

17 August, 2012

Ms Shabana Azmi

Noted Cine Artist and Social Activist.
India

Dear Shabana Ji,

We understand that you are going to be one of the chief delegates at the Nestlé's 'First 1000 Days' march which will be held at Major Dhyanchand National Stadium, India Gate 19 August, 2012, along with cinema artist Shabana Azmi and Konkana Sen Sharma amongst other key influential individuals. Nestle calls it “....a joint effort to generate awareness about the lasting and irreversible impact of inadequate nutrition during the 1st 1000 Days' window....”

We are concerned to see your support to Nestle, which has consistently tried to undermine and violate the *Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act 2003* (IMS Act), initiated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, even for an event which the company terms as a “cause” about Nutrition.

Nestle has been charged by a Court in Delhi and facing a criminal trial for violation of the IMS Act. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-19/india/31210121_1_nestle-india-food-products-cerelac

Recently, Nestle products have been seized by the Department of Health, Government of Haryana, as labeling of their infant milk substitutes violates the IMS Act. (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-03/india/33018930_1_nestle-milk-substitutes-bottle-and-infant-food)

Globally, though Nestle is the world's largest baby food company, it has shown scant respect for either child health or for national and international policies. Nestle is also the biggest violator of the International Code of Marketing of Breast milk Substitutes, putting the lives of millions of infants at risk.

Nestlé's continued violations of the IMS Act in India, and its attempts to undermine the law constrained the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of WCD to write letters to States and Union territories to warn them of the company tactics, which include setting up front organization like 'Nestle Nutrition Institute' that sponsors doctors' meetings and research in violation of the IMS Act.

http://www.bpni.org/IMS-ACT/Joint_MOH_WCD_Ltr_IMS_Act.pdf and <http://www.bpni.org/IMS-ACT/Govt-letter-sponsorship.pdf> .

We would like to point out that the '1000 days initiative' is a global initiative by international organizations and countries to focus on the special health and nutritional requirements of infants and young children. Nestle is trying to position themselves as “experts”.

We believe that Nestle is attempting to link itself to this initiative and using it as a Public Relation exercise to reduce national and international focus on its violations of laws and Codes, as well as to project itself as a promoter of healthy nutrition to enhance its profits at the expenses of health of children. It is no surprise that in March 2012, few days after campaign on '1000 days', Nestle launched their food supplement 'Mom & Me', a new product in the market very smartly directly targeting the mother and indirectly the unborn child. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM-FxuoPtkw>).

You are a public figure, one that has clearly demonstrated its concerns for social issues, and are thus a role model for millions of Indian women. Your association with the Nestle March will provide the company legitimacy as a saviour of infants and young children, even as it continues to violate the laws meant to protect the lives and health of the same children.

Your 'association' with brand Nestle will send a wrong signal of endorsing their behavior. We hope you refuse any association with the company in the garb of spreading awareness about the "cause" of Nutrition. We are concerned that your 'support' would provide legitimacy to Nestle in portraying the company being the nutrition expert in front of the public, which they are not.

We hope you understand our concerns and refuse to participate in the said "cause" and NOT help Nestle in 'cause- related marketing'.

Sincerely yours,

We are:

1. Dr. Arun Gupta (arun@ibfanasia.org) , Pediatrician, Regional coordinator, International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) and Member of Prime Ministers' Council on India's Nutrition Challenges
2. Dr. P.K. Shah, President, Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecological Societies of India.
3. Dr. Sailesh Gupta, Hon. Secretary General of Indian Academy of Pediatrics. (IAP)
4. Prof. HPS Sachdev, Head Dept. of Pediatrics, Sita Ram Bhartia Hospital, New Delhi.
5. Prof. KP Kushwaha, Principal, BRD Medical College and Head, Dept. of Pediatrics, Gorakhpur.
6. Dr. MMA Faridi, Professor and Head, Dept. of Pediatrics, UCMS and GTB Hospital, Delhi.
7. Dr. Vinod K Paul, Professor and Head, Dept. of Pediatrics, AIIMS, New Delhi.,
8. Dr. Umesh Kapil, Professor of Human Nutrition, AIIMS Delhi.
9. Dr. JP Dadhich, Pediatrician, and National Coordinator BPNI.
10. Dr Rajiv Tandon, Senior Adviser, Maternal, Newborn, Child Health and Nutrition, Save the Children, India.