

International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

142th session of the Executive Board



Agenda Item EB 4.3 - Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent Health (2016 to 2020): Early childhood development (EB142/19)

Chairperson, Dr Tedros, Honourable delegates, ladies and gentlemen. IBFAN is pleased to have the opportunity to address this agenda item.

Women's health and early childhood development are inextricably linked. The reproductive rights of women cannot be separated from the rights of the child to the highest attainable standard of health. Fulfilling these rights requires governments and institutions to provide necessary supports and resources. IBFAN welcomes the global move for public universal health coverage that is accessible to all, does not discriminate, and meets women's, adolescent's and children's needs as a requisite for gender equality.

IBFAN wishes to highlight the critical relationship of the mother/baby dyad and the importance of breastfeeding as the basis for nurture and care to achieve the Global Strategy goals. This vital relationship is indispensable to optimize the physical and mental health for early child development. IBFAN is pleased to see the inclusion of breastfeeding.

The GS notes that less than 40% of infants are exclusively breastfed. Considerable efforts are required to address this gap.

The threats that undermine breastfeeding persist. The marketing of breastmilk substitutes and baby feeding products remains systemic as demonstrated by IBFAN's global monitoring reports. Much more needs to be done to remove this commercial interference. The regulation, monitoring and enforcement of the provisions of the International Code of Marketing of BMS, the WHA resolutions is essential to increase breastfeeding practices, decrease the appalling mortality rates associated with the use of BMS and the high breast cancer and other reproductive cancers associated with low breastfeeding rates.

Mothers need adequate maternity provisions with paid leave and workplace capacity to maintain breastfeeding throughout early childhood. We urge governments to continue to address this need to achieve gender equity and the important health outcomes associated with breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding must be central to policies and recommendations that are designed to meet the goals of the Global Strategy and most importantly the aspirations of all mothers for their children.

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