

CRC Day of General Discussion on Children's Right and the Environment

Working group 2 on Children's rights and climate change

Thank you Chairperson. I am Camille Selleger and speak on behalf of the IBFAN.

In its recent report « Unless we act now », the UNICEF highlights that today, over half a billion children live in extremely high flood occurrence zones and nearly 160 million live in high or extremely high drought severity zones ». Among them, newborns, infants and young children are particularly at risk, given their early stage of development and immaturity of their immune systems. Babies exposed at drought, water stress, floods and severe storms are more likely to develop non-communicable and vector-borne diseases, and they are more likely to be malnourished .

In such crisis situations, there is a natural solution to provide babies the best nutrition and medicine: it is breastfeeding. Whenever natural disasters strike, it protects babies' health and helps them to survive and thrive. Supporting mothers to establish or re-establish breastfeeding is therefore absolutely essential. In such crisis situations, where clean water is lacking and where babies are exposed to malnutrition, non-communicable and vector-borne diseases, the use of milk formula can be deadly. On the contrary, breastfeeding constitutes a real lifeline for babies in disasters.

What about the impact resulting of the food production ? Already in 2006, the FAO was stating that « the livestock sector is a major stressor on many ecosystems and on the planet as a whole. Globally it is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gases and one of the leading causal factors in the loss of biodiversity, while in developed and emerging countries it is perhaps the leading source of water pollution. » Baby milk formula are livestock products and thus

sustantively contribute to the climate change and water pollution. Recently, IBFAN Asia studied the environmental impact of formula feeding in six Asian countries. The subsequent report revealed that in 2012, a total of about 3 Million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent had been released for the 6 countries as a consequence of formula feeding, which is equivalent to about 7 Million Miles driven by an average passenger vehicle. At the same time, the use of follow-on and toddler milk formulas in all study countries is increasing, even though the World Health Organization recognizes that these products are unnecessary and unsuitable when used as a breastmilk replacement.

Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly. It is a 100% renewable natural resource which contributes to make our world a more sustainable place and which helps mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Therefore, we urge your Committee to continue highlighting the importance of breastfeeding promotion, protection and support in your recommendations.

Thank you.