

## The International Diabetes Federation: losing its credibility by partnering with Nestlé?

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) is an umbrella organisation of more than 200 national diabetes associations in over 160 countries, and states its mission as being “to promote diabetes care, prevention and a cure worldwide”. In pursuing this mission, it can proudly point to many highly successful initiatives, helping to raise awareness, advocate for and guide clinical and public health action, and to build alliances for the prevention and control of diabetes and other chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) worldwide. Unfortunately its partnering with Nestlé, announced on Nestlé’s website at the end of April,<sup>1</sup> is in our view a serious misjudgment, the long-term effect of which will be contrary to IDF’s mission and bad for public health.

The partnership is undoubtedly excellent publicity for Nestlé, adding to its claim of genuine concern for population health after being vilified in the past, not least for its unethical promotion of infant formula in developing countries. The tobacco industry has used similar tactics in an attempt to rehabilitate itself and maintain its profits. IDF cites the fact that Nestlé has had a decade of commitment to reducing sugar, salt, and fat in its products as evidence that they are indeed committed to improving health. But when Nestlé remains so obviously wedded to the intense marketing of energy-dense confectionery and sugar-sweetened beverages, this is analogous to the tobacco industry showing its commitment to health through the production of low-tar cigarettes.

Of course food is different from tobacco, and the food industry as a whole must be part of the solution to the global epidemics of obesity, diabetes, and related diseases. How-

ever, IDF’s partnering with Nestlé is premature and retrograde and puts at risk the credibility of the wider NCD Alliance, which IDF has been jointly leading over recent years. IDF would be more credible and effective in working to improve the global and national regulatory frameworks within which Nestlé and other transnational corporations operate, and in building consumer pressure. In partnering, IDF is ultimately promoting Nestlé’s commercial interests in return for little more than cosmetic changes. This approach is a recipe for more business as usual, more obesity, and more diabetes.

DB has received project funding from IDF, and has worked for the Geneva Health Forum whose 2012 conference received money from Nestlé. AH, AM, and AR were on the committee for the last edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas. AM is co-chair of the review committee for the IDF-Bridges programme for Translational Research. NU is co-chair of the IDF Diabetes Atlas committee. JY is a member of the IDF Insulin Task Force. The other authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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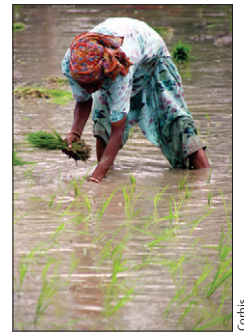
1 Nestlé. Nestlé contributes to fight against non-communicable diseases. <http://www.nestle.com/Media/NewsAndFeatures/Pages/Diabetes-partnership.aspx?Category=Investors,CSV> (accessed Aug 8, 2012).

## One world, one health: beyond the Millennium Development Goals

Your June 9 Editorial (p 2117)<sup>1</sup> emphasised the near absence of health from the initial Rio+20 agenda, reflecting a deep disconnect between health and environmental priorities for drafting sustainable development goals. The nexus of risks in terms of food, water, climate, and health identified by the World Economic Forum<sup>2</sup> presents the greatest challenge of our generation, but there is general reluctance to acknowledge humanity’s place within the ecosystem framework, despite our species’ profound ecological effects.

The intensification of agriculture has created habitat perturbations on a scale equivalent to the last glacial-interglacial transition.<sup>3</sup> Extensive international travel and trade networks, as well as population displacement due to natural disasters and conflict, facilitate the rapid spread of (re-)emerging infectious diseases across geographic and social boundaries, with increased pathogen resistance due to widespread antibiotic and chemical use. Additionally, pandemics of obesity and malnutrition are testament to a food system that no longer supports human health or sustainable agriculture, and is implicated in the devastating global burden of non-communicable diseases.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of “one health” recognises that all animal species (including human beings) provide a shared reservoir for pathogen gene exchange and spread. The expanded “one world, one health” concept, first proposed by the Wildlife Conservation Society and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, WHO, the World Bank, and UNICEF, recognises that the health of people and societies is intimately linked and ultimately dependent on the resilience of the world’s life-



For the NCD Alliance see <http://www.ncdalliance.org/>