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News and Public Information Press Release*

## **PAHO Sees Progress in Efforts to Limit Marketing of Baby Formula in Latin America**

*New report reviews 30 years of action to implement the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes*

**Washington, D.C., May 16, 2011 (PAHO/WHO)** — Three decades after world health leaders urged stringent limits on the marketing of baby formula and related products, a new report shows that Latin America has made significant progress in constraining such marketing, but abuses continue to occur because of inadequate monitoring and sanctions.

The new report, released today by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), is titled *30 Años del Código en América Latina: Un recorrido sobre diversas experiencias de aplicación del Código Internacional de Comercialización de Sucedáneos de la Leche materna en la Región entre 1981 y 2011*. It provides an assessment of legislation and regulatory efforts in Latin American countries since the Code's adoption by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1981. It also offers recommendations for more effective implementation.

The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes grew out of concerns that marketing practices for infant formula were undermining breastfeeding and increasing infant deaths and illnesses, particularly in developing countries.

The Code, supplemented by later WHA resolutions, provides guidelines on the packaging, promotion and sales of breast-milk substitutes, bottles and teats that are intended to prevent manufacturers from advertising these products or presenting them in any way as equal or better alternatives to breastfeeding.

The new PAHO/WHO report shows that nearly all countries in Latin America have adopted some or all of the provisions of the 1981 Code, through legislation or voluntary measures. However, only five out of the 19 countries that have laws also have regulatory mechanisms in place to ensure their effective application. In many countries, there are no mechanisms in place to monitor marketing practices, and violations are known to occur.

“It’s not enough for a country to sign on to the Code,” said PAHO Director Mirta Roses. “Countries need to pass laws and regulations based the Code’s provisions and they need to monitor compliance and apply sanctions to any violators.”

Breastfeeding is the single most effective intervention for preventing deaths of children under 5, and research shows that about 20 percent of neonatal (under 1 month) deaths could be prevented if all newborns began breastfeeding during the first hour of life.

In addition, children who are breastfed for seven to nine months have on average six points higher IQ than children who are breastfed for less than a month. Breastfeeding also helps mothers lose weight and reduces their risk of breast and ovarian cancer as well as type 2 diabetes.

In most countries of the Americas, fewer than half of babies begin breastfeeding within the first hour of life, according to PAHO/WHO estimates. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months—as recommended—is also low, ranging from 8 percent to 64 percent of babies in Latin America.

“In releasing this report, we want to encourage all countries to renew their support for the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes as well as their commitment to protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding,” said Dr. Chessa Lutter, Senior Advisor for Food and Nutrition at PAHO.

The new PAHO report is available for [download](#) on the PAHO website and is being distributed at the 64th World Health Assembly (16–24 May 2011) and throughout Latin America.

**CONTACT:**

*Dr. Chessa Lutter, PAHO Senior Advisor on Food and Nutrition, email: [lutterch@paho.org](mailto:lutterch@paho.org), Tel. +1 202 974 3871, or Donna Eberwine-Villagran, Specialist – Media and Communication, email: [eberwind@paho.org](mailto:eberwind@paho.org), Tel. +1 202 974 3122, PAHO/WHO – [www.paho.org](http://www.paho.org)*

**LINKS:**

[PAHO web page on Celebrando30AnosDelCodigo](#) (download printed materials and view public service announcements, in Spanish only).