

WABA's repeated focus on the Code demonstrates that protection of breastfeeding, as part of the three pillars of action, has and continues to be a vital part of the global breastfeeding strategy.<sup>14</sup>

### **Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTFs): Infant Health and Nutrition in Emergencies**

Protection comes in many forms. One area of protection that became an urgent and critical issue – that WABA and its core partners had to confront and find a common position on – concerned the Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTFs) and the commercially-produced ready-to-use foods. These were increasingly being promoted both by well-intentioned segments of the international community including UN agencies, in the face of severe and moderate childhood malnutrition or sudden food shortages during emergencies. The issue first emerged at the *35th Session of the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)*, "Working together to achieve freedom from child hunger and under nutrition," in Hanoi, Vietnam, in March 2008. The meeting was attended by WABA IAC co-chairs Michael Latham and Elisabet Helsing, and WABA co-director Susan Siew. Discussions focused on the concern arising from the use of RUTFs beyond emergency situations, and for prevention of moderate malnutrition. These impinge on continued breastfeeding during the six to 24-month period, and local complementary and indigenous foods. Contact was made with the Executive Director of the ACCESS Campaign of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF/Doctors without Borders), and their Nutrition Adviser to discuss concerns. MSF and the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN) subsequently became key partners with WABA on this issue and related IYCF concerns around emergencies.

In September 2008, two WABA representatives subsequently participated at the MSF Symposium in New York, *Starved for Attention: The Neglected Crisis of Childhood Malnutrition*, a meeting to spotlight the urgent need to scale-up effective interventions. They raised concerns on the threat of inappropriate marketing of RUTFs and the like (Ready to Use Foods, RUFs), and the need for optimal breastfeeding and young child feeding practices. Following WABA's participation at the UN SCN, and this meeting, WABA saw a need to facilitate a discussion among its Core Partners on these issues.

---

14. Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent WHA resolutions. IBFAN  
Penang, 2011