

Commercial Milk Formula Marketing: Communities & Emergencies

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Birthmark Doula Collective & New Orleans Breastfeeding Center (NOBC)



- Local member-owned cooperative
- Reproductive justice organization
- Provide support, education, and services during the perinatal year and beyond.
- NOBC, a program of Birthmark, is the first free-standing breastfeeding clinic in Louisiana



Infant feeding options

Breastmilk

The cleanest, **safest** food for an infant in an emergency is a mother's own breastmilk.

Donor's milk

The second safest choice is someone's else breastmilk.

Liquid formula

The third safest choice is liquid formula.

Powdered formula

The least safe choice is powdered formula.

Safe formula feeding requires substantial resources

- A steady supply of formula
- Clean drinking water
- Fuel
- Feeding equipment
- Cleaning supplies
- Education on how to safely prepare formula
- Medical care and follow-up

→ **These resources are not guaranteed in an emergency**



Formula donations in emergencies

- People want to help the youngest and most vulnerable; donations from individuals and organizations are well-meaning, but harmful
- Diarrhea, respiratory tract infections, and malnutrition are the most common causes of illness and death in emergencies, and formula feeding can make these more likely
- WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the Operational Guidance on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies prohibit formula donations (Gribble et al 2020)
- Resolution WHA63.23 (2010) calls on governments to adhere to the Operational Guidance on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (Ching et al. 2021)

The cost to individuals and communities

Formula donations and their widespread distribution --

- Reduce breastfeeding rates
- Increase infection rates
- Increase formula dependence

The infant formula industry

- \$70 billion industry (Lancet 2020)
- According to a 2014-2017 report by IBFAN-ICDC, there were 800+ Code violations documented on 28 baby food companies, including bottles and teats companies, from 79 countries
- **Formula companies see emergencies as an opportunity to market their products**
- Without compliance to the International Code, communities are vulnerable to aggressive marketing practices

Formula
companies
promote directly
to



Consumers



Health professionals
and systems



Policy makers



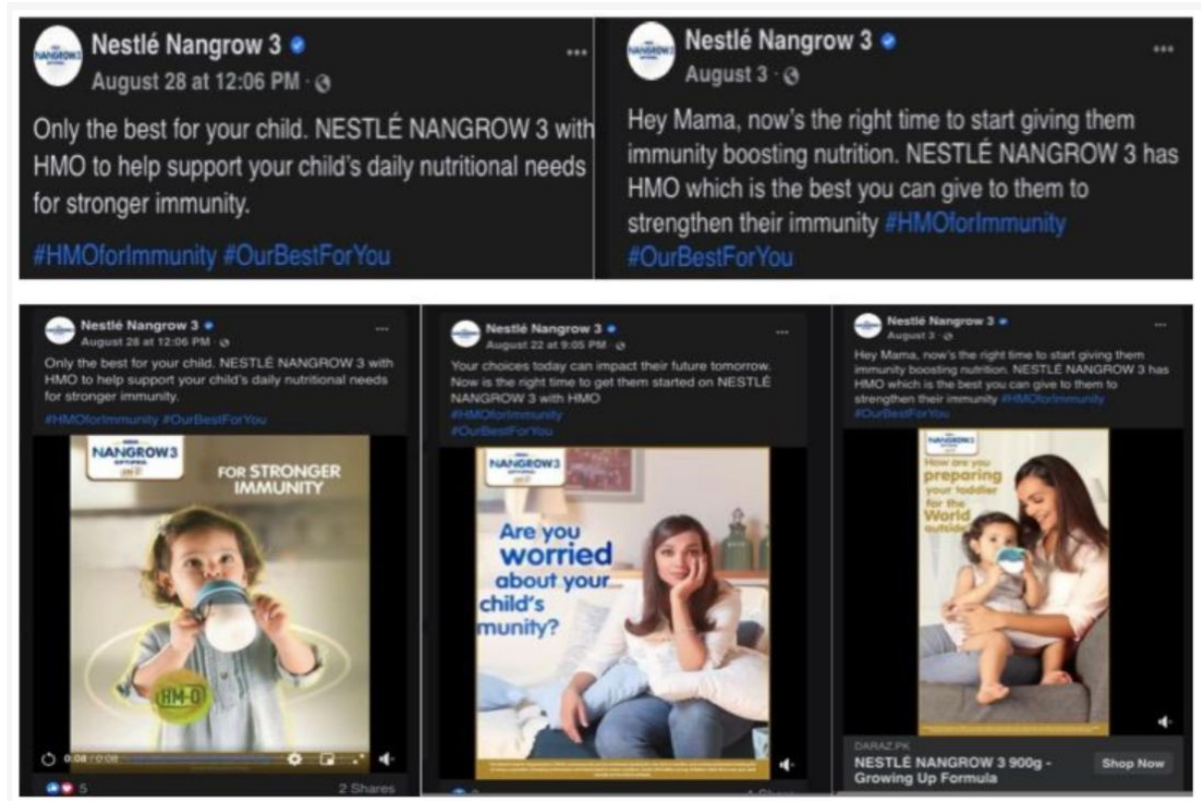
The COVID-19 Pandemic

- Formula companies are exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic (Baby Milk Action)
- Though prohibited, formula companies are donating to individuals, hospitals, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations on a global scale
- Policies that impede breastfeeding also enhance the marketing of infant formula (Gribble et al. 2020)



Formula Marketing Tactics

1. Unfounded health claims on immunity that promote fear



Insert citations on slides 10-17

Formula Marketing Tactics

2. Riding on public health authority to gain legitimacy

WHO TĂNG CẢNH BÁO DỊCH COVID-19 LÊN MỨC CAO NHẤT

“Thế giới đang ở “thời khắc quyết định” khi dịch ngày càng lấy lan mạnh”

ColosBaby
TĂNG CƯỜNG MIỄN DỊCH

PHÒNG NHIỄM KHUẨN
HÔ HẤP VÀ TIÊU HÓA
DO VIRUS VÀ VI KHUẨN

The advertisement features a portrait of WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom. At the bottom, three cans of ColosBaby formula are displayed, labeled 'MUMU', '2+', and 'IgG Blue'. The background is green with virus-like icons in the top right corner.

Formula Marketing Tactics

3. Appealing to public sentiment on solidarity and hope

中国儿童少年基金会
China Children and Teenagers Foundation

Mead Johnson
美赞臣

春雨医生
Chunyu Doctor

为爱战疫 守护新生

线上公益义诊

快速提问时间: 7*24小时
专家值班时间: 8: 00-23: 00
义诊时间: 2020.2.20-2020.4.20
义诊科室: 呼吸内科、感染科、产科、儿科、心理科
公益义诊, 每人每天3次免费咨询

“守护新生”公益行动为湖北省孕产妈妈们提供:

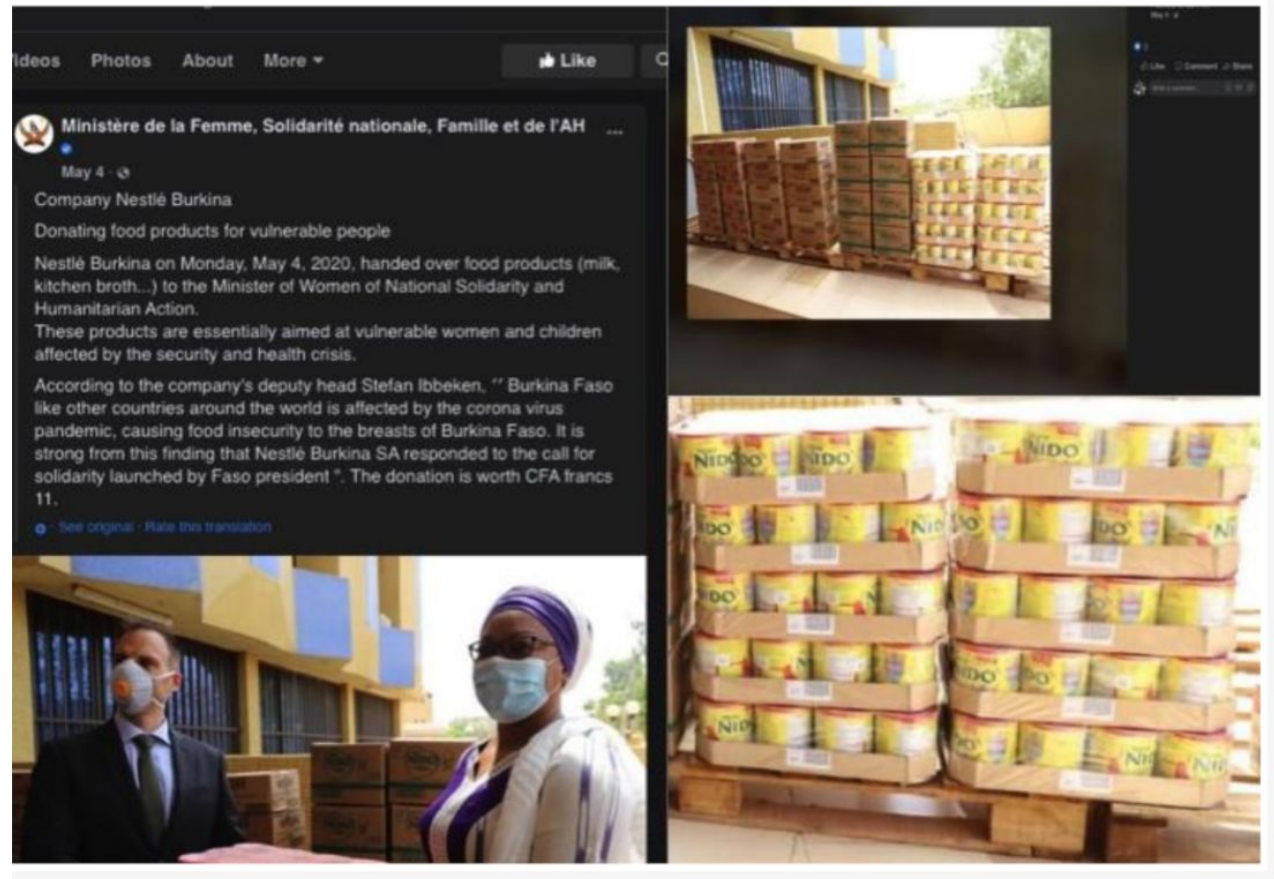
妈妈奶粉

妈妈防疫包

妈妈防疫包

Formula Marketing Tactics

4. Influx of donations of breastmilk substitutes and supplies related to COVID-19



Formula Marketing Tactics

5. Prominent use of digital platforms to reach out to parents



Nutriclub

**Layanan Careline kami
siap dihubungi 24/7
selama Libur Lebaran**

Nutriclub berkomitmen untuk terus membantu Mama dan Papa memberikan informasi penting mengenai nutrisi dan tumbuh kembang si Kecil.


We're standing by you,
Let's stay resilient together

Hubungi kami

0 821 2 000100
0 800 1 360360
www.nutriclub.co.id

Formula Marketing Tactics

6. Promoting uncertainty through endorsing breastfeeding



The image shows a screenshot of a social media post from Medela Kenya. On the left is a photograph of a woman breastfeeding her baby, with the Medela logo in the top left corner. On the right is the text of the post, which addresses concerns about breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. The post includes a question, a reassuring statement based on limited studies, and a recommendation for safety precautions. The post has one like and a comment input field is visible at the bottom.

medela 🍌

Medela Kenya
April 25 · 🌐

Is it safe to **#breastfeed** if I have **#Coronavirus** ?
Studies are limited, but until now they show that the **#mother** can continue to give her **#milk** to the baby taking precautions as using a mask and washing hands when feeding at the breast. **#MedelaBreastPumps**
#medela @medelakenya

1

Like Comment Share

Write a comment...









Coronavirus: Information for breastfeeding moms and moms to be

Formula Marketing Tactics

7. Discounts on BMS products that are linked to COVID-19

← → ↻ ⓘ Not Secure | news.gerber.com/news/an-important-message-for-the-gerber-community-on-covid-19

My Gerber Tools, guidance, savings and more [Learn more](#)

        Products ▾ Feeding Topic

Home > Gerber Newsroom > Press Releases An Important Message for the Gerber Community on COVID-19

An Important Message for the Gerber Community on COVID-19

As the world faces a time of great uncertainty, we want to reassure you that there is currently adequate supply of infant formula in the United States. As a partner for both parents and healthcare professionals, we know our products play a vital role in a family's life. We are here to help navigate the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation and ensure families can access our nutritional formulas, foods and beverages as the nation's response evolves.

We are aware of some temporary out-of-stock situations at retail stores and online retailers. We understand the concern parents feel when they see empty shelves. We are providing more formula, food and beverages to retailers so that they can restock their shelves as soon as possible. We have increased production of our baby formulas, beverages and foods and are operating seven days a week to quickly fill retail orders as they're received so we can help stores maintain their stocks.


If you have trouble locating Gerber formula, food or beverages at your local store, we encourage you to ask the store manager where these products can be found in-store, and when more stock is expected to arrive. Or, you can try to obtain our formulas, beverages and foods from an online retailer who may have more stock.

We are aware of rumors claiming that Gerber is giving away free formula in response to the out of stocks. While this is not true, we are committed to our goal of supporting babies and families with dependable, affordable nutrition, and you can find information about discounts by visiting <https://gerber.com/coupons>.

As always, we're here for you 24-7. If you have any questions, please give us a call at 1-844-796-5723.

Formula Marketing Tactics

8. Reaching out to health professionals through sponsoring educational events on topics related to COVID-19 and infant and young child feeding



UP MEDICINA
UP MED
WEBINARS
2020 MEDICAL UPDATES ONLINE

Life talks 2020

Pregnancy in time of COVID-19

April 24, 2020 | Friday, 12-1 PM Manila Time

SPEAKER:
Sharon Ann L. Singson, MD
Clinical Associate Professor
Division of Maternal and Fetal Medicine
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
UP-Philippine General Hospital

MODERATOR:
Leah Anne L. Zamora, MD
Head, Section of OB-GYN Ultrasound
Asian Hospital and Medical Center

UP Manila Livestream Page:
<http://livestream.upm.edu.ph>

REGISTRATION IS FREE
Contact us at:
upmedwebinars2020@gmail.com

Sponsored by: Abbott

UP Med Webinars

The way forward

- In emergencies, we need strong protection and support for breastfeeding, and implementation of the Code is the most effective way to do this
- To date, only 25 countries out of 194 countries have measures that are substantially aligned with the Code, while 58 have no legal provisions (WHO, UNICEF, & IBFAN, 2020)
- “WHO and UNICEF call on governments to urgently strengthen legislation on the Code during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments and civil society organizations should also not seek or accept donations of breast-milk substitutes in emergency situations.”

