

*“Our special thanks to David [UNICEF New York] and Joo Kean [IBFAN-ICDC], who have provided valuable, timely and untiring support to Vietnam during the entire long and tough process. We will seek for your further assistance in supporting the government with the decree enforcement through dissemination, training, and inspection”.*

- Child Survival and Development Programme, UNICEF Vietnam

Following our previous announcement about the brand new law in Myanmar, IBFAN-ICDC is very pleased to announce that after more than two years of supporting the Vietnamese government, the Prime Minister of Vietnam signed a new Decree [100/2014/ND-CP] on 5 November 2014, to give effect to the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. The new Decree replaces the previous Decree 21, and we have been informed by UNICEF Vietnam staff, with whom we collaborated closely, that the new Decree is now fully in line with the International Code and subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions .

The original Decree 21 on ‘the Marketing and Usage of Nutrition Products for Young Children’, adopted in 2006, omitted many provisions of the International Code and contained loopholes. Specifically, the loopholes allowed companies to advertise follow-up formula for children 12 to 24 months of age. Companies were able to circumvent Decree 21 through cross-promotion tactics which made it difficult for consumers to distinguish between the targeted age-ranges of the products, especially formula products for children of 6-12 months and younger. Under the new Decree, promotion of breastmilk substitutes up to the age of 24 month is forbidden. This is an achievement for Vietnam as giant neighbours, at industry’s behest, are rolling back their laws to focus only on infant formula up to 6 months of age.

The push for legislative improvement in Vietnam was fraught with difficulties due to unrelenting industry intervention made through trade associations and diplomatic channels. The success in Vietnam would not have been possible without the combined effort of committed staff in UNICEF and Alive & Thrive in Vietnam. They opened the door for ICDC to contribute to the review process undertaken by the government as it unfolded. It was a real privilege for ICDC to have the opportunity to contribute to the process. After more than 2 years of hard work, this news is something that tells us it is all worth it.

As we await the English translation to verify whether Vietnam deserves an upgrade in IBFAN’s State of the Code chart, we share this happy news with our readers and supporters as we are extremely honoured to have been a part of the effort to strengthen Code implementation in Vietnam.

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