding
In addition to the optimal nutrition that it provides, breast feeding contributes immensely to the bonding process. Cuddling, fondling, and the rhythm and warmth of the mother’s heartbeat bring mother and infant closer physically and emotionally. Breast feeding provides a warm relationship between you and your child, which is important for your baby’s healthy psychological and emotional growth.

Bottle feeding
If you cannot breast-feed your baby or have decided not to, you can still establish bonding with bottle feeding. During feedings, hold your baby close to you and maintain direct eye contact. The infant will feel your heartbeat and sense your warmth, feeling content and secure.
Companies will respect the law if enforced - In response to regulatory changes in Brazil, companies changed their labels. As of 2002, labels for **Isomil** and **Similac** no longer show Rosco bear.
Gerber changes its labels in Brazil and Bangladesh but not elsewhere.
UNICEF expects companies to adhere to the Code

Article 11.3 Independently of any other measures taken for implementation of this Code, manufacturers and distributors of products within the scope of this Code should regard themselves as responsible for monitoring their marketing practices according to the principles and aim of this Code, and for taking steps to ensure that their conduct at every level conforms to them.
Corporate criteria for partnerships

UNICEF Guidelines and Manual for Working with the Business Community provide for “zero tolerance” for manufacturers of infant formula where UNICEF concludes the company's marketing practices violate the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes.
The code in relation to complementary foods.

- No complementary food can be marketed to children under 6 months of age.
- Complementary foods cannot be marketed in any way that would undermine exclusive and continued breastfeeding. i.e. quantity must be less than would interfere with breastmilk.
- An area that is currently not very clear but is currently being worked on an may result in a new WHA resolution.
In conclusion ……

- Artificial feeding costs 1.4 million children their lives every year, and makes millions more sick.
- Breastfeeding is the most effective preventative public health intervention to reduce infant mortality and morbidity.
- Formula company promotion reduces breastfeeding and increases the use of breastmilk substitutes.
- Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes prohibits the unethical marketing practices that undermine breastfeeding.
- UNICEF expects all formula manufacturers to adhere to their obligations under the Code.
- UNICEF does not partner with formula companies that violate the Code.

http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/code_english.pdf