

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

### Cross-sectional Examination of Commercial Milk Formula Industry Funding of International, Regional, and National Healthcare Professional Associations: Protocol

#### GLOSSARY

**Commercial milk formula (CMF):** constitutes the predominant category of breast milk substitutes consumed globally. Our understanding of CMF is based on various definitions from the World Health Organization. It is a commercially produced, processed food used as a partial or total replacement for breast milk. This includes any milks (animal or plant based), in either liquid or powdered form. These products are specifically marketed as suitable for feeding children up to 36 months of age (encompassing standard infant formula, follow-up formula, and growing-up or toddler milks) and may also include specialised formula (referred to as an 'exempt formula' by the United States Food and Drug Administration, and as 'food for special medical purposes' in the European Union). This definition excludes vitamin or mineral supplements that are not part of a milk formula, and home-fortification products (1–4).

**Commercial milk formula industry (CMF industry):** the sector involved in the production/distribution/ sales/ marketing of these formulas. This definition is based on the World Health Organization's description of formula milk companies as entities "that manufacture, promote, and sell formula products" (2). In this study, we understand a commercial entity as any organisation engaged in activities aimed at generating financial profit through the production, promotion, sale, or other commercial actions related to CMF, regardless of the territorial scope of its activities. Conflict of interest (COI, see definition below) arises when individuals or organisations in positions of trust or authority may be influenced by entities seeking to promote products or regulatory environments that benefit their commercial interests.

Such entities aim to enhance the uptake of their products, which may be harmful to health, or to create favourable conditions for their product promotion and sale. This potential for influence compromises the impartiality of those with decision-making power, leading to potential bias in professional judgement or actions. Importantly, the existence of a COI as we understand it is not confined to the legal boundaries within which a product may or may not be sold; thus, we are not applying a country-specific legal definition of COI. This broader interpretation acknowledges that the impact of commercial entities may transcend legal jurisdictions, reflecting the global nature of commercial influences and their potential effects on public health and policy.

**Conflict of interest (COI):** occurs when professional judgement regarding a primary interest (such as patients' welfare, ensured through support for breastfeeding) may be unduly influenced by a secondary interest (such as any form of sponsorship or payment for services from CMF industry, which benefits financially from any reduction in breastfeeding). Our understanding of COI in this paper is guided by the following authoritative definitions taken in tandem:

- 1) the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' (ICMJE) definition: "A conflict of interest exists when professional judgment concerning a primary interest (such as patients' welfare or the validity of research) may be influenced by a secondary interest (such as financial gain). Perceptions of conflict of interest are as important as actual conflicts of interest" (5);
- 2) the Institute of Medicine (IOM) defines a COI as "a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest" (page 46) (6).

**Front organisation or front group:** an apparently independent association operating under the guise of public interest or public health, but in reality, representing the interests of specific companies or the commercial industry. These organisations often adopt authoritative names and may provide advice, develop standards, or engage in advocacy related to their perceived cause, in this case infant and young child feeding (4,7).

**Healthcare professional association (HCPA):** an organisation representing voluntary members from either regulated or self-regulated specific healthcare professions, relevant to infants and young children feeding, nutrition, breastfeeding, and lactation. These members, including physicians, nurses, midwives, dietitians/ nutritionists, and lactation support specialists/ consultants, often possess specific licences/ certificates or diplomas from accredited studies or training in their home countries to ensure the protection of public health and patient safety.

**Payment for services:** considered the case if the HCPA provides direct benefits to the company, such as through advertisements in a publication or exhibition space at a conference (8).

**Sponsorship:** determined if there appears to be no specific services provided to the donor other than acknowledgement (8).

## REFERENCES

1. Maternal, infant and young child nutrition: Guidance on ending the inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children. Report by the Secretariat. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016.
2. How the marketing of formula milk influences our decisions on infant feeding. Geneva: World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); 2022.
3. Jarrold K, Helfer B, Eskander M, et al. Guidance for the Conduct and Reporting of Clinical Trials of Breast Milk Substitutes. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2020;174(9):874–81.
4. Baker P, Russ K, Kang M, et al. Globalization, first-foods systems transformations and corporate power: a synthesis of literature and data on the market and political practices of the transnational baby food industry. *Global Health.* 2021;17(1):1–35.
5. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Disclosure of Financial and Non-Financial Relationships and Activities, and Conflicts of Interest. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals. Updated January 2024.
6. Institute of Medicine. Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education, and Practice. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2009.
7. Baker P, Zambrano P, Mathisen R, et al. Breastfeeding, first-food systems and corporate power: a case study on the market and political practices of the transnational baby food industry and public health resistance in the Philippines. *Global Health.* 2021;17(1):125.
8. Grummer-Strawn LM, Holliday F, Jungo KT, Rollins N. Sponsorship of national and regional professional paediatrics associations by companies that make breast-milk substitutes: evidence from a review of official websites. *BMJ Open.* 2019;9(8):e029035.