



In 1981, health officials from around the world gathered at the World Health Assembly to address aggressive marketing tactics by the infant and young child feeding industry, which was promoting formula feeding over breastfeeding and causing a dramatic increase in infant morbidity and mortality. The result was the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (the Code), a landmark policy framework designed to stop commercial interests from damaging breastfeeding rates and endangering the health and nutrition of the world's youngest inhabitants.

In the last four decades, there has been a 50 per cent increase in the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding. As a result, an estimated 900 million infants globally have enjoyed the survival, growth and development benefits of exclusive breastfeeding in infancy. Yet, aggressive marketing of breastmilk substitutes continues to discourage women from breastfeeding, putting both children's and women's health at risk.

The 40th anniversary of the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes is an opportunity to mark the significant progress made in protecting and promoting the incomparable benefits of breastfeeding, but also a reminder of the work still to be done. The Code remains as relevant today as it was 40 years ago. On the 40th anniversary of the Code, UNICEF and WHO call on governments, health workers, and the baby food industry to fully implement and abide by the Code requirements.

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