



IBFAN Italia

...per la protezione dell'allattamento e dell'alimentazione infantile

IBFAN Italia
fa parte di IBFAN
International
Baby Food
Action Network



His Holiness Pope Francis PP.

Casa Santa Marta

00120 Città del Vaticano

Trieste, 13/4/15

To His Holiness Pope Francis

Subject: Formula for Disaster

Holy Father,

I am Sofia Quintero Romero, a Colombian woman, mother and medical doctor. I am writing to you on behalf of IBFAN Italy, an organization that is part of an international network set up in 1981 and that acts in more than 160 countries to protect breastfeeding and infant nutrition from the onslaught of commercial interests of the multinationals that manufacture artificial milks and other infant foods, feeding bottles and teats.

The aim of our activities is to achieve the highest level of health for newborns and for the children of this world, by promoting correct feeding and health care practices, abiding by the present scientific knowledge and by the terms of the WHO-UNICEF International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions.

We address you, Your Holiness, because we have noted how many times you have spoken to the faithful worldwide and to all religions to remind us that Nature is generous to its children, giving us all we need to live in good health and demanding only to be respected.

You, Holy Father, have spoken to us about the importance of Compassion and Tenderness, reminding us of the natural act of mothers breastfeeding their children, inviting them to respond to that need of their children, even when they are in churches, many of which are embellished with images of the Virgin Mary breastfeeding the Child Jesus.

Already once in the past a Swedish scientist, Dr. Lars Å. Hanson, addressed Pope John Paul II, speaking of breastfeeding and asking that any obstacles to its promotion be removed and that the importance of breastfeeding as a life saver for many many children be considered.¹ There is untold scientific evidence to prove that breastfeeding is of fundamental importance for infant survival and health, because it protects the child from infection and promotes the physiological development of the immune system. Furthermore, Hanson also emphasized the tremendous importance of breastfeeding

as the only contraceptive method available and acceptable in many socio-cultural contexts, a natural contraceptive that is free and is available practically to all families. It is useful especially in those settings where infant mortality is highest, as well as high birth rates.

We, members of IBFAN Italy, take the initiative of once again calling to the attention of Your Holiness to this problem, which we believe is the sign of an intolerable injustice: Nowadays more than 40% of the children of this world are not breastfed, in accordance with the present recommendations, and this has extremely serious consequences for the survival and health of millions of children, causing great suffering to them and their families, in addition to excessive costs to health care services.

As a woman, mother and medical doctor who has worked for many years as volunteer in some countries of Africa and Latin America, I have witnessed a truth that Your Holiness also knows and has spoken about in public numerous times, because (although it is lost today) it is part of the heritage of mankind: to breastfeed a child is an act of tenderness, compassion and great generosity that each woman is able to achieve. Yes, a woman can do so if she is motivated, correctly informed and adequately supported before, during and after delivery. Unfortunately, this many times does not happen and in many countries artificial feeding has unfortunately become the cultural norm or a status symbol, a desirable way of life in the Western technological and consumerist model. All of this is not happening because mothers have chosen it, or because Nature prevents them from breastfeeding, but rather because the insatiable thirst for money is jeopardizing this healthy practice. Even today still many multinational companies insidiously are promoting artificial feeding and the use of bottles and teats. They do so even through the health workers and the health care services, often pressuring governments and institutions, both national and international, not to put in place restrictions and regulate their marketing practices.

There are numerous examples of this intolerable shame of our times¹, and those who denounce unethical or banned infant food company practices do so at their own risk, as was the case of Mr Syed Amir Raza, a former representative of Nestlé in Pakistan who became an unwitting actor of the story told by film producer Danis Tanovic in *TIGERS*², a film that was recently shown in Florence.

However, the spread of artificial infant feeding practices, to the detriment of breastfeeding, affects the health of children and the wellbeing of families indirectly too: It has grave consequences for the health of our Mother Earth, because the use of feeding bottles and artificial milks causes a waste of natural resources, produces large amounts of rubbish and greenhouse gases. That is why on International Earth Day, which shall be celebrated next 22nd of April, IBFAN Italy wishes to draw the attention of all those who care for the health of our planet and its protection for future generations to this issue, and wishes to deliver to Your Holiness the publication *FORMULA FOR DISASTER*. This is a dossier produced by IBFAN and translated by us into Italian, that explains and shows the serious ecological damage caused by the spread of artificial feeding and the use of industrially manufactured infant foods. The very same multinational companies that make these products predict that their

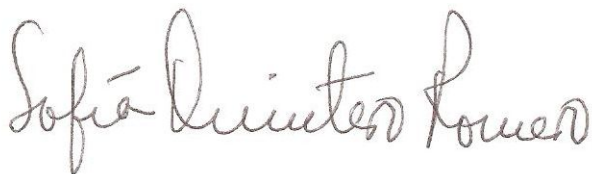
consumption will increase in future years, thanks to the opening of new promising markets and the absence of rules regulating their marketing.

We hope this small gift will be accepted by Your Holiness. We offer you with much love this publication and ask that, in your prayers, you remember the children who die because of the immoral promotion of artificial breastmilk substitutes, but also remember the adults who are responsible for making decisions, so that they open their hearts and minds to compassion and to the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.

We bear the hope that Your words will light up the path for all those who work to put an end to this injustice.

With our best wishes to Your Holiness, we remain

Yours cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sofia Quintero Romero". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

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