Preliminary Meeting on a Global Network for Monitoring the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant WHA Resolutions
Geneva, Switzerland, 10-11 April, 2014
Venue: Salle D

SCOPE AND PURPOSE (Revised)

In May 2012, the 65th World Health Assembly endorsed the Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition\(^1\) and urged Member States to put it into practice, as appropriate, by including proven nutrition interventions relevant to the country in maternal, child and adolescent health services. Member States in turn requested the World Health Organization (WHO) to support them in the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes; in implementing policies and programmes aimed at improving nutritional outcomes; and in their efforts to develop, or where necessary strengthen and monitor the establishment of legislative, regulatory and other effective measures to control the marketing of breast-milk substitutes. WHO was also requested to update and expand its guidance and tools for cost-effective nutrition actions, highlighting good practices for disseminating the information and delivering interventions. Increasing exclusive breastfeeding among infants less than 6 months of age was included as one of six nutrition targets in the comprehensive plan.

Key to achieving this target, as well as to increasing the duration of breastfeeding, is strengthening the adoption, monitoring and enforcement of national legislation in full compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and all relevant subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions (Code)\(^2\). The establishment of a fully functioning monitoring framework, protocols and training tools and capacity development to achieve this are crucial. This framework must be empowered to support the development and strengthening of legislation, and monitoring to identify violations of national laws so that countries can take appropriate enforcement action.

In addition a framework and accompanying protocols can identify Code violations and also track progress and gains in implementation and strengthening, monitoring and enforcement of the Code, validate strategies that are effective and appropriate for specific country contexts, identify common issues, problems and challenges, and identify factors that facilitate or hinder full Code implementation.

In the nearly 35 years since the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes was adopted, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) has been the most active nongovernmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to supporting implementation of legislation and training relevant actors in Code monitoring and carrying out its own monitoring of the Code, usually in collaboration with Ministries of Health and often with the support of WHO and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). UNICEF has provided technical assistance to countries in drafting and

\(^1\) WHA A65/11 Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. Annex 2. Available at [http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/WHA65_6_annex2_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/WHA65_6_annex2_en.pdf)

\(^2\) The “Code” refers to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant WHA resolutions.
monitoring Code legislation. WHO, as required by the World Health Assembly, has ensured reports are presented every two years on Code implementation to its Governing Bodies and also provides some national and regional assistance. Many other NGOs have worked diligently to promote and support breastfeeding on the ground globally such as La Leche League, World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, Wellstart International, International Lactation Consultants Association, Save the Children, and Helen Keller International among others. Several of these have also monitored the Code. In spite of these efforts many countries do not have comprehensive legislation and others none at all; evidence also shows continued violations by manufacturers and distributors of breast-milk substitutes. Thus, a concerted global effort is needed to further implement and strengthen Code legislation and enforcement by Member States and further strengthen Member States’ and civil society’s capacity for Code monitoring.

Given the role breastfeeding plays in infant and young child survival, growth and development and maternal health, WHO, UNICEF and partner organizations are committed to breastfeeding protection, promotion and support and see legislation, monitoring and enforcement of the Code as vital to this effort. Coordinating their efforts on the Code will create synergies that will further strengthen it as well as benefit the continued actions by individual stakeholders. Therefore, the goal of a Global Network for Monitoring the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions, formed under the leadership of the World Health Organization’s Department of Nutrition for Health and Development (WHO/NHD) in collaboration with UNICEF’s Nutrition Section, is to strengthen Member States and civil society capacity to monitor the Code and through this strengthen Member States’ Code legislation and enforcement of their national regulations by bringing together a group of committed partners to support this process.

The objectives of a Global Network for Code Monitoring are to:

1. Guide the adaptation to and development of a Code monitoring framework, protocols and training tools;
2. Facilitate the further development and strengthening of Member States and civil society capacity for Code monitoring;
3. Facilitate the continued strengthening of Code legislation, monitoring and enforcement by Member States; and,

The main objectives of the preliminary meeting on a Global Network for Code Monitoring are to:

1. Share and learn from experiences in Code legislation, monitoring and enforcement
2. Review and advise WHO and UNICEF on how to improve the draft concept note to guide the development of a Global Network for Code Monitoring