



**WABA COMMON POSITION STATEMENT ON PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**  
***Endorsed by WABA Core Partners: ABM, IBFAN, ILCA and Wellstart.***

Considering that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) have become the *new paradigm of cooperation and interactions* between the public sector, both national and international, and the private sector; and that such “partnerships” are entered into by international institutions (notably the specialized agencies of the UN system), as well as governments and members of civil society, with private corporations or with business associations;

Observing that there is a *fundamental problem with giving the name 'partnership' to interactions between public interest and business-interest actors and with the assumption that such partnerships have to happen and should* be based from the outset on "mutual trust" and aim at "shared benefits";

Concerned that global pressures to advance trade are leading to *deregulation and re-regulation in the business interest of the health and food and nutrition sector*, and that PPPs allow commercial interests to view ill health and malnutrition *caused by social and economic inequity* as business opportunities;

Concerned that the commercial sector, particularly in the field of infant feeding, has been known to put profits before public good, and thus its participation in PPPs raises the very real potential for conflict of interest:

Concerned that through PPPs the *commercial sector becomes legitimized in the role of a partner in policy-making*, able to steer policy and consequent actions towards outcomes that will favour its own interests, while compromising public interests and public health;

Given that optimal breastfeeding, including early, exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continued adequate breastfeeding for up to two years or longer constitute the primary intervention to prevent child mortality worldwide;

Concerned that the recent shifts in policy on and resources for infant and young child nutrition from evidence-based interventions such as optimal breastfeeding practices to *techno-centric, vertical models and market-based solutions will exacerbate ill health and malnutrition*;

Believing that programmes related to food and nutrition, health care and development and, especially programmes on infant and young child feeding, should be *free from commercial influence and conflicts of interest*;

Convinced that PPPs with the commercial sector will *create confusion over the role of UN agencies and governments*, which is to support public health and well-being, and not to be 'brokers' between corporations and communities;

Given that the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes*, which regulates the marketing practices of manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes was adopted by World Health Assembly in 1981, *and the subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions*, together regulate the marketing practices of manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats; and the number of countries enacting the Code and resolutions into national law is steadily increasing;

Given that the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*, adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution in May 2002, and by the UNICEF Executive Board in September 2002, calls for implementing programmes on infant and young child feeding to be consistent with accepted principles for avoiding conflict of interest;

Given that the Paragraph 44 of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding delineates clearly the role of manufacturers and distributors of industrially processed foods intended for infants and young children, limiting it to full compliance with the International Code and relevant WHA resolutions, and to meeting quality, safety and labelling standards of *Codex Alimentarius*.

Given that the *World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution 58.32* urges Member States “to ensure that financial support and other incentives for programmes and health professionals working in infant and young child health do not create conflict of interest”.

Given that the most recent *WHA Resolution 61.20* urges Member States, “... to strengthen implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent relevant Health Assembly resolutions by scaling up efforts to monitor and enforce national measures in order to protect breastfeeding while keeping in mind the Health Assembly resolutions to avoid conflicts of interest;...”

And

Given that there are alternatives to PPPs that include the concepts of public- private coordination, and public-private collaborations, that do not entail joint or collaborative action on equal terms;

#### **We call upon international agencies, governments and all concerned parties**

1. To implement programmes on child health and development that are **fully compliant with the International Code** and subsequent WHA resolutions as a minimum standard.
2. To evaluate the existing 'partnership' paradigm, its underlying assumptions and existing global health PPPs from the public-interest perspective.
3. To ensure that the infant food industry is compliant **with paragraph 44 of the Global Strategy** for Infant and Young Child Feeding in letter and spirit.
4. To set up international and national mechanisms on the lines of the Human Rights Commission to evaluate participation of the private sector for potential conflicts of interest and ensure that **public interest and social equity are at the forefront** in the sectors of health and nutrition; at least half the members of such mechanisms at all levels should be civil society organisations.
5. To avoid using the term 'partnership' for public-private interactions. The arrangements currently called Public Private Partnerships to be renamed as **Public Private Initiatives** to more specifically express the precise the nature of such interactions, such as sponsorship relationship, research collaborations and contracting out of public services.

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The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals & organisations concerned with the protection, promotion & support of breastfeeding worldwide. WABA action is based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the WHO/UNICEF Global Strategy for Infant & Young Child Feeding. ). Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International and Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM). WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF & an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC WABA is incorporated in Malaysia as World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action Bhd (847762-P), a non-profit company limited by guarantee.

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