



# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

## International Baby Food Action Network, IBFAN (Switzerland)

(1998)



*...for its committed and effective campaigning in support of breastfeeding.*

IBFAN representatives  
in Stockholm

The International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) was the name taken by a small group of organisations and activists who came together in 1979 at the end of the WHO/UNICEF joint meeting on infant and young child feeding. The meeting had recommended an international code to regulate the marketing of infant formula and other breastmilk substitutes. The founding group consisted of six NGOs. 30 years later, IBFAN has 200 affiliates in more than 100 countries and is the oldest single issue network in the world.

Breastmilk is the most universally available and complete food resource. However, it has been under subtle and overt attack for at least 60 years by commercial interests. UNICEF estimates that 1.5 million children die annually because they are not breastfed.

IBFAN brings together the non-governmental organisations which are addressing infant feeding and health and unites these organisations in a common aim: improving breastfeeding rates, reducing dependence on industrial artificial milk products, and protecting women's and families' freedom of choice based on full, unbiased information and support, free from commercial influences.

Key to this campaign is the regulation of marketing of infant feeding products, by means of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981. In the face of the enormous power of the multinational companies which dominate the world infant baby food market, IBFAN has continued to find means to mobilise people effectively to press their governments for action, to undertake citizen monitoring of compliance with the recommendations of the World Health Assembly, and to stimulate self-reliance and effective action at the grassroots level. The global strategy on infant and young child feeding adopted at the World Health Assembly in 2002 provides further policy support for breastfeeding in all areas.

Monitoring the International Code and pressing governments and industry to adopt it in full has remained a central and ongoing struggle for the network. IBFAN groups also work on many linked topics including breastfeeding and ecology, breastfeeding and economics, women's health and rights, maternity legislation, every child's right to the highest attainable standards of health and protection. IBFAN groups in more than 100 countries are working actively on one or more of these issues and are supporting governments and monitoring implementation of the global strategy in more than 50 countries. The groups are organised into eight geographical and linguistic regions: Africa (English and Portuguese-speaking); Afrique (French-speaking); Asia; Arab world; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; North America and Oceania. The publication *Breastfeeding Briefs*,

covering news from the WHO, other UN Agencies and recent scientific research, is produced twice-yearly by the European office in Geneva and published in four languages. It has a circulation of 10,000 copies.

The campaign for which IBFAN is best known is the international boycott of Nestlé for breaches of the International Code. IBFAN's principal donors have been the Netherlands and now are the Canadian, Swedish and Dutch development cooperation agencies as well as UNICEF Regional and Country Offices.

### Quotation

*"Our experience fuels our commitment to organise together in international solidarity to end the suffering caused by bottle-feeding."*

Ira Puspadewi

---

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD  
AWARD FOUNDATION