



HEALTH ▸ HYGIENE ▸ HOME

22 February 2018

Kevin Watkins  
Save the Children  
1 St John's Lane  
London  
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Dear Kevin

Thank you for your letter of 14 February 2018 and the opportunity to respond to Save the Children's report 'Don't push it: Why the formula milk industry must clean up its act'.

We recognise that the first 1000 days of life are critical to a child's development and fully support the role organisations such as yourselves have to play in improving the transparency and accountability of the infant and child nutrition industry.

We fully accept our role in ensuring our marketing practices on BMS are ethical at all times, respecting the WHO Code and national legislation as implemented. Industry and governments have a collective responsibility to ensure infants have the best start in life, and we will ensure that RB is seen as a responsible and ethical player within the BMS industry.

To fully demonstrate of our commitment to act as a responsible company, we are proud to have launched our Infant and Child Nutrition Pledge that sets out a number of key commitments and is our first step to articulate what we want to stand for as a respected BMS player.

Amongst other things, the pledge takes a public position in support of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond, followed by the introduction of appropriate complementary foods thereafter.

The pledge also recognises the importance of the principles of the WHO Code as a foundation of our BMS marketing practices, which will be introduced in Q2 2018 as part of our new BMS Marketing Policy. We would like to acknowledge the consultation and input that Save the Children have had in this process.

We realise the importance of senior level line of sight – and thus have established a BMS Steering Committee to monitor all on-going BMS matters, and our Corporate Responsibility, Sustainability, Ethics and Compliance Committee (CR Sec) a sub-committee of the Board of Directors of RB plc has final oversight for all BMS related matters.

We fully agree and support that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) establish a series of targets applicable globally that address each of the areas outlined in your conclusions and recommendations, and believe the steps noted above address each of these recommendations.

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This notwithstanding, we have a number of serious objections;

- First, to question the ethics of our company, is both judgemental and grossly unfair. We consider these references to be defamatory and detract from the credibility of the report. This does not nurture a collaborative environment for open dialogue.
- Secondly, we find it troubling that the report seems to miss the opportunity to reflect the numerous occasions where we have sought Save the Children's counsel with the objective of outlining practical steps to improve our BMS practices and procedures. I think you will agree, this omission does not reflect the depth of actions already undertaken in the 6-7 months that we have responsibility for this business.
- Thirdly, the reference to our partnership on page 32 is factually inaccurate. It states that "Save the Children has not accepted funding from RB since the announcement of the acquisition..." This is not true and insinuates that STC immediately suspended the partnership. Funds were accepted and transferred through to the January 2018.
- Finally, we find it disappointing that our input was not sought, nor were we given the opportunity to respond to the content of the report before its finalisation. We are very proud of what we have achieved together including the support of many valuable programmes around the world that have benefited millions of children, becoming the first and continued contributor to the Children's Emergency Fund, main sponsor of Night of Events. RB colleagues from all around have worked together to raise over £35 million since 2003. This lack of transparency does not provide us with the confidence that our partnership of over 15 years is either respected or valued by Save the Children.

We remain fully committed to our 'Save a Child every Minute' campaign, designed to help "eliminate child deaths from diarrhoea, one of the world's largest killers of children under five". We too are equally proud of the results of the partnership between RB and Save the Children, which focussed on the Stop the Diarrhoea Initiative in Nigeria and India, and has delivered results for nearly 2 million children.

Going forward, we will also looking at addressing the serious issue of nutritional stunting, a condition affecting 170 million children around the world.

We would hope that with the introduction of RB's BMS Marketing Policy built around the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk substitutes, we could renew our partnership and continue to deliver important milestones in the area of Infant and Child Nutrition.

Yours sincerely



Rakesh Kapoor