

Media Brief: April 16 2008

People call Upon GAIN to leave India and Government of India to regulate PPPs

A joint action group constituted by 33 persons including individual experts, pediatricians, public health experts, representatives from 19 national organisations working in public interest in health, development, gender, education and nutrition sector made strong voice and protest to GAIN for sparing India from the hands of multinational consumer and food companies to which GAIN is a promising market builder.

The group staged a silent protest using placards at the site of GAIN initiated meeting to call for an India Alliance for Infant and young child nutrition (IYCN) on 15th April in Delhi.

The group submitted a pretest note to the GAIN representative in India and also interacted with the participants who were invited at the meeting and offered to answer any questions if they have while using their right to protest in the interest of people of India reeling with poverty, lack of food and lack of support to women who nurture the future of India.

Two members of the protest group also participated in the meeting and raised the points of 'conflicts of interest' while entering into any partnership.

Participants met immediately after the meeting and decided to work together for future action on these issues.

Contact for more information:

Dr Arun Gupta arun@ibfanasia.org 9911176306

Vandana Prasad 9891552425

Mira Shiva 9810582028

Enclosed Pictures and papers submitted

We the undersigned

Aware that infant and young child feeding and nutrition is a crucial period of child development and nutrition inputs are key to their survival, health and later developments;

Concerned that there is increasing interference of baby food/children's food lobby on policy and implementation level for infant and young child feeding and nutrition;

Believe that such interference is conflicting with public interest;

Highly disturbed on the setting up of an India Alliance led by GAIN the Global alliance for Improved nutrition, which is a business interest NGO and its interests are creating markets for its partners like Unilever, Cargill, Danone, and Wockhardt;

Noting that Government of India has failed to initiate public action in this area and now moving towards public private partnerships with MNCs to tackle the problem of child malnutrition;

Appreciating the fact that the Ministry of HRD has not succumbed to the pressures of the Biscuit Manufacturers lobby and resisted the attempts to replace the hot, cooked mid-day meal with a packet of biscuits;

Concerned that food supplies is a major problem as well as price rise which pushes people to poverty;

Believe that MNCs would be keen to market their baby foods for infants and young children, which will perpetuate poverty;

Seriously concerned that GAIN under Infant and child nutrition intends "to find new & sustained market for fortified food" and for "promoting market driven solutions"

Recognise that market solutions have failed where health and nutrition are concerned, specially where majority are poor, without purchasing power or purchasing with indebtedness and they can't resist aggressively marketed products;

Respect the *Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992* as amended in 2003, which prohibits promotion of all infant milk substitutes and baby foods for children below 2 years;

Protest against such action and partnerships, which cater to profits and markets;

Call upon Government of India, not to allow private manufacturers and multinationals to take over and compromise the nutrition of India's infants and children;

Call upon private players in nutrition to leave India's children alone and submit our concerns explained in the document 'Questioning Market Solutions for Child Malnutrition'

1. Devika Singh, Mobile Crèches
2. Colin Gonsalves, HRLN
3. Vandana Prasad, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan
4. Vandana Shiva, Navdanya
5. Shiv P Bhandari, Marketing Consultant Markman Marketing Associates
6. Mira Shiva, Initiative for Health Equity & Society, AIDAN
7. Sunita Bhasin, Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute (SSMI)
8. K. Ashok Rao, National Confederation of Officers Associations (NCOA)
9. Arun Gupta, BPNI
10. JP Dadhich, Pediatrician, SLJ Hospital Delhi
11. Kuldeep Khanna, Pediatrician, Jaipur Golden Hospital, Delhi
12. Dinesh Bhatt, PHRN
13. Karminder, Haryana Gyan Vigyan Samiti
14. Surekha, Haryana Gyan Vigyan Samiti
15. Mukesh, Haryana Vigyan Manch
16. Satbir, Haryana Vigyan Manch
17. Leena Menghaney, MSF
18. Gurminder Singh, Right to food campaign
19. Radha Holla, Consultant Women's Health, Noida
20. Amit Sengupta, DSF
21. Maria Edna Martin, BPNI
22. Subrata Datta, Communication Consultant
23. Indira Chakravorty, JSA
24. Dipa Sinha, Right to Food Campaign
25. Haripriya Soibam, PHRN
26. Sudha Sundararaman, AIDWA
27. Anup Srivastava, HRLN
28. Sudeshna Sengupta, Mobile Creches
29. Beena Bhatt, IBFAN Asia
30. P.K Sudhir, Pitamapura Delhi
31. Tultul, Delhi Forces (Neenvy)
32. Abhijit Visaria, ICCHN
33. Sulakshana Nandi, JSA

Questioning Market Solutions for Child Malnutrition

- GAIN comes with a pre set mind aiming to build business for its partners. Proposed GAIN Forum in May 2007 lays down its intent. “.....The demonstrated benefits of GAIN’s new business models will attract some of its leading partners from the EU, European Governments, leading companies such as Cargill, Unilever and Danone, and representatives of major international organisations.”
- Unlike traditional aid campaigns GAIN looks to build new markets for nutritious foods. "
- The new alliance is seen as “..champions for infant and young child feeding related issues in the country...”. And they will advocate for ‘IYCF friendly policy/ regulatory environment.... increasing access to affordable complementary foods/ complementary food supplements in accordance with the regulations in the country...”
- Yakult Danone is a joint venture entrant to the probiotic foods market in India, they have already begun supporting pediatricians
- In 2007, UNILEVER in partnership with UNICEF....., “...we piloted an education programme for schoolchildren in Uganda highlighting the importance of hand-washing with soap, underpinned by our soap brand Lifebuoy. Coupled with this, the Unilever Marketing Academy helped develop health promotion campaigns in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. During the year the brand grew by 9%.”
- *Wockhardt*, listed as one of the partners and who has recently acquired ‘Farex’ brand from DUMEX (stated reason to give up is prohibition of promotion) *Wockhardt* has been recently found to be illegally promoting the ‘Farex Infant Formula’ through gifting ‘slip pads’ to doctors. Thus violating the *Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992* as amended in 2003.
- This raises the question of who will decide what Indian children should eat- health and nutrition experts from India, or corporate driven bodies from abroad.
- Who should decide? Indian mouthpieces of the business interest NGOs(BINGOs) or public interest NGOs (PINGOs) and the GOs.
- Why such special focus on fortified complementary foods ? Issue is not fortification but market based solution.

- Who is interested in scaling business for Cargill, Danone, Unilever and Wockhardt? Who wants to sell the little babies of India to MNCs?
- Where are the guidelines for private sector and what is a private sector in the Partnerships?

These are open questions to all, including the Government of India

Notes on child malnutrition

- Child malnutrition in India is essentially a problem of under 24 months so should be dealt entirely during or before that. It is so much so that it doubles up during first six months, reflecting undernutrition of mothers and infants. Further after six months it peaks by 2 years during the time it is due both to lack of food, that is hunger, and inadequate breastfeeding, with lots of other liquids or liquid like foods given to babies.
- Child malnutrition is associated with majority of infant deaths. Most deaths of children under five occur during first year, and 2/3rd of those during first month, due to newborn infections, diarrhoea and pneumonia.
- In India , more than 1.4 million infants die each year, and about 36 million children under three are under nourished and do not develop to their full potential .
- A cohort of more than 10 million under weights is added every year. These children continue to suffer the long term impact and pushed to severe child malnutrition due to hunger later in life.
- Assuming that 27 million babies are born in India 75% women i.e. more than 20 million are NOT beginning breastfeeding within an hour. 72% i.e. close to 19.5 million women are NOT exclusively breastfeeding for six months and 48% i.e. close to 12 million are NOT giving solid/semisolid foods for complementary feeding to babies by 6-9 months.
- According to the most updated scientific evidence one to one or group counselling/ education about breastfeeding and complementary feeding is the way to enhance these practices and after six months solid food supplements are required for food insecure populations.
- Universal coverage of starting breastfeeding within one hour can avert 22% newborn deaths. Universal coverage of exclusive breastfeeding can cut down diarrhea deaths by 4.6 times, and pneumonia deaths by 2.5 times.
- As a public health recommendation WHO, UNICEF, Government of India recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and after six months, mothers milk plus complementary feeding using semisolid/solid family foods is recommended.
- *The Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992 as amended in 2003, bans promotion of all kinds of foods marketed for babies under the age 2.*