

The overall **OBJECTIVE:**

To protect breastfeeding and optimal feeding practices as a key natural resource for food security and safety and as a basic women's right

gBICS CORE PARTNERS

Environment and Climate Change

g b i c s the global breastfeeding
initiative for child survival

gBICS is supported by Norad

gBICS contribution to the ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The gBICS programme has identified a healthy and sustainable environment as a key factor towards the survival, healthy growth and development of infants and young children and for the protection of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Environmental health and sustainability are core elements for the gBICS. Therefore gBICS aims at promoting a healthy environment for women and children through networking, advocacy and research.

gBICS works for the survival and health of all babies and young children and for the right of women to breastfeed, by protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding as a first natural resource, safe and most adequate food.

gBICS also works for protecting the health of babies who are bottle-fed using industrially produced baby milks (formulas) and for the development of local and sustainable systems that guarantee access to appropriate complementary feeding for infants, based on indigenous food, family diets, and nutritious natural and affordable foods for pregnant and lactating women who have special nutritional needs.

Today's dominant patterns of food production and consumption have devastating consequences for local production and to the detriment of the overall food system, ignoring nutrition concerns. gBICS advocates for a holistic approach to food systems that focuses on sustainable production and consumption patterns to achieve food and nutrition security and sovereignty. This necessarily implies local participation in resource management and strengthening of women's and communities' rights to access and protection of natural resources.



Advocacy by gBICS partners led to the Resolution WHA63.3 (2010) on climate change as a significant factor affecting infant and young child health. Similarly, IBFAN has worked on the radioactive contamination of formulas after the Chernobyl disaster, on the detection of chemical residues in breastmilk following exposure of women to Agent Orange, a toxic dioxin, in Vietnam, melamine contamination in China and most recently supporting breastfeeding mothers during the nuclear crisis and leaks of radiation after the earthquake in Japan. IBFAN has established a global working group, on Contamination of infant formulas and on Chemical residues in breastmilk, on chemical and microbiological contamination of infant feeding products, for addressing cross-cutting issues and incorporating members from all continents. The group, that includes independent researchers, nurtures all gBICS partners with regular exchange of information, alerts, updates and scientific articles, facebook page and prepares joint statements and submissions, for example to WHO or to the European Food Safety Authority. Since 2011, gBICS partners began work on estimating carbon footprint of formula feeding compared to the zero carbon and water footprint of breastfeeding.

Expansion of baby food markets threatens to health and environment

Given the industry predictions of the expansion of the baby food market and the potential increase in formula feeding with its concurrent increase in non-biodegradable waste materials, chemical residues and emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHG), we believe that it is imperative all efforts be made to increase breastfeeding rates globally. Even if the effects of industrial development on health are better researched, and can be used by policy-makers, the negative impact on our environment of the increase of this very market is far less researched and understood, and is thus ignored by many policy-makers. This is of particular concern in developing countries with high vulnerability due to poverty and low adaptive capacity.

gBICS plays an important role to bridge this gap and in developing instruments to support rational decision making. The concept of the total Ecological Footprint of formula feeding needs to be developed, as per the 2012 Resolution of the European Parliament, to include the indicators of use of scarce natural resources, the Land, Water, Raw materials and Energy footprint. The emission of Greenhouse Gases, Carbon Footprint, and the emission of toxic chemicals caused by waste and garbage disposal must be included as well. Industry is already calculating the carbon footprint of its products, using their own internal methodology. gBICS will continue to advocate nationally and internationally, to prevent such conflicts of interest, while at the same time, along with key partners, in making independent calculations. IBFAN's expertise in developing independent monitoring tools, training and assessments of the International Code and the WBTi processes developed at national levels offer knowledge and frameworks to develop this research.

The positive effect of breastfeeding on our environment is also under-researched, poorly documented and ignored by many policy-makers. Breastfeeding not only protects health, but also contributes to a healthier environment and to face climate change challenges. Breastfeeding is a renewable, irreplaceable and energy efficient natural resource. However it is under severe threat not only by industry promotion and marketing but

from the impact of a polluted and degraded environment due to climate change and environmental contamination. Detection of chemicals in breastmilk is an indicator of far greater problem: the toxic contamination of the human body. Its protection demands special joint action with environmentalists and other partners. IBFAN already has data on breastfeeding producing Zero Waste and using zero natural resources (land; water; raw materials; energy). These data need to be presented in different formats and widely disseminated. We also need to present on how much land, water, raw materials and energy would be saved and GHG and pollution prevented if mothers breastfed instead of formula fed.

gBICS needs to open up space for various campaigning suggestions that have emerged from the local and national groups. Women and local participation organizations and action are key to protect natural resources and the rights of people to access them.

Emergencies and disasters.

gBICS partners recognized that emergencies are to great extent caused by climate change and that it is primarily countries not on track with MDGs that suffer devastating consequences of natural disasters. Infants and young children are among the most vulnerable groups in emergencies. Interruption of breastfeeding by formula feeding and inappropriate complementary feeding increase the risks of malnutrition, illness and mortality. gBICS works with groups in special circumstances, displaced people and emergency networks in targeted countries.

gBICS Partners advocate for improved international policies and guidelines of optimal policies and practices for infant feeding in Emergencies and for their application at country and local level. Important tools have been developed to ensure appropriate practices that comply with international emergency standards (including the Code): concise Operational Guidance developed by inter-agency IFE Core Group and adopted by the Global Nutrition Cluster of the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IBFAN is a member of both). The IFE training modules for decision-makers and for humanitarian health and nutrition workers were developed with IBFAN's active participation and the challenge now lies in their implementation, as well as regular updating based on new experience.



The gBICS partners all continue to play an important role at all these levels as well as in exchanging lessons learned from the people's organization in the various emergency situations that affect countries year after year. Particular focus at country level will be at closing the gap identified by the WBTi assessments, i.e. poor incorporation of IFE in disaster prevention policies.



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