Engaging Business for Maternal and Child Nutrition
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Engaging Business for Maternal and Child Nutrition
Intended audience and purpose of the Programming Guidance on Engaging Business for Maternal and Child Nutrition

The primary audience of this Programming Guidance on Engaging Business for Maternal and Child Nutrition is UNICEF staff, particularly programme teams and private sector engagement teams working jointly on maternal, adolescent and child nutrition programmes in development and humanitarian contexts, as well as those working on nutrition-relevant programmes, such as health, water and sanitation, education, protection and social policy.

The Programming Guidance aligns with the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, which identifies the potential of engaging business when the private sector is uniquely positioned to help UNICEF achieve priority nutrition outcomes, at the same time as being aware of risks that need to be managed. It intends to provide UNICEF teams with practical and evidence-based guidance on effectively engaging the private sector to implement the Nutrition Strategy.

The content of this Programming Guidance is based on the lessons and insights generated by a review of UNICEF’s past and recent experiences in engaging business for nutrition outcomes across several regions. Ten case studies were developed from this review and are referenced in the Programming Guidance to provide practical country and programme examples.

This full collection of summarized case studies can be found in the 2021 Compendium of UNICEF’s Experience Engaging Business for Nutrition Outcomes which is recommended to be read in conjunction with this Programme Guidance.
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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEPSA</td>
<td>Kenya Private Sector Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Programme Group (of UNICEF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>Private Fundraising and Partnership Division (of UNICEF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNPs</td>
<td>Micronutrient powders</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMG</td>
<td>Ready-made garment</td>
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<tr>
<td>RUTF</td>
<td>Ready-to-use therapeutic foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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DEFINITIONS

Please note that these are definitions used for the purposes of this guidance.

Business sector – All companies (from small and medium enterprises and community-level entrepreneurs to large global multi-nationals and corporations); multi-stakeholder platforms and industry bodies; business leaders (as influencers and philanthropists); investors; as well as corporate and family foundations.

Business for Results – A ‘whole-of-UNICEF’ approach to accelerating UNICEF’s engagement with the world of business, with a vision to create a UNICEF in which the potential and relevance of business are mainstreamed into decisions on how to achieve results for children, with the necessary ambition, knowledge, skills and resources in place.

Cause-related marketing – Engagements related to specific products or a specific campaign where the UNICEF brand or other intellectual property is used to drive consumer behaviour. An example would be a promotion on a package of Pampers diapers where the company donates to UNICEF for every pack sold.

Customer fundraising partnerships – Partnerships focused on driving donations from individuals through the company (customers), either in a real-world realm (in-store) or in a digital realm (through a digital platform or interface).

Conflict of interest – A situation in which a company has a competing interest and/or benefit that jeopardizes its commitment to deliver on the shared programming interest it is embarking on with UNICEF. A conflict of interest may also arise under a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest. For example, a conflict of interest would exist if a UNICEF country office is receiving programme funding from food and beverage companies while also supporting the government to legislate regulations that prevent the unhealthy marketing practices of the same food and beverage products those companies are producing and marketing.

Dialogue with business institutions – The least structured form of engaging where UNICEF takes part in a conversation with the objective of raising awareness or influencing a corporation, platform or sector on an issue or opportunity. A dialogue may be a prelude to a more structured engagement or a full-fledged partnership; or it may simply stay at the level of discussion.

Engagements under this category would include, inter alia:
• Exchanging information with business
• Discussion of business practices
• Participation in business-led events

Engagement – An umbrella term referring to any type of interaction with or on business entities, which can include different objectives depending on the situation and nutrition programming context. Two distinct types of ways in which UNICEF engages business for nutrition programme outcomes include “engaging with” and “engaging on”. These are described as follows:

Engaging with – A direct relationship that UNICEF has with a business entity ranging from dialogue and discussions to knowledge-exchange platforms to full-fledged partnerships. Depending on circumstances, “engaging with” may or may not entail funding, joint programming or co-communication. These types of engagements can target the business community either with individual corporations in a bilateral modality or through engagement with business platforms, alliances and industry associations as multi-stakeholder platforms.

Engaging on – A nuanced way of thinking about how UNICEF can indirectly influence the practices of certain business entities to improve nutrition outcomes for children. This might include public advocacy, working with civil society or engaging with upstream regulators or business influencers, such as investors, and mobilizing national and international business platforms.

Food and beverage sector – Diverse businesses that support the production, processing, marketing and retail of most of the food consumed by the world’s population. Importantly, this definition also includes other closely associated organizations, such as philanthropic foundations funded by the food industry, food and beverage retailers, trade associations and research institutes funded by the organization or organizations. Only a small number of subsistence farmers – those who survive on what they grow – can be considered outside of the scope of the modern food and beverage sector.

Leveraging business – An umbrella term encompassing actions that seek to both engage with and engage on business. In sum, any activities that seek to use the powerful ways in which business impacts children to accelerate UNICEF’s achievement of a specific objective.
**Partnership** – A form of engagement involving a written legal agreement formalizing the collaboration (which may range from a letter of intent, to a memorandum of understanding, to a legally binding agreement). Typically, all participants in a partnership agree to:

a) Work together to achieve a common purpose;

b) Invest their respective resources (e.g., time, knowledge and expertise, research and technological development, funding, core assets, etc.);

c) Acknowledge mutual benefits as an integral aspect to the engagement; and

d) Share risks.

Usually (but not always) partnerships involve some level of public communication and recognition, and an exchange of assets (e.g., financial or brand-related) between the parties.

**Multi-stakeholder platforms** (also commonly referred to as “platforms” or “aggregators”) – Organizations, initiatives, networks and/or associations that systematically bring together stakeholders, including businesses, foundations, governments, United Nations agencies, NGOs and/or communities around issues of business and societal importance to catalyse action.

**Philanthropic partnerships** – Partnerships where the partner’s programmatic impact is through the funding or transfer of other assets to support UNICEF’s work. In such partnerships, the actions of the business do not align closely or strategically with the core business of the company or deliver significant strategic value back to the business.

**Shared-value partnerships** A win-win partnership that delivers business value to the partner (e.g., access to market, increased sales, enhanced reputation, license to operate, strategic communications, brand) and value to UNICEF (e.g., new implementation modalities, business assets such as data and expertise, programme funding, better business practices that improve life for families and children). ‘Shared-value’ should not be confused with ‘shared values’ (which is where two entities share the same values).
BACKGROUND

1.1 HARNESSING THE POWER OF BUSINESS TO ACHIEVE PROGRAMME OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN
As a global organization UNICEF is committed to accelerating results for children and contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Achieving the goal to realize the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged, will require strategic engagement with government, other United Nations organizations, civil society, business, communities and children.

Harnessing the power of business and markets for children is one of UNICEF’s core how strategies for achieving programme outcomes for children, including for nutrition. UNICEF’s 2019 programme guidance for country offices on Engagement with Business was designed to move this strategy forward by helping UNICEF country teams focus on key areas where engaging business – beyond fundraising and commercial contracts – can significantly help to achieve the organization’s strategic programme outcomes.

1.2 GLOBAL MALNUTRITION TRENDS
Although major progress has been made in the past decade to improve nutrition, malnutrition rates remain unacceptably high and current achievements are insufficient to reach the nutrition targets of the 2030 SDG agenda, hampering the development of economies and nations. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an immense negative impact on maternal and child nutrition with its disruptions to food, health, education and social protection systems, which have eroded gains made in reducing malnutrition in recent years.2

Today the nutrition situation of the world’s children is characterized by a triple burden of malnutrition.3 The first burden is the continuing scourge of undernutrition, in the form of stunting and wasting, which threatens the survival, growth and development of millions of children. The second burden encompasses micronutrient deficiencies, an often hidden form of malnutrition where children lack the vitamins and minerals that are essential for optimal skeletal growth, brain development and sometimes survival. The third is the growing prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity, which is increasingly affecting children from poorer households in low-, middle- and high-income countries.

1.3 THE UNICEF NUTRITION STRATEGY 2020–2030
With 10 years remaining in the pursuit of the 2030 SDGs, UNICEF has renewed its commitment and action on ending child malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere.

The vision of the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030: Nutrition, for Every Child (see Figure 1) aspires to a world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to nutrition. The goal of the Nutrition Strategy is to protect and promote diets, services and practices that support optimal nutrition, growth and development for all children, adolescents and women by providing support to governments – the primary duty-bearers of children’s nutrition – and their many partners, to scale up policies, strategies and programmes that end child malnutrition.

Box 1 shows UNICEF’s four strategic result areas on which efforts to end malnutrition in all its forms will be focused in both development and humanitarian settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030: Four result areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Early childhood nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Nutrition in middle childhood and adolescence</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Maternal nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Nutrition and care for children with wasting</td>
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1.4 ENGAGING BUSINESS FOR PRIORITY NUTRITION OUTCOMES
The business sector is highly relevant to UNICEF’s efforts to support governments in ending malnutrition – from undernutrition, to micronutrient deficiencies, to overweight and obesity. Engaging business strategically has the potential to reinforce UNICEF’s nutrition programming, for example, by sharing responsibilities, optimizing resources, and maximizing outcomes (see Box 2).

To better understand the strategic role that the business sector can potentially play in protecting and promoting diets, services and practices, an extensive analytical review of UNICEF’s past experiences engaging business to achieve nutrition outcomes was carried out with field teams in Africa, Asia, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America. This review covered an expanse of business engagements for nutrition programming in a variety of settings and sectors as well as with a diverse array of commercial entities.
**Figure 1: UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030: Nutrition, For Every Child**

**VISION**

**NUTRITION, FOR EVERY CHILD**

A world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to nutrition.

Convention of the Rights of the Child: Full realization of children’s right to nutrition

Sustainable Development Agenda 2030: Ensure access by all people, including infants, to nutritious, safe and sufficient food all year round, and end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms

**GOAL**

To protect and promote diets, services and practices that support optimal nutrition, growth and development for all children, adolescents and women

**OBJECTIVES**

Objective 1: To prevent undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight in early childhood (the first five years of life)

Objective 2: To prevent undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight in middle childhood and adolescence

Objective 3: To prevent undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight in mothers, and low birthweight in newborns

Objective 4: To ensure the early detection and treatment of wasting and other forms of life-threatening acute malnutrition in early childhood

**PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES**

- Rights-based
- Equity-focused
- Gender-responsive
- Context-specific
- Evidence-informed
- Systems-centred

**RESULTS AREAS**

Results Area 1: Early childhood nutrition

Results Area 2: Nutrition in middle childhood and adolescence

Results Area 3: Maternal nutrition

Results Area 4: Nutrition and care for children with wasting

Results Area 5: Maternal and child nutrition in humanitarian action

Results Area 6: Partnerships and governance for maternal and child nutrition

**A SYSTEMS APPROACH**

- Food System
- Health System
- Water and Sanitation System
- Education System
- Social Protection System

**IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY**

- Partnerships: Governments and partners
- Resources: Human and financial

**PROGRAMMING APPROACHES**

- Situation analysis
- Advocacy
- Policy design
- Programme scale-up
- Community engagement
- Capacity building
- Supply chains
- Financing
- Data, monitoring and evaluation
- Knowledge, innovations and learning

A world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to nutrition.
Box 2: UNICEF’s strategic response to the evolving face of child malnutrition

One of the key strategic shifts in UNICEF’s Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 is greater attention to private sector engagement. Good governance for nutrition requires public and private partners that are accountable for supporting children’s right to nutrition. National governments have primary accountability for upholding this right; however, the private sector has a key role to play as a provider of food, goods and services.

The UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 calls for UNICEF programmes to engage strategically with public and private sector actors – including the food and beverage industry – to advocate for business products and practices that support optimal nutrition for all children, adolescents and women, in all contexts.¹⁰

In particular, the review also covered some of UNICEF’s experiences and challenges in engaging the food and beverage sector, in light of that sector’s current role in shaping global food systems today (see Box 21, Section 4.4). Deciding if and how best to engage food and beverage companies to improve nutrition outcomes in an effective manner that also respects children’s rights is fundamentally important for UNICEF. This is a particularly compelling necessity given the increasing share of ultra-processed foods found in the diets of most people around the world – including children – and the proven links these foods have to rising childhood overweight and obesity levels.⁶

Based on the findings of UNICEF’s review, 10 case studies were developed with field teams. The lessons learned from these case studies have informed the content of this programme guidance. A Compendium of UNICEF’s Experience Engaging Business for Nutrition Outcomes,⁷ which contains the summaries of these case studies, serves as a companion document to this programme guidance.

Two other reference documents should be consulted in tandem with this programme guidance and the Compendium. One is the UNICEF Engagement with Business Programme Guidance for Country Offices, from which this current programme guidance draws heavily. The other is the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, described earlier.

These four documents (shown in Box 3) should be consulted by UNICEF field teams when considering whether it is strategic to engage the business sector to help the organization achieve priority nutrition outcomes. There are also numerous additional materials available at the UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedure Site.
Box 3: Engaging business for nutrition: Four key reference documents

1.5 SCOPE OF THIS PROGRAMME GUIDANCE.

Section 1 of the programme guidance provides overall contextual background to engaging business for nutrition outcomes, including the evolving global malnutrition situation and the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030.

Section 2 provides additional background to the approach on why engaging business might make sense in some circumstances to help UNICEF achieve nutrition goals and key results outlined in the Nutrition Strategy. The Section frames how business can serve in a strategic and transformational role for UNICEF in certain situations when it is able to offer unique support to achieve programme goals. Situations when the core practices of business may negatively impact children’s right to adequate nutrition are also highlighted.

Section 3 offers guidance on preparing for potential business engagements to improve child nutrition outcomes. It starts by describing five business focus areas that lend themselves as entry points through which UNICEF teams may engage business for nutrition programming. A review is also provided on the types of nutrition strategies that may be relevant for engaging business, in addition to the types of business entities that may be relevant in helping UNICEF achieve certain nutrition outcomes.

Section 4 outlines how the UNICEF programme cycle should be used to identify if and how engaging business can strategically add value to achieving desired nutrition outcomes. This includes a review of the main engagement modalities that can be considered depending on the situation, including the importance of using UNICEF’s due diligence process early in the process to vet each prospective engagement entity. Related to this, a description of businesses in the exclusionary and sensitive categories is also provided. The section also discusses how engaging certain types of business entities – for example, from the food and beverage sector – will likely require extra caution due to possible risks for UNICEF.

Section 5 gives practical insights on how to manage business engagements related to nutrition programming, including the value of having communication and risk mitigation plans around certain types of engagements.

Section 6 summarizes the practical lessons learned from UNICEF’s past field experiences, outlined in 10 case studies. These include lessons related to specific business focus areas, as well as those that cut across a number of case studies.

Section 7 offers general conclusions related to engaging business for nutrition outcomes.
2.1 FROM TRANSACTIONAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL – ENGAGING BUSINESS IN NUTRITION PROGRAMMING

Resource generation and income will always be an important factor when UNICEF engages business to support the delivery of programmes, particularly from unrestricted funds. However, fundraising should not be pursued as the only form of business engagement if other approaches can contribute to impactful and long-lasting outcomes for children, as will be illustrated in this programme guidance.

One of UNICEF’s core **how** strategies is engaging business beyond, or in addition to, fundraising and transactional partnerships. This includes transformational business engagements to achieve priority nutrition outcomes. It also involves programming that is sensitive to business practices that have a harmful impact on child nutrition, and responds through support to governments to enact better regulations and policies.

**Transformational changes to and by business actors can scale up and accelerate UNICEF’s programme outcomes.**

As such, the possible impact of business should be considered in all phases of the programme planning process.

The business ecosystem is diverse and consists of many different business partners, some of which may provide a good match to help UNICEF achieve child, adolescent and maternal nutrition programming objectives through the expertise, innovation, resources, influence and reach they can bring to the table. Businesses can directly and indirectly impact children’s nutrition (both positively and negatively) as consumers, family members of employees, young workers, and as future employees and business leaders. Children are also part of the communities and environments in which business operates.

Some of the reasons why UNICEF should consider engaging business in nutrition programming to achieve priority nutrition outcomes are outlined below.8

**2.2 BUSINESS CAN ENHANCE LARGE-SCALE NUTRITION PROGRAMME EFFECTIVENESS**

Business may have the resources, means and influence to help UNICEF achieve important nutrition outcomes at scale for children. For example, by strategically leveraging the reach of a business, its communications technologies, capacities and innovative solutions, UNICEF can significantly enhance its access to vulnerable communities, including scaling up its nutrition programmes and delivering related nutrition services to hard-to-reach groups.

In addition, business plays a critical role in producing essential nutrition products and shaping consumer preferences for them, such as micronutrient powders (MNPs), iodized salt, and ready-to-use-therapeutic foods (RUTF) for children suffering from severe wasting.

Business also has major influence on global and national economies through its role as an employer, especially considering its potential to reach hundreds of millions of workers, including women with children, in both the formal and informal sectors (see Box 4). Improvements in nutrition can occur via national or company policies that support workforce nutrition, such as the provision of healthy food in the workplace; employee health and nutrition services; nutrition education; and maternity rights protection and breastfeeding support for working mothers. Some types of nutrition support in the workplace, such as nutrition education and breastfeeding support, may also have positive secondary impacts on the nutrition of workers’ families.

**Box 4: Business as an employer**

Around the world, half a billion workers are involved in global supply chains. In some countries and sectors, the majority of workers are women, many with infants and young children. This is an important vulnerable group often underserved by health and nutrition services.

With its influence on networks of employees along the supply chain, business can strategically help UNICEF support the delivery of nutrition support in the workplace with policies related to wellbeing and nutrition literacy, as well as breastfeeding promotion, maternity rights protection and nutrition behaviour change.

Some businesses can also play a powerful role in supporting child nutrition by using its voice and influence in society – including within government circles and among its business peers – leading to positive nutrition programme outcomes.
2.3 BUSINESS PRACTICES, PROTECTING CHILDREN’S RIGHT TO GOOD NUTRITION AND THE SDGS

One of the most powerful contributions business can make to achieving the nutrition-related SDGs and other global nutrition targets is a commitment to ethical, responsible business practices that contribute positively to food, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection systems, all of which are necessary prerequisites for better nutrition. Members of the business community must also adhere to all relevant national and international regulations and ensure that they respect children’s human rights (see Box 8 in Section 3.5 for more details on these global principles).

Business is also critically relevant when it comes to ensuring access to safe, affordable, nutritious and sustainable foods for children, adolescents and mothers. More food now crosses borders, and production is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of businesses – just 100 large firms account for 77 per cent of processed food sales worldwide. For families around the world, business is playing a growing role in providing the food they eat, and through its marketing, is also shaping what they want to consume and their aspirations. Ensuring that business practices support, and do not undermine, optimal nutrition is a must. There are opportunities, for example, to explore engagement with small and medium producers to help improve the availability and affordability of locally sourced, nutritious foods for children. Small firms are generally those with fewer than 50 employees, while medium-sized enterprises are usually defined as employing no more than 250 to 500 employees. In addition, UNICEF can leverage corporate human rights due diligence to encourage businesses to proactively identify, assess and manage potential and actual adverse human rights impacts through concrete action, including improved policies, processes and reporting.

At the same time, UNICEF must be sensitive to the fact that some business practices negatively impact nutrition outcomes. This is related to the impact of business on the food environment and caregiver practices stemming from unhealthy marketing practices and products. For example, some core business practices of large multinational food and beverage companies (e.g., the production, distribution and marketing of highly processed, calorie-rich foods high in saturated fats, trans-fats, free sugars and/or salt as well as breastmilk substitutes) have been linked to poor nutrition outcomes in children and the growing epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity, and the food and beverage sector has been unable or unwilling to effectively self-regulate.

In these contexts, UNICEF can be inspired by the experience from Latin America where country offices supported governments to address obesogenic environments through the regulation of harmful food and beverage sector practices. This experience is documented in two of the case studies generated from UNICEF’s review.

2.4 WHAT ARE THE INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESS TO ENGAGE WITH UNICEF?

While engaging business can sometimes help UNICEF achieve nutrition programme outcomes and ensure the promotion, protection and fulfilment of children’s rights, it is important to underscore that business can also derive much value from its affiliation with UNICEF. These benefits include improving the company’s image, strengthening their brand and business sustainability, and supporting staff morale and stakeholder support.

UNICEF assets that are attractive to business include leveraging the organization’s comprehensive programming in nutrition (and other related sectors), deep expertise in child rights, its global field presence, long-standing experience in corporate engagement, its knowledge of targeting vulnerable communities through field programming, private sector partnerships and policy, and standards development.

UNICEF also has the potential to convene, engage with and influence a wide range of nutrition relevant strategic stakeholders that business may wish to reach and partner with, including governments, civil society, faith-based organizations and investors. While this should always be a secondary consideration – because the main reason that UNICEF engages businesses is to bring value for children, programming effectiveness and efficiency – it can be a useful argument for motivating businesses to support and amplify UNICEF’s work, noting that business can also benefit from the organization’s brand and reputation.

A fine balance: managing benefits and risks

Business can be a key partner to maximizing progress for children. Much of this document explores how UNICEF can amplify its work with the private sector to drive results for children at scale. However, at the same time, UNICEF recognizes that some sectors, and some business practices, are associated with negative impacts on children that undermine children’s rights and make it sensitive for UNICEF to engage. For this reason it is relevant to consider risks, the rules of engagement and take care to avoid conflict of interest. One such sector is the food and beverage (F&B) industry where business practices, product portfolios and influencing or lobbying work has been evidenced as tying back directly to problems that UNICEF’s programmes are working to fix – and where business can be found to be working at cross-purposes of UNICEF’s goals for children. UNICEF should remain ambitious about its goals for every child and will remain ‘risk-aware’ rather than ‘risk-averse’; however this is an area where potential gains and opportunities from partnerships need to be weighed against potential harms for children and risks to UNICEF’s programmes and priorities.
PREPARING FOR POTENTIAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH BUSINESS FOR NUTRITION

3.1 FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING BUSINESS FOR NUTRITION PROGRAMME OUTCOMES.
UNICEF’s framework for engaging business in nutrition programming is shown in Figure 2 and provides a useful starting point for UNICEF field teams to begin visualizing how the business sector might be uniquely positioned to help UNICEF achieve its nutrition priorities.

3.2 FIVE FOCUS AREAS TO ENGAGE BUSINESS
As shown in Figure 2, there are five business focus areas that provide UNICEF field teams with strategic entry points to engage business in nutrition programming. Some illustrative nutrition examples for each of these five focus areas are shown in Box 5.

Box 5: Five business focus areas for UNICEF’s nutrition programming
1. Business as a provider of essential goods and services for children and families, for example, through industry support for large-scale food fortification, fortified complementary foods and micronutrient supplements
2. Business as an employer, for example through industry support to breastfeeding by ensuring maternity protection policies, nursing breaks and breastfeeding rooms in the workplace
3. Business impact on communities and the food environment, for example by producing nutritious, safe and affordable food options sustainably, and making them available at local retail outlets
4. Business technology, innovation, and financing, for example by strengthening supply chains to support reliable access to low-cost RUTF for children with wasting; and leveraging resources for children and providing funds for UNICEF to implement programmes
5. Business as a positive influence in society, for example through stronger corporate responsibility directed to protect, promote and support children’s rights, including the right to nutrition
3.3 WHAT TYPES OF NUTRITION PROGRAMME STRATEGIES ARE RELEVANT FOR ENGAGING BUSINESS?

Table 1 provides detailed examples of the specific types of nutrition programme strategies that can be considered when engaging business under each of the five business focus areas. The table also shows the case studies developed during UNICEF’s review, which are featured in the Compendium. As can be seen, a number of case studies fall within more than one of the five focus areas.

Table 1: Consider the relevance of business for improved nutrition outcomes: Examples of nutrition programme strategies by the five business areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business focus areas</th>
<th>Examples of programming that consider the relevance of business to nutrition outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Business as a provider of essential foods, goods and services for children and families | • Advocate for public procurement processes to influence or shape markets by improving access, availability, quality, affordability and sustainability of healthy foods  
• Strengthen incentives for private providers to engage in expanding access to affordable and nutritious foods for excluded populations  
• Undertake assessments of core business policies and policies related to food and nutrition  
• Develop specialized nutrition products, such as RUTF to treat severe wasting in children  
• Scale up the delivery of nutrition products for children and women, such as MNPs, iodized salt and RUTF  
• Support governments to develop and implement standards around large-scale food fortification  
• Provide guidance to national food companies on how to fortify staple foods (e.g., cooking oil and flour) with essential micronutrients  
See the following related case studies:  
• Success in reducing iodine deficiency: Engaging with the salt industry in Europe and Central Asia (Case study #1)  
• UNICEF and DSM’s shared-value partnership for improved nutrition in Nigeria: Increasing access to vital nutrients for children (Case study #2)  
• Life-saving treatment for children with severe wasting: Shaping the global market to scale up ready-to-use therapeutic food (Case study #3) |
### Business focus areas

<table>
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<tr>
<th>2. Business as an employer</th>
<th>Examples of programming that consider the relevance of business to nutrition outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase nutrition literacy among workers and their families (e.g., children, adolescents and mothers) on good nutrition practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourage business investments in nutrition education resources to address workforce needs and promote employee-led innovations in design and delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourage business to adopt and enforce policies and regulations to protect maternity rights in the workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support optimal infant feeding for mothers with infants (e.g., exclusive breastfeeding) both in the workplace as well as outside in the communities where these mothers reside, linking with government health and nutrition services whenever possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promote healthy and safe food at work through increased employee access in the workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Integrate nutrition support into workplace health services provided to employees</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>See the following related case studies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Promoting baby-friendly workplaces in the agricultural sector:</strong> Supporting mothers to breastfeeding in Kenya’s commercial tea estates (Case study #4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Promoting baby-friendly workplaces in the ready-made garment sector:</strong> Building the Mothers@Work programme in Bangladesh (Case study #5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>UNICEF and IMPAct4Nutrition:</strong> Engaging business through an innovative platform to support India’s national nutrition programme (Case study # 6)</td>
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<th>3. Business impact on community and the food environment</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Encourage local sourcing of ingredients for new RUTF recipes and strengthen local production capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support women-led businesses and female entrepreneurs in the food supply chain and conduct impact assessments of employment conditions in the supply chain, in particular the enabling environment for good nutrition of women and children</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partner with research and consumer rights groups to build the evidence around causes and solutions to childhood obesity and carry out advocacy to address them</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support governments to develop and enforce regulations on harmful business practices linked to malnutrition (e.g., inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes and complementary foods for children under age 2; and the aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages targeting children including in school settings)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with producers/manufacturers of nutritious foods and essential nutrition supplies to create an environment that is conducive to improving nutrition outcomes and healthier behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partner with financial institutions to address economic barriers that prevent businesses from upgrading systems, fortify staple products and other initiatives that would help improve the supply of healthy foods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>See the following related case studies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Engaging on better business practices to prevent childhood obesity:</strong> New approaches to business engagement in Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico (Case study #7)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Preventing childhood obesity and protecting child rights:</strong> Ending direct engagement with food and beverage companies in Argentina and Mexico (Case study #8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Business focus areas

#### 4. Business technology, innovation and financing

- Address business impact on biodiversity loss and ecosystem instability and the possible implications for nutrition
- Convene industry and partner forums for dialogue with businesses on strategic direction to convey nutrition product development needs, understand business challenges and communicate strategies for accelerating development and addressing market entry challenges
- Develop and deploy special contracting and innovative financing tools to incentivize accelerated research and development related to improved nutrition outcomes and a path to a viable market
- Connect investors and lenders with business providers to facilitate access to commercial loans to support improved nutrition outcomes
- Leverage the power of leading technology companies to access and use big data for insights and forecasting related to nutrition, and to efficiently and accurately identify and act on global trends in malnutrition
- Work with the business sector to identify new sources of funding and innovative ways of generating sustainable funding sources

**See the following related case studies:**

- **#Eat Like A Pro**: How UNICEF and Beko, a global appliance giant, combined forces to combat childhood obesity (Case study #9)
- **Life-saving treatment for children with severe wasting**: Shaping the global market to scale up ready-to-use therapeutic food (Case study #3)

#### 5. Business as a positive influence in society

- Partner with civil society, academia and other actors without conflict of interest to influence policy and further engage in advocacy and communications
- While sensitive to avoiding conflict of interest, leverage the social media and marketing expertise of business to reach vast audiences (e.g., customer base, employees, parents and caregivers) to raise awareness on the importance of good nutrition on child health and survival outcomes, but also on the proven productivity gains that investing in nutrition generates

**See the following related case studies:**

- **UNICEF and IMPAct4Nutrition**: Engaging business through an innovative platform to support India’s national nutrition programme (Case study # 6)
- **#Eat Like A Pro**: How UNICEF and Beko, a global appliance giant, combined forces to combat childhood obesity (Case study #9)
- **Advocating for salt iodization**: Partnering with a private real estate company in Thailand to beat iodine deficiency (Case study #10)
3.4 WHAT TYPES OF ENTITIES ARE RELEVANT WHEN CONSIDERING THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS ON NUTRITION OUTCOMES?

Figure 3 shows the many types of commercial groups and bodies which exist in the business ecosystem that may be relevant to nutrition programming. This broad expanse of business groups includes national, regional and international companies and covers many sectors. A description of those most relevant for UNICEF is found in Box 6.

**Sectoral business entities**

There are many types of business entities in different sectors to consider as relevant to programming (see Box 6). The choice of business entity and sector will be determined by the specific nutrition needs identified during the country programme cycle (described in Section 4).

**Box 6: Types of business entities relevant for nutrition programming**

- Export crop companies
- Garment manufacturers
- Banking institutions
- Household appliance companies
- Telecommunication firms
- Pharmaceutical companies
- Real estate developers
- Professional sports clubs
- Media companies
- Food retailers
- Salt producers and processed food companies
- Food and beverage companies

UNICEF has engaged with single companies and groups of companies, including both national and multinational entities. In some cases, the engagement was with the foundational arm of the commercial company, such as in Kenya.

In other instances, depending on the programmatic needs and nutrition objectives, UNICEF has engaged larger business groups, networks and/or associations of companies as an alternative strategy. This has been useful when the goal was to change a business practice “sector-wide” across all companies in that industry to improve nutrition outcomes. However, this can entail risks – including around conflict of interest – and there is evidence that such engagements without legislation do not lead to lasting impact. In other instances, UNICEF has worked directly with government to influence business practices through regulations. Examples of some alternative options to working with a single company or group of companies are described as follows:

**Business platforms**

Business platforms can include industry and sector associations and similar groups. For example, to address the priority programme issue of improving exclusive breastfeeding levels, **UNICEF Kenya** engaged with the foundation arm of Kenya’s apex network of businesses – the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) – to design and implement the “Better Business Practices for Children” initiative, which aimed to improve maternal and infant nutrition (especially optimal breastfeeding) by making workplaces mother and baby-friendly. It should be noted, however, that many business platforms have members...
that fall under UNICEF exclusionary criteria (e.g., tobacco companies, manufacturers of infant formula that are in violation of the International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes) as well as companies whose core business is at odds with nutrition programming objectives (e.g., manufacturers of ultra-processed foods). A risk-benefit should be conducted on any engagement with business platforms, including ensuring it does not go against UNICEF’s due diligence guidance for exclusionary sectors.

**Business influencers**

Business influencers can include business sustainability initiatives or organizations, investors, shareholders, workers, unions, consulting organizations, certification schemes, stock exchanges, civil society organizations, business schools, business media, relevant CEOs, business owners and similar groups. For example, **UNICEF Thailand** and a key leader of the country’s business community embarked on an engagement that helped to trigger much needed legislation to ensure that all iodine bound for human consumption is iodized, an action that had lagged for years in that country’s policy process.

**Multi-stakeholder platforms involving business and other groups, such as government, civil society, academic and research institutions and donors**

In Nigeria, the executive leaders of UNICEF and DSM, a Dutch company known for its nutrition products, including MNP s, agreed to engage via a shared-value partnership through their mutual affiliation with the Global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, a multi-sectoral nutrition platform that includes the business sector along with the Government, donor and civil society groups. Taking this global vision, UNICEF and DSM focused on their mutual priority to combat childhood micronutrient deficiencies at the country level in Nigeria. This engagement evolved over time to work with the Nigeria SUN Movement, especially its business network, to undertake advocacy aimed at securing the commitment of the Nigerian business community to invest in addressing malnutrition in the country. As with business platforms, many multi-stakeholder platforms have members that fall under UNICEF exclusionary criteria (e.g., tobacco companies, manufacturers of infant formula that are in violation of the International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes) as well as companies whose core business is at odds with nutrition programming objectives (e.g., manufacturers of ultra-processed foods). A case-by-case risk-benefit should be conducted on any engagement with multistakeholder platform for nutrition programming, including ensuring it does not go against UNICEF’s due diligence guidance for exclusionary sectors.

**Government agencies, other regulatory agencies, research and civil society groups**

In some instances, it is not businesses or companies per se that are the relevant entity to engage, but government or regulatory agencies. For example, when UNICEF identifies harmful business practices with negative impact on nutrition, it is often preferable to work with government to regulate business. In **Mexico**, during the programme cycle, the situation analysis identified the rising level of childhood obesity as a top priority. As a result, UNICEF Mexico’s placed importance on supporting the Government to design and implement regulatory measures to end unhealthy food and beverage marketing practices. To this end, UNICEF worked very closely with both Government offices, especially the Ministry of Health, and respected civil society groups, including the consumer protection group **El Poder del Consumidor** and the National Institute of Public Health.

Ultimately, UNICEF’s decision on how to address the relevance of business to nutrition outcomes and what entity is most appropriate to engage (e.g., the company itself, a business platform or the government/regulatory agencies) and how needs to be guided by the findings of the UNICEF country programme cycle, especially the situation analysis, strategic planning and design discussions, as well as the strategic rationale for the engagement (i.e., what is the distinguishing factor for this stakeholder – can it help UNICEF reach scale and does engaging through a platform help mitigate the risk of engaging with a single company?). Section 4 provides a description of how to use the UNICEF programme planning cycle to determine if and how to strategically engage business for nutrition outcomes, including identifying the nutrition priorities and objectives that may require the involvement of business, and thereafter, the most relevant companies to consider.

**KEY TAKE-AWAY**

The expanse of business engagements which UNICEF can initiate to achieve for nutrition outcomes is immense and cuts across a variety of sectors. Engaging business can also go beyond working with one company and instead involve multisector platforms, networks, associations, influencers, civil society and government. The ultimate decision of which company to engage must be driven by the results of the country programme cycle.
3.5 HOW TO ENSURE A BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT RESPECTS CHILDREN’S RIGHTS?
As a leading child rights organization, it is important to always apply a principle-based approach to working with the business sector. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children’s rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

All engagements with business must conform with certain key principles (see Figure 2) to ensure that the processes and outcomes are always in the best interests of children.

These “rules of engagement” (shown in Box 7) apply to UNICEF’s work with all types of partners, including the business sector.16

Box 7: UNICEF’s rules of engagement17
1. Rights-based approach
2. Non-exclusivity, non-endorsement, fair competition, transparency
3. Children’s rights cannot be offset
4. Open-source solutions
5. Sustainability
6. Sustainable procurement

It is also important to note that all companies and related entities are bound by international standards that outline the actions they need to take to protect and support children’s rights (see Box 8).

Box 8: International business standards and children’s rights
All businesses have a responsibility to adhere to a number of global standards related to children’s rights. The standards of most relevance to engaging business for nutrition outcomes include:

• United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Article 24, which upholds children’s right to nutrition (1989)
• United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011)
• Children’s Rights and Business Principles (UNICEF, Save the Children and UN Global Compact, 2012)
STRATEGICALLY ENGAGING BUSINESS FOR NUTRITION IN YOUR COUNTRY

4.1 COUNTRY PROGRAMME CYCLE

As shown in Figure 4, there are key moments throughout the phases of the country programme cycle to analyse the potential role of business, starting at ‘evidence and analysis’ to ‘strategic planning and design’ to ‘implementation’, and thereafter to ‘monitoring and reporting’.

Figure 4 underscores that the practice of considering the potential impacts (both positive and negative) of the business sector on children’s rights and nutrition must be mainstreamed into the routine logic of the country programme cycle. In other words, the potential role of business must not be viewed solely as a separate parallel or special activity.

This approach represents a significant shift from previous ad hoc, transactional, project-type engagements based on the interests and priorities of business to a more deliberate transformational strategic engagement driven by UNICEF’s programme needs.

![Figure 4: Key moments in country programme cycle for analysing the role of business in achieving nutrition outcomes](source)

Source: Adapted from Figure 3 on Page 42 of UNICEF. 2019. Engaging with Business – Programme Guidance for Country Offices. UNICEF, New York.
Achieving this integration will require close collaboration between the Programme Group (PG) and Private Sector and Fundraising Partnership (PFP) teams throughout the country programme cycle, especially during the analysis and strategic planning phases. Because of their specialized areas of expertise, these two teams often focus on different aspects of such engagements and may also use different terminology and measures of success; thus, care may be needed to ensure that all teams are on the same page moving forward.

**KEY TAKE-AWAY**

Deciding *if* and *how* business will play a role in enabling UNICEF to achieve its programming objectives in nutrition needs to be a strategic process that is integrated as an essential aspect of the country programme planning cycle.

Engaging business should neither be viewed nor presented as an outcome in and of itself, but rather as an important *how* strategy within the country programme strategy to achieve positive outcomes for children, including in nutrition.

### 4.2 HOW TO IDENTIFY NUTRITION ISSUES WHERE BUSINESS CAN UNIQUELY HELP UNICEF ACHIEVE PROGRAMME OUTCOMES?

The key steps in the programme cycle to explore and identify where business is in a unique position to support UNICEF programming are highlighted in the following sections.

**Evidence and analysis**

**Situation analysis**

The first step in the country programme cycle is undertaking an in-depth situation analysis under the evidence and analysis phase.

An important tool to use during the situation analysis is the UNICEF Conceptual Framework on the Determinants of Maternal and Child Nutrition (see Figure 5), which serves as an essential road map for PD teams to assess the country’s nutrition situation.

The situation analysis should pay close attention to assessing and analysing the fulfilment of the status of the three clusters of underlying determinants (e.g., food, feeding practices and environments) in different vulnerable groups of children, adolescents and women. Alongside, the

**Figure 5:** UNICEF Conceptual Framework on the Determinants of Maternal and Child Nutrition, 2020.

A framework for the prevention of malnutrition in all its forms.

status of the **three enabling determinants** (e.g., good governance, positive norms and sufficient resources) also needs to be assessed to provide the context of the overall planning environment for nutrition. Other “country contextual factors” to bear in mind that could affect the potential to engage with business around nutrition are summarized in Box 9.

### Box 9: Considerations regarding the country context for engaging business

While countries with the same development status, economy or income-base category (e.g., low-, middle-, upper- middle- and high-income) may share similar nutrition characteristics and challenges, the circumstances, opportunities and risks for engaging business vary from country to country. UNICEF should consider the specific country context, including whether there is a humanitarian situation, whether the country is fragile or conflict-affected, the business presence in the country, and political attitudes to business engagement.

These factors need to be considered in country and stakeholder analyses to help determine, for example:

- Nutrition relevant issues affecting children and the programmatic priorities of the country office;
- Political context, strengths and gaps in the environment (including policy and legal frameworks);
- Status of business development within the country, type of business and stakeholders, business size and its potential impact on positive outcomes for children; and
- The capacity of UNICEF country offices to engage with/ on business.

During the situation analysis and continuing into the strategic planning and design phase, where the theory of change will be developed, it is important for field teams to reflect upon three basic questions (see Box 10).

### Box 10: Four questions to consider throughout the country programme cycle

1. Are there nutrition issues in the country on which business is needed to help UNICEF achieve priority nutrition outcomes for children, adolescents and women?
2. What necessary actions or changes can business take or support to ensure maximum positive impact on nutrition for these groups?
3. What is the potential of business in the country to be able to deliver these nutrition outcomes for these groups?
4. Are there nutrition issues in the country where harmful business practices are contributing to/aggravating/ worsening nutrition outcomes? Could working with government to regulate these practices contribute to positive impact for these groups?

In addressing these four questions, the field teams should bear in mind the five business focus areas, which provide practical programming entry points. The focus may also provide UNICEF with the opportunity to achieve broad scale and, in some cases, gain access to hard-to-reach vulnerable groups (e.g., low-income mothers working in factories). Guidance is being developed by the PD Business for Results and PFP Child Rights and Business teams on basic ways of assessing the relevance of business to a programme goal; teams are advised to reach out for assistance.

During the situation analysis process, and using the conceptual framework as a road map, relevant areas on which UNICEF’s teams can begin to focus their assessment and analysis might include:

- Assessing the prevailing types and levels of child malnutrition and trends over time;
- Consider what has been published with regards to business influence on the determinants of nutrition in the country context. For example, what is known about the nutritional content of foods, what about their availability and marketing practices that influence caregiver practices;
- Mapping what is known about the adequacy/sufficiency of the three clusters of underlying determinants of maternal and child nutrition (e.g., adequate food, adequate feeding and a healthy environment), which shape the immediate determinants of good diet and good care for children and women, and ultimately, the outcome of improved nutrition;
- Analysing the enabling determinants (e.g., good governance, positive norms and sufficient resources) and related economic context, including laws, policies and regulations on business. This can help UNICEF understand the incentives, gaps and constraints that significantly influence or determine business practices and their impact, either positive or negative, on the three clusters of underlying determinants (e.g., adequate food, adequate feeding and a healthy environment). For example, to what extent are the necessary regulations in place to ensure business practices respect child rights. Or, in another sector, are there technology/expertise barriers preventing uptake of nutrition interventions by parts of the business sector. Particular attention should be paid to factors that can affect the protection and promotion of *diets, services and practices* that support optimal nutrition (see Box 11 for an example from UNICEF Kenya illustrating why it is necessary to understand the country’s laws around maternity rights);
- Undertaking a stakeholder analysis of all key players, which includes assessing the power dynamics of the business sector and its role and motivation in addressing
different types of nutrition problems. This should include the business sector’s own accountability and relationships with government offices in all relevant sectors, including those that fall outside of health, such as agriculture or trade. This should also take into consideration how businesses – especially the food and beverage industry and its representatives, including business platforms/associations – may lobby to undermine UNICEF nutrition priorities. (see Box 12 for an example of how UNICEF Argentina mapped out the business community to better understand power dynamics);

• Understanding bottlenecks and barriers, as well as business options and opportunities that are critical for achieving positive nutrition outcomes for children.

Along the same lines, an illustrative list of similar “prompt” questions that teams can consider during the situation analysis are provided in Appendix 1.

**Box 11: UNICEF Kenya and the importance of knowing the infant feeding policy landscape to design a business engagement**

During the programme cycle, UNICEF Kenya identified that improving breastfeeding was a priority issue, especially in the agricultural sector and outside the formal workplace. The work environment was identified as contributing to low exclusive breastfeeding levels and UNICEF used this knowledge to design programmes that would reach underserved working mothers to improve infant feeding practices. As such, UNICEF engaged with a multinational company overseeing an immense commercial tea estate in Kericho country to pilot a baby-friendly workplace programme to improve exclusive breastfeeding levels among workers with young infants.

Prior to embarking on this engagement, UNICEF’s team had to know the full background to and content of national policies and laws relevant to maternity protection including breastfeeding promotion and support. This knowledge of key health policies and laws around infant feeding was necessary to inform the design of the engagement, which entailed testing a pilot programme aimed at supporting mothers in the workplace to better care for themselves and breastfeed their infants.
Box 12: UNICEF Argentina and the importance of undertaking a strategic mapping of business stakeholders

During the situation analysis, UNICEF Argentina identified the prevention of childhood obesity as a top nutrition programme priority and concluded that it would be strategic to support the government on designing and implementing effective regulatory measures targeting the unhealthy marketing practices of the food and beverage sector. To develop its strategy to prevent childhood obesity, UNICEF Argentina started by undertaking a strategic stakeholder analysis that mapped out the food and beverage landscape and all known connections with existing governmental offices and policy processes, including significant food industry interference in policy making that UNICEF had to be aware of and counter in order to achieve programme results. This resulted in a valuable road map of where UNICEF’s attention should be focused to support policy changes aimed at reducing the harmful marketing of unhealthy food and beverage products to children and adolescents.

UNICEF Argentina also realized it was imperative to hire staff with a deep understanding of Argentina’s legislative review and approval processes related to product labelling and marketing restrictions.

Box 13: UNICEF Mexico and identifying childhood obesity, a new nutrition focus area, as a top priority

For many years, UNICEF Mexico had given limited focus to nutrition issues beyond support to optimal breastfeeding practices. Since around 2014, it had become increasingly clear to UNICEF, through the country programme and situation analysis process, that rising levels of childhood obesity posed a serious threat to the nutrition and health of Mexican children and adolescents. Evidence also showed that the problem was linked to the obesogenic environment in the country, especially the unhealthy products and marketing practices of the food and beverage industry.

This prompted UNICEF Mexico to elevate nutrition as a priority issue within the country programme portfolio, particularly the prevention of obesity. This was done through a multipronged strategy with civil society partners to support the government to engage on the harmful practices of the food and beverage companies through legislative and regulatory efforts alongside evidenced-based advocacy to raise general awareness around the problem and what could be done to address and prevent it. The decision to address harmful business practices through supporting government regulation was informed by substantial evidence of industry interference in policy-making and evidence that self-regulatory schemes promoted by businesses themselves were ineffective.

In keeping with good programming practice, the situation analysis should not be limited to existing priorities. In other words, the situation analysis should strive to more widely unpack the business impact on nutrition – positive or negative. This can help identify opportunities for engaging business as well as identify new nutrition priorities where business is relevant (see Boxes 13 and 14 for examples).
Box 14: UNICEF Bangladesh and supporting breastfeeding mothers in garment factories to reverse the country’s declining exclusive breastfeeding levels

During the preparation of the Country Programme Document 2017–2020, UNICEF Bangladesh nutrition staff noticed that national levels of exclusive breastfeeding were declining. They surmised that a key factor accounting for this could be the suboptimal breastfeeding practices found among the country’s female workforce in the vast ready-made garment (RMG) industry in light of the sheer numbers of women working in the sector (estimated to be 2.2 million women).

While the evidence on infant feeding practices within the RMG’s female workforce was scanty at that time, a few studies showed sub-optimal breastfeeding practices among RMG working mothers with infants. As a result, UNICEF’s Nutrition team made the strategic decision to engage with the owners of RMG companies — due to their unique position to reach huge numbers of mothers with young infants — to design, pilot and scale up a family-friendly workplace programme to promote optimal breastfeeding among working mothers as a strategy to improve national breastfeeding levels. This effort was done in tandem with the work of UNICEF Bangladesh’s Corporate Alliance team and the Better Business for Children Initiative.

Box 15: UNICEF programme planning resources for deciding if and how to engage business for nutrition outcomes

The following two technical resources can support UNICEF field teams during the country programme cycle to analyse and plan for engaging business:

- UNICEF’s Programme Policy and Procedure (PPPx) resource site provides detailed guidance on how to integrate business into the country programme cycle, Programme Strategy Notes and theory of change. (A detailed description of the six phases of the country programme cycle can be found here).
- UNICEF’s Results-based Management Handbook. New York. 2017, provides a practical “how-to” manual on results-based management, which can be consulted by field teams as it covers the key steps needed in strategic planning (at either the programme or project level). Also included is guidance on the steps needed to develop a theory of change, its related results framework, and relevant monitoring systems to track progress against results.

Two important aspects of the strategic planning phase that relate to engaging business include identifying the most relevant business entities that are best positioned to address UNICEF’s nutrition priorities; and deciding on the modalities of engagement. Both these critical areas are discussed in the following two sections.

Strategic planning and design phase

Once the situation analysis is complete, UNICEF country teams should have a better understanding of the three important questions posed in Box 10.

Having this background will inform the strategic planning and design phase of the programme cycle where the form of the potential business engagement will begin to take shape (see key points on which to focus during this phase in Figure 4). The results of strategic planning will also inform the programme strategy notes, the development of the theory of change, and in time, the country programme document, among other key documents. It can also act as an entry point for resourcing discussion.

Two important UNICEF programme planning resources that may be useful for field teams are shown in Box 15. In addition, Appendix 2 provides additional background on the Programme Strategy Note and gives practical steps on how to develop a theory of change around engaging business for nutrition outcomes. Appendix 3 presents a recent theory of change developed by UNICEF India describing the Impact for Nutrition platform initiative, which has the goal of mobilizing the country’s business sector to combat malnutrition via nutrition education in the workforce.

How to identify business entities able to help address nutrition programme priorities?

As described above, the situation analysis and strategic planning phases should help to decide if and how business might be uniquely positioned to help UNICEF address priority nutrition needs in the country, but also situations where their practices are harmful and care is needed to avoid conflict of interest. In such circumstances, it might be preferable to work through government to address the impact of business on nutrition outcomes..

When doing so, the business ecosystem should be examined as part of the stakeholder analysis for nutrition to identify those entities most relevant for UNICEF’s nutrition programming priorities. As mentioned earlier, this should include identification and mapping of the most relevant key business sectors, prominent companies and relevant business entities in addition to their connections to government. Nutrition colleagues in country offices should also consider a discussion with donor relations and partnerships teams in the country office about some form of impact prospecting to identify private and public sector prospects that may be interested in resourcing the nutrition priorities for the country programme document cycle.
Using this list of all relevant companies and related groups (e.g., associations and networks) within the country as the basis, the next step is to develop a short-list of those which have the most potential to help UNICEF achieve its desired nutrition outcomes. Box 16 summarizes some of these steps.

Companies being considered as good candidates for engagements must also be vetted through UNICEF’s due diligence process, even during this early identification stage (e.g., when the short-list is being developed) and prior to any engagement discussions with the business – no matter how informal these may be. More discussion of the required due diligence process is provided in Section 4.3.

Some considerations of potential benefits and risks for both UNICEF and business

When developing the short-list of potential businesses (as shown in Box 16), UNICEF staff should also consider potential benefits and risks for both UNICEF and the business entity, as these will inform whether and how to move forward with an engagement.

For example, based on the 10 case studies developed from the review of past experiences, the top benefit from the perspective of UNICEF teams included how the organization gained from the specialized expertise of the business entity (e.g., in social media campaigns or manufacturing of a specific nutrition product, such as RUTF) to achieve a nutrition outcome. Another benefit noted by UNICEF teams was how some engagements provided them with a unique strategy to reach large numbers of vulnerable groups with essential nutrition support (e.g., such as baby-friendly workplaces that offer support to breastfeeding).

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<th>Box 16: Steps to identify if and how business can help UNICEF achieve priority nutrition outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Country programme cycle</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Identify priority nutrition issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Determine desired nutrition outcome(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Assess evidence and analyse how business is relevant and whether engaging business can uniquely and strategically help achieve nutrition outcomes with eyes to: (i) the five focus areas (Box 5) as entry points; and (ii) answering the three important questions (see Box 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Develop a programme strategy note and associated theory of change to elaborate the actions needed and who (including the business entity) can help achieve the desired outcome (e.g., necessary inputs, processes, and outputs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Concurrent with the preceding step, identify all relevant companies and business groups (e.g. associations, networks, influences, etc.) in the country with the greatest potential to help UNICEF achieve its nutrition outcomes as elaborated in the programme strategy note and theory of change</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. Develop a short-list of best business candidates for contributing to desired nutrition outcomes. Questions to consider in making the short-list include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Do UNICEF and the business have common values and objectives?</td>
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<td>b. What is the standing and reputation of the business with the government and other UNICEF partners?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. What are the perceived benefits and risks from the perspective of UNICEF and the business?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Is there a prior history of this business working in nutrition and/or with UNICEF?</td>
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<tr>
<th>3. Contact PFP to initiate the due diligence process to assess the acceptability of potential business candidates on the short list (see Section 4.3), including exclusionary criteria and sensitive sectors (see Section 4.4).</th>
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</table>

| 4. If due diligence clearance and conditions for engagement enable pursuing business candidates, begin exploring options for collaboration with business. This should follow the UNICEF Procedure for Engagement with Business and include: being clear on UNICEF’s ask and offer; considering negotiation tactics and parameters; deciding modality of engagement; obtaining required agreements/paperwork; identifying how the engagement will be co-managed; clarifying the management structure; determining project technical design, including workplans, desired outcome, monitoring and evaluation components; and preparing, if needed, communication and risk mitigation plans around the engagement (see Chapter 5). Once this has been done, a further review by Due Diligence is conducted to ensure that what has been developed remains in line with the overall conditions previously outlined. |
In terms of **risks** for UNICEF (described in Section 4.3 on due diligence), most relate to concerns with conflict of interest and reputational risk, especially if UNICEF’s brand and logo might be used inappropriately by the business entity. Another risk identified by UNICEF field teams was the possibility of a low return on investment should the time and effort put into the business engagement by UNICEF staff not result in the desired outcome.

*From the perspective of business*, as documented in the case studies, the top benefit (touched on earlier in Section 2.4) was the public association with UNICEF, which was considered valuable in terms of the company’s reputation among its private sector peers and customer base. Some businesses also felt they would learn from UNICEF, especially in the areas of children’s rights and global health and nutrition issues. In terms of risks for companies, one concern frequently mentioned was the worry that working with UNICEF might uncover violations of children’s rights (e.g., child labour issues); this was particularly the case in UNICEF’s past engagements with business as an employer.

**What types of engagement modalities should be considered?**

The types of modalities that UNICEF teams can use to engage business for nutrition outcomes can range from informal talks to more formal information exchanges to full-fledged partnership either one-on-one or through business platforms or industry associations. A brief description of the different types and modalities of engagements is given as part of the list of definitions provided at the beginning of this programme guidance.

UNICEF’s past experience engaging business in nutrition programming has taken a number of different forms, from direct “engaging with” business to indirect “engagements on” business. Some illustrative examples are provided below.

**Direct – “engaging with” business**

UNICEF has extensive experience directly engaging with a single company or group of companies; sometimes these engagements have involved financing from business and other times not (see the example below on non-financial engagements). *Engaging with* describes a direct relationship that UNICEF has with business (including, if appropriate, with some food and beverage companies) that may include direct dialogue or collaboration. Depending on circumstances, *engaging with* may or may not entail formal partnership, funding, joint programming or co-communication.

A few examples of how UNICEF engaged with single companies or groups of companies are as follows:

- **UNICEF**, through PFP and the Turkey National Committee for UNICEF, directly engaged with a single company, Beko PLC (one of Europe’s largest home appliance companies) to launch the #EatLikeAPro worldwide social media campaign to raise funds and awareness around childhood obesity. This was done with a mutual partner of both UNICEF and Beko, the Football Club Barcelona, which innovatively leveraged football celebrities to support healthy eating with their child and adolescent supporters across the world. The fundraising campaign was based on Beko donating €1 to UNICEF for every #EatLikeAPro hashtag shared, up to a maximum amount of €1 million. The #EatLikeAPro hashtag sharing went viral and reached more than 1 million shares in 11 days, which triggered Beko donating the full funding amount to UNICEF. Beko’s funding was used to support UNICEF’s childhood obesity prevention initiatives in six Latin American and Caribbean countries. During the entire process – from designing the #EatLikeAPro campaign to implementing the child obesity activities – Beko maintained an active interest engaging with UNICEF.

- **UNICEF Bangladesh** directly engaged with a group of ready-made-garment (RMG) companies forming the International Labour Organization’s Better Work network of RMG factories to scale up the adoption of the Government-supported family-friendly workplace initiative, Mothers@Work. The initiative aims to protect maternity rights and promote exclusive breastfeeding in the workplace, with financing for designing and launching the initiative from a philanthropic donor. Apart from the time of their factory management and health staff and some minimal costs incurred to establish breastfeeding and childcare spaces for mothers on the factory floor, the RMG companies did not contribute any financing to this effort.

- **UNICEF Nigeria** formed a shared-value partnership with DSM (see Box 17) to support the Government of Nigeria to scale up the provision of MNPs for children across the country by using the national infant and young child feeding programme as the entry point. Under this shared-value partnership, it was agreed that no funding would go from DSM to UNICEF; instead both organizations used their own resources to implement the joint workplan. While DSM seconded several full-time technical experts and covered their related expenses, UNICEF used its own donor nutrition funds to cover the costs of the field activities, as well as the MNP product itself, for both the pilot and scale-up phases. Given that the shared-value partnership model accepts that a financial gain may accrue in time to the business
entity, it was important to carefully adhere to UNICEF’s rules of engagement (shown earlier in Box 7), which focus on: a rights-based approach, non-exclusivity, non-endorsement, fair competition, transparency, not off-setting children’s rights, open-source solutions, and sustainability (including sustainable procurement).

**Box 17: What is a shared-value partnership?**

A ‘shared-value partnership’ involves working with businesses to create a win-win arrangement that is of value to both society and business. From UNICEF’s perspective, this must be driven by the need to positively impact children. From a business perspective, this may involve financial benefits, financial and non-financial resources, business sustainability and/or reputational benefits and shared commitment to social change.22

**Indirect – “engaging on” business practices**

UNICEF has gained experience working with government to change business practices. This does not involve engaging with businesses, rather the work is directly with government. Indeed care is taken to protect the policy-making process from conflict of interest and business interference. More details on engaging on business are given below in Section 4.4. Two examples of how UNICEF field teams have engaged on business include the following.

- **UNICEF** in many countries has a long history of supporting host governments to put into place legislation that implements the International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes or mandates the fortification of certain foods with micronutrients (e.g., the iodization of all salt bound for human consumption).

- **In Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico (and elsewhere), UNICEF** has been supporting governments to develop upstream policies and legislation that regulate the marketing practices of companies that manufacture, distribute and promote unhealthy food and beverage products to better respect children’s rights to good nutrition.

**Non-financial versus financial engagements**

While some of UNICEF’s direct engagements with business have involved receiving financial support to carry out the programme activities, in other cases there has been no financial exchange. Some examples to illustrate these types of engagements are described below.

- **Non-financial – UNICEF Kenya** used its own donor nutrition funds to engage with one of the country’s largest export tea estates to design and test a baby-friendly workplace initiative to protect maternity rights and promote optimal breastfeeding with working mothers in their place of employment. UNICEF bore all the costs related to designing and piloting the initiative, which was implemented through the local Ministry of Health office (e.g., costs for capacity building of community health workers, training sessions, social and behaviour change materials, breast pump supplies, fridge, etc.) Minimum costs were covered by the tea estate, including staff time and establishing breastfeeding corners (which were equipped with basic furniture and supplies). Apart from this, the tea estate provided no further resources or funding for the programme. It was anticipated that the model would be scaled up across the country’s agriculture export sector; however, to date, expansion has been slower than expected due to funding constraints.

- **Financial – UNICEF Thailand** engaged with the Thai Sansiri PLC property development company to leverage the company’s communication and social media expertise to super-charge advocacy in the country and nudge the Government to mandate that all salt bound for human consumption must be iodized. The effort was highly successful, with legislation enacted by the Government. Sansiri paid for the social media campaign, which amounted to nearly US$700,000, while UNICEF contributed staff time to the effort. In time, Sansiri became a regular donor to UNICEF on global (rather than nutrition-specific) programmes.

**Implementation, monitoring and reporting phases**

Following the situation analysis and strategic planning and design phases, the implementation phase (shown earlier in Figure 3) is an opportune time to continue team-building with the business partner – as well as other key players, such as government and civil society – to develop a strong and functional working relationship.

UNICEF country teams should consider whether it would add value to have the business entity co-design and co-manage the engagement. That said, pursuing this type of co-oversight with the business entity would depend on the local context, type of engagement and type of business entity. For example, with Beko and DSM in India and Nigeria, there was a fair amount of co-designing during the initial phase. Getting clarity around these roles and responsibilities is important during this early stage when exploratory discussions are still taking place around what UNICEF and business could each bring to the table.

Regular reviews of the progress around the engagement’s implementation through routine meetings and updates involving staff from both UNICEF and the business entity, in addition to any other involved partners, are important to not only team-build and keep the engagement vibrant, but also to identify issues that may need to be jointly addressed. For example, in the case of UNICEF Kenya developing a baby-friendly workplace model on a tea estate to support optimal breastfeeding for working mothers with young infants, a multi-stakeholder steering group comprising key staff from
the estate, Ministry of Health and UNICEF, was established to design, implement and monitor all the field work.

Including business in this way may help to give it a sense of ownership in the engagement, which may also bode well for their future support to UNICEF’s nutrition programmes.

*Monitoring and reporting* are critical for good programming with business. As such, information needs for both UNICEF and the business entity should be carefully considered. It is important for UNICEF teams to clarify if there are any specific information needs required by the business entity; for example, to report to their corporate management or to use in public relations materials for their customer base.

Whatever is agreed also needs to be manageable and realistic for UNICEF’s teams to collect and report on. In some prior experiences, reporting requirements for private sector partners may be extensive and not proportional to the the support provided. UNICEF teams may find the reporting requirements take time away from implementing activities efficiently. Agreeing with the prospective business entity in advance about their information needs and ensuring these are reasonable and manageable for UNICEF’s field teams is important.

Further discussion around monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that pertains to the technical project requirements carried out as part of the engagement are discussed in Section 5.4.

### 4.3 Protecting UNICEF’s Reputation and Being Risk-Aware

Risks are inherent to any UNICEF engagement with the business sector. From the start of any collaborative engagement, UNICEF inevitably lends its reputation to the partnering company. Reputation and brand equity are UNICEF’s main assets, and the bases of its license to operate, but these are also main drivers of donors’ desire to support the organization’s work.23

Risk is also an important strategic component of corporate partnering. In fact, it is increasingly clear that partnering is almost never a risk-free option, and that the mutual agreement of partners to share risks is often at the basis of a successful, lasting, win-win engagement. 24

A brief description of the different types and modalities of engagements is given as part of the list of definitions provided at the beginning of this programme guidance. Similarly, an engagement will benefit from each organization recognizing, mitigating and managing its own risks. It is, therefore, in the interests of both UNICEF and the business entity to be aware of their own concerns as well as the risks for one another, whenever possible.

Since the 2012 release of *Children’s Rights and Business Principles*,25 UNICEF has shifted from a “risk-averse” attitude towards a more “risk-aware” approach to engaging business. The Children’s Rights and Business Principles provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the impact of business on the rights and well-being of children. Businesses have human rights responsibilities, and the Principles call on companies everywhere to respect children’s rights through their core business policies, practices and actions, but also through their commitments, due diligence and remediation measures. The Principles provide a wide range of strategies and options for UNICEF to think about in terms of engaging businesses for nutrition outcomes. But any engagements must be conducted within a risk-informed framework to maintain the best interest of the child at its core, which entails protecting the integrity and reputation of the organization to allow it to carry out its mission.26

As covered in UNICEF’s 2016 *Due Diligence Criteria*, this means that any engagement UNICEF undertakes must avoid:

- Undermining UNICEF’s integrity or mission;
- Inconsistency with UNICEF strategies;
- Negative impact on UNICEF reputation;
- Conflicts of interest (see Box 18); perception of endorsement (of a company, its products/services, or its policies and practices related to environmental, social and governance or corporate social responsibility);
- Loss of autonomy and neutrality;
- Direct or indirect negative impact on children;
- Bluewashing28 (also known as whitewashing); and
- Financial risks.

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

Be aware of all possible risks in order to manage them. It is imperative that all field teams contemplating business engagements study these potential risks to fully understand what they entail, including possible mitigation strategies that eliminate or reduce the risks in an informed and manageable manner.
Box 18: Definition of conflict of interest
A conflict of interest describes a situation in which a company has a competing interest and/or benefit that jeopardizes its commitment to deliver on its shared programming interest with UNICEF. A conflict of interest may also arise under a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgement or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest. For example, a conflict of interest would exist if a UNICEF country office is receiving programme funding from food and beverage companies while the organization is also supporting the government to legislate regulations that prevent the unhealthy marketing practices of the same food and beverage products those companies are producing and marketing.

Due diligence process
During the programme cycle, when a UNICEF field team identifies a potential business entity with which to contemplate an engagement for nutrition programmes, prompt attention needs to be given to initiating UNICEF’s “due diligence” process. The due diligence process must be initiated through the PFP Partnerships Advisory and Support Services Section (PFP-PASS), which is responsible for coordinating and assisting UNICEF divisions, country offices and National Committees in selecting and structuring all corporate engagements.

KEY TAKEAWAY
It is important to start the due diligence review early, ideally after a potential company has been identified and there is a reasonable idea of what the potential engagement might look like, but before starting any advanced discussions about the specific engagement opportunity. Similarly, it is important for UNICEF offices to state as early as possible if there are ideas or channels of interest for a potential engagement. This will help to expedite and target the due diligence review process.

Further detailed guidance on the due diligence process is available in the UNICEF Due Diligence Criteria and Processes for Corporate Fundraising and Partnerships.

Box 19: What businesses are in the “exclusionary” category?
Funding and co-branded relationships are not possible with an entity directly involved in alcohol, tobacco, gambling, arms, adult content products or manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes violating the Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. For more details please refer to the PFP-PASS Due Diligence intranet and related resources.

4.4 EXCLUSIONARY OR SENSITIVE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENTS: HOW TO PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Types of businesses that are in the “exclusionary” category
As highlighted above, the UNICEF Due Diligence process is extremely important in identifying potential risks of engaging with certain business groups; as such it must always be followed. The process applies regardless of the possible level of funding; it also applies when a non-funding relationship is being considered.

As outlined in the Due Diligence Criteria, UNICEF will not engage in funding interactions, strategic partnerships, or co-branded collaborative efforts with business sector entities directly involved in certain “exclusionary” categories (shown in Box 19).
A group of businesses in the exclusionary sectors are manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes that violate the Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (see Box 20) because of the deleterious effects of their inappropriate marketing activities on infant and young child nutrition. Because of this, UNICEF has a long-standing commitment not to engage in funding interactions and partnerships, or co-branded collaborative efforts with companies violating the Code.

**Box 20: Companies that violate the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes**

Companies that produce breastmilk substitutes and contravene the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent WHA Resolutions are in UNICEF’s exclusionary category.

Breastmilk substitutes include those products that replace human breastmilk, including infant formula, growing up milks, follow-on formulas and any commercial complementary food marketed as suitable for infants under the age of 6 months.

The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes aims "to contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the protection and promotion of breast-feeding, and by ensuring the proper use of breast-milk substitutes, when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution."\(^{31}\)

The Code bans all promotion of breastmilk substitutes and sets out requirements for labelling and information on infant feeding. Any activity that undermines breastfeeding violates the aim and spirit of the Code. This encompasses the promotion of bottle-feeding (including bottles and teats) and promotion of breastmilk substitutes for older infants including follow-on formulas and growing up milks, which are often promoted for children 6 to 36 months of age.

Unfortunately, there are many examples of non-compliance by the vast majority of companies, including large multinationals. There is no consistent monitoring system yet in place at the global or country level that allows for continuous assessment of Code compliance, although WHO and other groups are working to develop these systems. The International Baby Foods Action Network routinely produces a report anecdotally citing Code violations in multiple countries.\(^{32}\) The Access to Nutrition Foundation also uses a systematic approach to assess company compliance regarding the Code.\(^{33}\) Based on current practices, it is unlikely that any BMS manufacturer will pass UNICEF’s due diligence criteria.

**Types of businesses that are in the “sensitive” category**

UNICEF’s Due Diligence Criteria also categorizes three specific types of industries to be particularly sensitive. These three industries include the oil and extractive, pharmaceutical, and food and beverage sectors, with the latter two being particularly relevant for nutrition programming.

These three industries require caution either due to the close link between the business interests and children’s rights, or in light of the potential negative impact of their operations or products on communities or on the food environment (in the case of nutrition programming).

Regarding businesses that manufacture pharmaceuticals and related products (e.g., such as micronutrient fortificants, micronutrient supplements or powders or pharmacological treatments for obesity), sensitivities may arise when an engagement is considered with a company that has a commercial relationship with UNICEF (e.g., as a supplier of commodities used in UNICEF programmes such as MNPs) or when the focus of the partnership is agenda-shaping in a way that may benefit the market for the company’s products. These situations may increase the risk of conflict of interest at both the organizational and the individual level, undermining UNICEF’s principle of non-endorsement or unfair competition as well as threatening the integrity and independence of UNICEF’s programming. It is important to involve UNICEF Supply Division, which manages these supplier relationship issues.

Due to its immense importance in addressing malnutrition, a full discussion of the food and beverage sector follows in the next section.

**The food and beverage sector**

UNICEF has identified the food and beverage sector as a sensitive sector for engagements. UNICEF has previously stipulated that direct food and beverage product association (e.g., cause-related marketing for UNICEF on a food product) and corporate sponsorship of events are not permitted, and other forms of engagements, including contributions in-kind from the food and beverage sector, should be considered on a case-by case basis.
As the major source of food for the vast majority of the world’s population, a rapidly growing business sector and a major employer worldwide, some food and beverage companies have the potential to contribute significantly to achieving priority nutrition outcomes for children – as a duty bearer, as a resource and as an advocate for children. For this reason, UNICEF may look at engaging parts of the sector, while carefully managing the various risks of engagement in an effective and risk-informed approach. However, there are serious concerns relating to direct engagement and funding relationships with companies whose core business is the manufacture, distribution, and promotion of ultra-processed foods and whose practices violate children’s rights. For example, widespread and aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages has been documented to have a harmful and lasting impact on children and adolescents, and there is evidence that the food and beverage industry lobbies against measures that UNICEF and national governments advocate for and support (e.g. front of pack nutrition labelling, taxes on sugary drinks).

Box 21 describes the importance of addressing food and beverage practices due to their influence over children’s food environments and overall food systems.

**Box 21: Improving nutrition outcomes: The importance of addressing the food and beverage sector’s practices**

An important determinant of good nutrition is the food environment, which incorporates the availability, affordability, convenience, and desirability of various foods including beverages.\(^3^4\) The food environment ultimately determines and signals to people what to purchase and consume. In turn, food environments are influenced by broader aspects of the food system, such as agriculture, food retail, food storage and transport and food processing.\(^3^5\)

In particular, business entities involved in producing, packaging, distributing, and marketing foods and beverages greatly influence the overall food environments of children and populations. As a result, changes to the policies and practices of these business entities are critical to improve the nutrition of children, adolescents and mothers. Change may come from front-runner business themselves, but in many instances government action in the form of policies and regulations will likely be needed to incentivize positive change and create a level playing field.

**Diversity of the food and beverage sector.** UNICEF defines the food and beverage sector as “... the diverse businesses that support the production, processing, marketing and retail of most of the food consumed by the world’s population” (see Appendix 4 for a description of the food and beverage supply chain). UNICEF’s definition of the food and beverage sector also includes other closely associated organizations within the food and beverage sector, such as philanthropic foundations funded by the food industry, food and beverage retailers, trade associations or research institutes funded by the organizations.

As such, the food and beverage industry is immense, with many types of companies and groups – ranging from local to national to regional to multinational entities. This heterogeneity means that risk may vary according to the specific food and beverage sector actor. That said, a small number of multinational companies are particularly dominant in the global food economy.\(^3^6\) As described above in Section 4.3 and Box 16, the UNICEF Due Diligence procedures should always be carefully followed.

Box 22 summarizes why the sector is sensitive for UNICEF and highlights issues concerning children’s rights and the contribution of certain unhealthy food and beverage products to child malnutrition, including overweight and obesity but also micronutrient deficiencies. Detailed lessons learned from the case studies on working with the food and beverage sector to achieve nutrition outcomes are included in Appendix 5.
Box 22: Why is the food and beverage sector considered “sensitive” for UNICEF?

• The food and beverage sector impacts a wide number of children's rights, ranging from the supply side (e.g., rights violations linked to child labour) to impacts closer to market (e.g., the right to adequate nutrition and health). Some of these impacts may be positive, but many are negative.

• Within the area of nutrition, unhealthy diet is the major contributor to childhood obesity and the leading cause of premature mortality among adults in the world. Companies that promote and produce ultra-processed food and beverages play a significant role in contributing to the obesogenic environment that results in the increasing obesity levels now seen in all parts of the world.

• Some food and beverage companies produce and market ultra-processed foods and drinks targeting children. This contributes to poor nutritional intake in children, particularly childhood overweight and obesity but also micronutrient deficiencies where these energy-dense, but nutrient poor products replace more nutritious foods in children's diets. These practices undermine UNICEF’s goal of ensuring every child survives and thrives to the best of their potential.

• Some food and beverage companies also actively lobby against effective policies that UNICEF supports. These policies (such as food marketing restrictions, front-of-pack nutrition labelling, school food policies and taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages) are intended to protect children from harmful corporate practices. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health has called on food companies to cease lobbying that undermines the right to health. Engagement with companies that oppose these policy goals risks undermining the integrity of UNICEF's work in this space.

• An additional key risk from interacting with the food and beverage sector is the risk to government and public trust in the organization, with potential damage to UNICEF's reputation. Previous partnerships or funding relationships between the charitable sector and certain food and beverage companies have resulted in scathing criticism from the media and the public health community.

• Most food and beverage companies have fiduciary duties to generate profits and sell more products. At the same time, these same companies must sell less ultra-processed if we are to achieve global nutrition targets. This reality pits the fundamental purpose of some food and beverage companies against public health goals.

Options for “engaging with” food and beverage companies. Throughout the past few decades UNICEF has engaged with different parts of the food and beverage sector to accomplish a number of major achievements.

For example, UNICEF’s work engaging with salt producers and processed food companies to ensure that all salt bound for human consumption was iodized has helped to prevent iodine deficiency in hundreds of millions of babies.

In addition, the responsiveness of small food companies, many of them locally owned and based in countries facing high burdens of severe acute malnutrition in children, led to the exponential increase in capacity to produce enough RUTF to meet programme demand.

At the same time, there are also legitimate and growing concerns inside and outside of UNICEF around how engaging directly with certain food and beverage companies that manufacture and distribute ultra-processed foods has not been an effective approach to achieve change in their core business practices and has led to reputational risks for the organization, particularly at country level. Receiving funding from the food and beverage sector has also generated issues with important partners such as the World Health Organization and civil society organizations. This is why UNICEF does not accept nutrition programme funding from companies that manufacture and distribute ultra-processed foods. Some country offices have had relationships with this sector in the past. However, after careful consideration, these offices have strategically discontinued any direct engagement with companies producing food and beverage products known to be unhealthy (including ending all funding) and have chosen to focus on engagement with governments directly to achieve their nutrition goals. This was the case in Argentina and Mexico (see Box 23).
Box 23: Disengaging from certain food and beverage companies in Argentina and Mexico

As UNICEF began working to prevent childhood obesity in Argentina and Mexico it soon became apparent that the organization needed to discontinue existing funding and direct engagements with commercial food and beverage companies producing unhealthy foods to avoid any conflict of interest.

The decision to disengage was informed by the specific country context and programmes being undertaken in both countries. At that time UNICEF’s teams were actively working with academic, civil society and United Nations partners to support the government to institute regulations aimed at ending the unhealthy marketing practices of food and beverage companies, including the ones with which UNICEF had been receiving funding for many years.

To avoid any reputational and conflict of interest risks, it was important that UNICEF did not have a direct relationship with (or receive funding from) the food and beverage companies producing the same unhealthy products linked to high sugar intakes and growing childhood obesity levels.

Above all, UNICEF needed to be viewed as a neutral entity protecting the rights of children through the support given to government.

UNICEF’s experiences indicate that bilaterally “engaging with” large food and beverage manufacturers (e.g., to change the company’s core business practices and policies related to food manufacturing, distribution and marketing by integrating the importance of children’s rights) has yet to yield promising results for nutrition outcomes as companies have been largely unwilling or unable to act as first movers without a level playing field, which in many instances needed to be provided by the government through policy and regulation. Such approaches in the past have also been resource intensive for UNICEF, thus resulting in a low return on investment.

Looking to the future, an important priority for UNICEF is to avoid certain kinds of interaction with high-risk food and beverage companies, such as formal partnerships or fundraising relationships, when those companies have core business that involves the manufacture, distribution and promotion of unhealthy foods. Such engagements may undermine the integrity of UNICEF’s programming and bring significant reputational risk.

That said, there are also certain parts of the food and beverage sector that may be considered as being sufficiently low-risk (e.g., producers whose main products are minimally processed, such as fruit and vegetables, or companies whose core business is fortifying staple foods). These companies should not be strongly associated with unhealthy food. Engagement with such low-risk entities/groups could contribute meaningfully to achieving nutrition outcomes, such as improving dietary diversity in young children or addressing micronutrient deficiencies. A non-financial, shared value engagement with a small food cooperative around the production of nutritious and diverse complementary foods for children, or an non-financial engagement with a retailer known for its commitment to promoting healthy and fresh foods, are two examples through which UNICEF could generate positive impact with minimal risk.

As always, a key consideration with any engagement is the anticipated return on investment – will it contribute to results at scale and what is the best way to achieve those results. Using multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g., business membership platforms) might be an entry point worth exploring as a potentially efficient way of engaging lower risk companies and testing ideas by reaching a larger group of businesses. Based on the outcome of such an initial lower cost engagement, a decision on further investment of time/effort can then be made based on interest of the platform or its members to stop, continue with the platform, or pursue bilateral engagements with individual members. For example, if a company is going to contribute significant knowledge/learnings on how to do something, then it may be worth piloting with a company in order to understand what is possible, even if the actual direct impact of the work on programme results is very limited. Another example might be if a company commits to working on something itself and then taking this experience to the rest of its business sector. Peer-to-peer communication has much more credibility among businesses, depending on the issue, than UNICEF. However, as mentioned above, engagement with multi-stakeholder platforms that involve companies whose core business is the manufacture, distribution and promotion of unhealthy foods would need to be examined carefully due to conflict of interest risks, reputational risk to UNICEF and the UN, as well as low return on investment. Any such engagement would need to be evaluated very carefully before proceeding, including following all due diligence processes.
In all UNICEF nutrition programming, teams will adopt the following approach to companies whose core business involves the production, distribution and promotion of unhealthy foods:

1. Focus on government regulation of harmful business practices (products, promotion, prices and placement of foods) rather than self-regulation;
2. Not accept any money from food and beverage industry actors whose core business is the production, promotion or distribution of unhealthy foods or beverages at any level of the organization; and
3. Avoid any formal partnerships with these same food and beverage industry actors.

Appropriate ways in which UNICEF could act on the business dimension of nutrition programming when it comes to such issues and companies would be an approach of engaging on these food and beverage companies using a multi-pronged strategy as described in the following section.

**Options for “engaging on” food and beverage companies.** As described earlier in Section 4.2 regarding types of engagements, indirectly engaging on food and beverage companies is proving to be an effective strategy for UNICEF to improve nutrition outcomes.

A key line of action in this approach is through UNICEF’s support to government and its work with civil society, research, academic and United Nations partners (see Box 24) to advocate for, design and implement policies and regulations that reduce the unhealthy marketing practices of food and beverage companies linked to growing levels of childhood obesity. To this end, UNICEF’s past experiences preventing childhood obesity in Latin America suggest a multi-pronged strategy is needed that includes the following components:

- Tailoring support to governments to formulate, adopt and enforce regulations that protect children and create a level playing field for business;
- Calling on food and beverage companies to improve their practices for children using multi-stakeholder platforms where their associations and aggregators are present;
- Mobilizing civil society, media, trendsetters and conducting behind-the-scenes activism to call out priority areas for improvement by food and beverage companies; and
- Ensuring greater public accountability (e.g., meaningful annual rankings on food and beverage company performance; leveraging the role of investors through shareholder action).

Lastly, there may be options to engage on the food and beverage sector through structured dialogue, including with mediation. However, this is not guaranteed to lead to satisfactory results. In such instances, a very careful risk-benefit analysis and estimation of return on investment would be needed. In addition, certain protections still need to be carefully considered to safeguard UNICEF’s reputation. Risk mitigation measures that may be considered include agreements around use of UNICEF logo, confidentiality and no promotion of the engagement. Furthermore, UNICEF must establish key performance indicators, continuously evaluate the impact of the dialogues and be willing to walk away from the table if there is insufficient progress towards fulfilling children’s rights.

**Box 24: Work with like-minded partners whenever possible to amplify UNICEF’s voice and increase collective strength**

In Argentina, Ecuador and Mexico, in addition to working closely with government offices on regulatory issues related to food and beverage marketing practices, UNICEF teams also formed strategic alliances with partners from the United Nations (e.g., the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Pan American Health Organization and WHO) along with respected academic and research institutions and civil society organizations including consumer rights groups.

In all three countries, partnering with research institutions was particularly critical to building the evidence base, as described above, which later informed advocacy and policy strategies.
MANAGING THE ENGAGEMENT

5.1 FORMALIZING THE ENGAGEMENT
When working with any stakeholder, including from the business sector, UNICEF may choose to have a formal engagement through a memorandum of understanding, a letter of intent or other agreement, supported by an activity plan.

Conversely, a non-contractual engagement may be the best option (e.g., by collaborating informally or through dialogue, learning networks, platforms or associations). UNICEF may also choose to join, support, advise or be an observer in collaborations or multi-stakeholder platforms.

The choice of mechanism will depend on an analysis of the approach that will best support the desired outcome and an assessment of benefits and risks as part of the due diligence process.

For example, in the case of UNICEF Bangladesh engaging with RMG companies in the country, the memorandum of understanding drafted contained specific language around stipulating that the companies complied with all global and national norms and laws protecting against child labour. Similar child labour provisions were included in UNICEF’s memorandum of understanding with the Sansiri property development company in Thailand.

5.2 BUILDING CAPACITY AT THE COUNTRY OFFICE LEVEL
At the country level, decisions regarding internal arrangements are key to enhancing the chances of successful business engagement. However, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ management approach for country offices. There are different approaches across offices and regions, and for this reason, there is no uniform way of organizing teams to do this programmatic work. Additionally, while some country offices have private sector fundraising operations and related staff, others do not, and are thus reliant on regional or headquarters support.

That said, there are some general principles that UNICEF teams may use to build capacity within the country office on engaging business and guiding management decisions that are relevant for engagements on field programming in general and nutrition in particular. These are discussed as follows.

Mainstream into the country programme
As discussed in Section 4, consideration as to the relevance of the business sector should, as far as possible, be mainstreamed into the logic of a country programme cycle, and hence, into all related processes including the situation analysis, theory of change, Programme Strategy Notes, Strategic Moments of Reflection, country programme documents, mid-term reviews, annual workplans and annual reports. Once the business is mainstreamed into the programme, programme teams will own this agenda.

Ensure the right level of internal coordination
Different forms of business engagement may be led by different sections of an office. However, all actions must be fully synchronized and coordinated to ensure a coherent approach to external relationships and full use of synergies. For example, the chief of planning should be fully engaged on the integration of business work in all procedures, including ensuring appropriate monitoring and reporting, and the Deputy Representative should have a senior strategy and coordination role facilitating the business engagement.

UNICEF should also consider the necessary investment of staff time to plan and implement the engagement and manage the relationship with the company, both on the side of private sector partnerships and programme teams; this is particularly important when there is no budget from business to cover these costs (see Box 25). The availability of staff and their time on the side of the business entity for the engagement also must be considered.

Box 25: Consider the time investment needed by UNICEF staff
When engaging business, the country team should consider the UNICEF staff time needed to programmatically or operationally support the activities. This includes whether staff time is adequately covered in the budget for the engagement or from other sources.

With shared-value engagements – which may not entail funding from business – the question of covering staff time may be especially relevant. UNICEF offices are encouraged to seek funding to cover activities related to shared-value engagements, wherever it makes sense and is compliant with due diligence.
In addition, it may not be unusual for different teams – such as programmes and PFP – to approach the same nutrition programme issues from different perspectives. Varying views should be expected, for example, on what the programme focus should be and how to pitch the programme to business partners to resonate with their different audiences. While it is crucial that all perspectives be recognized as valuable, it may take time for different teams to coalesce on the best programme approach. Child nutrition outcomes and programming objectives must remain at the forefront.

**Shift from income to impact**

In offices with a historical focus on bilateral corporate partnerships or corporate fundraising, care should be taken to avoid a narrow view of the opportunities with the business sector, as explained in this programme guidance. The main goal of engaging business for nutrition outcomes is to identify wider strategic opportunities to influence business entities, industries and markets towards nutrition programme goals. Likewise, it is equally important to explore if and how fundraising-only partnerships with business might be broadened beyond funding (e.g., via shared-value partnerships).

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

The outcome – improved nutrition for children and women – should always be at the forefront and the engagement needs to make strategic sense for nutrition programming. If it does not, it will be at best ineffective, and at worst harmful.

**5.3 COMMUNICATION AND RISK MITIGATION PLANS FOR SOME ENGAGEMENTS**

During engagements with sensitive sectors (e.g., the pharmaceutical industry or the food and beverage sector), it would be prudent to develop a risk mitigation plan that identifies different types/levels of risks which might arise. This should be part of the assessment process on what to do. The plan should include clear messaging to address the different risks and identify who (on the side of UNICEF and the business entity) is responsible for being the messenger should the plan need to come into effect.

**Box 26: Usefulness of a communication plan for unusual-looking business engagements**

Sometimes it is useful to develop a communication plan to be prepared for questions should the choice of business entity be considered unusual.

For example, during partnership formation it may be useful for UNICEF to work with the private partner’s team to develop a joint Question and Answer (Q&A) document in the event that respective staff are asked questions.

This might help staff address questions around why outwardly different organizations decided to work together and why they were focusing their efforts on nutrition.

A potential question such a Q&A might seek to address is whether working with a private sector partner means that UNICEF endorses the company’s products? It is always important for UNICEF to be clear that at no time does it endorse any brand, product, or services of any business group it collaborates with.

**5.4 TECHNICAL DESIGN OF THE ENGAGEMENT**

As with all of UNICEF’s country programmes, the design and technical content of specific nutrition projects undertaken as part of engaging business must align with UNICEF’s latest nutrition programme guidance documents.

Also included are additional reference materials, including useful manuals and research publications, directly relating to a number of the five business focus areas (e.g., business as an employer).

**5.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION: HOW TO MAKE SURE THE ENGAGEMENT IS EFFECTIVE**

There are several dimensions related to M&E to consider.

The **first** concerns the company’s specific requirements for information to inform their own internal corporate reporting requirements and, often, to feed the public relation needs and customer base (discussed earlier in Section 4.2). Companies almost always want to know about impact, in terms of number of children directly benefiting. Collecting this information is sometimes extremely difficult, especially for complex engagements involving policy outcomes, as was the case under the engagement with Beko. Therefore, during the planning phases it is important for UNICEF and the company to fully discuss and agree upon expectations for M&E data and reporting from field teams.

The **second** dimension concerns UNICEF’s technical M&E standards recommended for specific nutrition programme areas. This includes the necessary metrics needed to measure technical programme inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes against baseline and targets to track the progress and impact of the nutrition initiatives under the
engagement. As described before in Box 16, UNICEF’s *Results-based Management Handbook* provides practical tips for results-based planning, which can be applied to specific technical nutrition programmes areas and their M&E requirements.

The third dimension of M&E relates to collecting and reporting on organization-wide indicators to track UNICEF’s Strategic Plan and IMPACT plan.  

**5.6 SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

In any programming effort, UNICEF places high priority on supporting host governments and national partners to develop and implement sustainable programmes and actions. This programming principle must be at the core of any engagements that UNICEF has with business for nutrition outcomes.

UNICEF’s engagement on sector-wide efforts, such as salt iodization or increasing the production of RUTF to treat children with severe wasting were not only vital to achieving UNICEF’s large-scale programmatic goals but also have resulted in sustainable production of these important nutrition products. This is because in both cases, the production of these nutrition products made sense commercially and allowed these businesses to contribute to the greater public health good.

Related to sustainability, undertaking a cost-effective analysis (sometimes as part of the M&E plan) under the engagement is a strategy that UNICEF field teams can contemplate to show company owners that investing in nutrition is good for business. This strategy was used by UNICEF in Bangladesh and Kenya in designing and testing baby-friendly workplace models for RMG factories and tea estates.

Another aspect of sustainability relates to the durability of UNICEF’s engagement relationship with the business entity and the need to continuously steward and care for the relationship to encourage long-term funding of UNICEF nutrition programmes. For example, while the engagement with Beko and the Football Club Barcelona was exciting at the time, it did not last beyond the first round of funding. In addition, while the engagement with the Sansiri property developer in Thailand on universal salt iodization was highly successful, Sansiri moved away from supporting further nutrition programming; however, the company does continue to support other aspects of the UNICEF global programme.
LESSONS ON ENGAGING BUSINESS FOR NUTRITION OUTCOMES

Some practical lessons for UNICEF field teams were generated from the 10 case studies developed under the review of UNICEF’s past business engagements on nutrition. Lessons learned that relate specifically to the business focus areas are highlighted first; thereafter, key cross-cutting lessons are first presented.

6.1 SPECIFIC LESSONS LEARNED RELATED TO BUSINESS FOCUS AREAS

The following section summarizes lessons learned that are specific to four of the five business focus areas (e.g., entry points) through which UNICEF engaged business in nutrition programming. Additional insights and details learned in each of these business focus areas can be found in the accompanying Compendium containing summaries of the 10 case studies.

[Note: The business focus area related to the private sector as a source of technology and innovation is not included as it is cross-cutting, and as such, does not lend itself to identifiable and discrete lessons learned.]

Business as a provider of essential goods

In terms of engaging with the private sector to produce essential nutrition products, especially at a sector-wide scale, a number of practical lessons were learned from the two case studies focusing on UNICEF’s work with salt producers in the Europe and Central Asia region and with local food companies to scale the production of RUTF to treat children with severe wasting. These lessons included:

- **Planning with sustainability in mind from the first day is crucial.** In the rush to increase the production of iodized salt in countries of the region during the 1990s, UNICEF was perhaps more willing to give away, at no cost, iodization equipment and supplies to the owners of private companies in the salt industry, some of whom may have had the means to pay for these items themselves. This can easily lead to dependency and prevent the private sector from assuming the ownership and responsibility needed for long-term sustainability.

- **Learning about the business and its operations prior to engaging.** Prior to engaging with the business sector, it is important to research what they do, with whom, at what costs, and in what way. What are the key factors driving their decision-making? Which people are in their networks commercially and politically? What technical ‘business language’ do they use? Do they lobby governments? What is their relationship with the national government, and do they interact differently across different sectors? These questions were asked in the Europe and Central Asia region, for example, before engaging with the salt sector.

- **Increasing the supply of nutrition products is important, but so is increasing the demand for those products by the intended beneficiaries** (e.g., through targeted advocacy and communication campaigns to reach families, child caregivers, etc.).

- **Building the capacity of companies needs to be strategic, sustainable and follow Supply Division’s procurement processes.** Supply Division’s strategy entailed “indirectly” strengthening the ability of companies to meet global standards around good manufacturing practices. This implies that UNICEF teams need to have expertise in the technical manufacturing aspects of the sector.

- **Creating a sense of responsibility on the side of business to play a role in improving public health and protecting the well-being of children may be an effective strategy to secure the commitment of some companies.** This occurred in the case of salt producers in the Europe and Central Asia region, who greatly appreciated the public recognition and accolades they received from governments and UNICEF with respect to their role iodizing national salt supplies, which saved hundreds of thousands of children from permanent brain damage.

- **Considering the bigger regional and international trade context in terms of the cross-border movement of nutrition products.** It is also important to consider and analyse the bigger picture when it comes to national, regional and even international trade regulations. Sometimes regulations related to regional trade agreements can create challenges for monitoring the importation of fortified foods or even iodized salt by the private sector. Addressing these types of issues may require high-level advocacy to ensure that leaders involved in economic unions are supportive of
Some specific lessons learned from UNICEF’s experience with Impact for Nutrition are as follows.

- **Knowing the intricacies of national laws around maternity rights and breastfeeding promotion is imperative for designing a scalable workplace model.**

- **Securing agreements – right from the start – with the key partners and networks needed to scale up the workplace model is essential.** Confirmation is needed that these groups are interested and willing to participate in the future.

- **Identifying “committed” partners and feasible financing mechanisms, especially from companies themselves, to support future scale-up is central to sustainability.** Resources will be needed to cover not only the “heavier” start-up costs (e.g., formative research in design phase, capacity building including training, etc.) but also future recurrent running costs. Innovative and creative ways to fund the scaling of a workplace model sector-wide need to be explored from the start.

- **Adding a community component when implementing workplace initiatives to achieve optimal breastfeeding practices ensures helps secure support for mothers outside of the workplace.** Such a component will also increase costs.

- **Care is needed to avoid scaling back proven interventions, even when there is pressure to contain costs.** Small group and one-on-one breastfeeding counselling sessions with mothers in the workplace are necessary activities and should not be scaled back to contain costs as doing so will have negative consequences on the adoption of optimal breastfeeding practices by mothers. Therefore, the strategy to scale up the baby-friendly workplace model must carefully consider how to maintain the quality of the breastfeeding support needed to ensure mothers adopt optimal breastfeeding practices.

Regarding the second model under business as an employer, a number of lessons were gained from UNICEF India’s experiences developing a strategy to strengthen nutrition education in the country’s workforce through the Impact for Nutrition initiative, which functions as a virtual platform to which Indian companies can pledged a “no cost” commitment and for which they obtain technical support. A key insight learned during the start-up phase of Impact for Nutrition was that having the Government of India and UNICEF linked to the initiative proved to be an important tipping factor to get companies to engage. Another insight was that companies agreed to participate even if the platform was ‘brand agnostic’, which meant that they put aside any promotion of their commercial enterprise or products. After only two years of implementation, more than one hundred companies had pledged to the platform, supporting the proof-of-concept that it is possible to collectively harness the resources and influence of the private sector to support national nutrition efforts.

In undertaking future efforts, some key lessons include the following:

- **Resources will be needed to cover not only the “heavier” start-up costs (e.g., formative research in design phase, capacity building including training, etc.) but also future recurrent running costs. Innovative and creative ways to fund the scaling of a workplace model sector-wide need to be explored from the start.**

- **Adding a community component when implementing workplace initiatives to achieve optimal breastfeeding practices ensures helps secure support for mothers outside of the workplace.** Such a component will also increase costs.

- **Care is needed to avoid scaling back proven interventions, even when there is pressure to contain costs.** Small group and one-on-one breastfeeding counselling sessions with mothers in the workplace are necessary activities and should not be scaled back to contain costs as doing so will have negative consequences on the adoption of optimal breastfeeding practices by mothers. Therefore, the strategy to scale up the baby-friendly workplace model must carefully consider how to maintain the quality of the breastfeeding support needed to ensure mothers adopt optimal breastfeeding practices.
Lessons include the following:

• **Defining success for a sector-wide nutrition education approach in the workplace is important.**
  This is needed from the start in order to define the desired impact in measurable terms and develop an M&E system able to quantitatively assess and track progress over time.

• **Scaling up nutrition education over an entire sector requires consideration from the outset about how to fund and sustain the effort into the future as well as ensure the quality of nutrition education support being provided.**

**Business impact on communities and the food environment**

Practical lessons were generated on the impact of business on the food environment from UNICEF’s case studies related to “engaging on” the food and beverage sector to prevent childhood obesity in Latin America other experiences with the sector over the years.

These lessons have helped inform the organization on the importance of working primarily with governments to regulate harmful business practices and be aware of industry interference in the context of programmes to prevent childhood obesity, as part of the Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030. Lessons include the following:

• **Conducting a mapping exercise as part of the situation analysis phase provides the detailed knowledge of the national landscape necessary to develop a robust strategy to prevent childhood obesity.** Not only does this exercise identify the key actors involved (especially the food and beverage companies and their affiliated industrial associations), but it also sheds light on their relationships with different parts of government, in addition to civil society and research partners. This can provide important insights into lobbying activities and efforts to undermine nutrition policy-making.

• **Creating strong partnerships, free from conflict of interest, with a broad network of allies is essential.** These partnerships should include, for example, other United Nations agencies (i.e., the Pan American Health Organization and WHO), civil society groups, including both consumer protection and advocacy groups, as well as academia and research groups. Such a network of partners for UNICEF allows the combination of resources, creation of synergies and amplification of advocacy efforts to help underpin the efforts of governments towards developing preventative regulatory measures around childhood obesity.

• **Building the evidence base describing the situation of childhood obesity in a country is strategic** and helps to shape the national dialogue, design effective advocacy strategies, and forge strong links with academia and research institutions.

• **Strongly framing the issue of childhood obesity within the context of children’s rights is strategic as it reflects UNICEF’s ‘core identity’** and, importantly, can resonate well with governments, as was the case in Argentina.

• **Bringing on board UNICEF staff with legal training may be invaluable** in helping to navigate complex governmental review and approval processes related to regulations around labelling, marketing restrictions and the school food environment.

• **Being free from any financial connection with food and beverage companies producing unhealthy food and beverage products enables UNICEF teams to work more effectively with government and other partners on the issue of childhood nutrition.** A direct funding relationship with food and beverage companies, especially those manufacturing, distributing and promoting unhealthy products, risks compromising UNICEF’s ability to carry out its work on nutrition with government and partners – particularly, but not exclusively, in countries with a strong nutrition component in their country programme document. In addition, a conflict of interest could arise if UNICEF is receiving funding from such companies while also supporting the government to adopt regulatory measures to restrict the marketing practices around the product lines of these same companies.

• **Directly “engaging with” food and beverage companies around self-regulatory approaches, including multi-stakeholder platforms or food and beverage sector aggregators, is unlikely to result in a significant return on investment.** This is because companies show little willingness to voluntarily change their core business practices in a way that aligns with evidence-based recommendations and children’s rights. Instead, a positive return on investment appears more likely when UNICEF supports governments to indirectly engage on food and beverage companies through regulatory measures that curtail their aggressive marketing practices.
network of companies in the country, to develop its baby-friendly workplace model. KEPSA was a valuable private sector partner for UNICEF as the alliance helped energize the dialogue around infant feeding issues within the country’s business community. KEPSA’s strong convening power within Kenya, with both the country’s business community and the Government, was strategically helpful in moving infant feeding policies forward for enactment into law. However, as highlighted in this guidance, care to avoid conflict of interest is needed and each engagement with a business association should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for risks/benefits.

6.2 CROSS-CUTTING LESSONS LEARNED

A number of key cross-cutting lessons related to UNICEF’s past experiences engaging business relevant to all five business focus areas are summarized as follows.

**Study the potential business partner and learn “their” language.** Company owners and their staff are more apt to engage if they clearly understand the potential economic benefits. It is best for UNICEF teams not to pitch the effort solely in technical nutrition terms and outcomes (e.g., increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates) as this is not likely to catch the attention of company owners (and, in fact, could have the opposite effect). Rather, a more effective rationale for a potential business partner is how improving nutrition increases productivity and leads to higher returns on investment; these points are more likely to pique the interest of business owners. Prior to approaching a company, it is important to research the business first, learn their priorities, identify their top staff, and thereafter, use this background to develop key business centric messages around nutrition programming.

**Costs are paramount to the private sector.** Owners of private companies keep their eye on how any engagement might affect their bottom line, for the better or worse. While some companies place higher priority on doing good for altruistic reasons, others view their participation strictly within budgetary limits to guard against negative returns or increased costs that may lead to lost profits. This has been the case in UNICEF’s experiences working with salt producers on universal salt iodization and in establishing baby-friendly workplaces. If possible, UNICEF field teams should try to include a cost benefit analysis as part of the engagement since these data may later serve as a powerful advocacy tool to support future scale-up to other companies.

**Risk runs both ways.** Using the due diligence process, UNICEF vets the business partners with which it hopes to work in order to assess if there are any risks in engaging with certain entities, and, if so, how these can be managed (or not). On the reverse side, business partners also assess their

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**Business as a positive influence in society**

In terms of business serving as a positive influence in society, where children’s rights and business interests align, businesses can be an important positive voice, using their influence and leverage to advance children’s rights with governments. Some lessons to highlight are as follows.

- **The communication expertise and massive reach of some private sector groups can go far beyond what UNICEF is able to muster on its own to elevate, energize and influence national policy dialogues.**

- **Engaging with business in massive advocacy efforts can build new communication skills within UNICEF country teams, especially in areas where staff have not yet acquired experience.**

- **Understanding the national political landscape – and how it is likely to change over time – is essential for UNICEF teams when engaging with business leaders on nutrition programming.** This was effective in Thailand, when UNICEF worked closely with the leadership of a large property development company to advocate for salt iodization.

- **Working through business associations on child nutrition issues can be an effective strategy to influence government policies on nutrition issues.** This was the case in Kenya, when UNICEF engaged with the foundational arm of KEPSA, the largest business...
own risks about working with UNICEF; for example, they may consider whether the engagement would expose child labour, safety or health related problems, such as was the case engaging with the tea estate in Kenya to pilot a scalable family-friendly workplace. UNICEF teams should be aware of these potential concerns on the side of businesses and be prepared to manage such apprehension should it arise.

**It is more difficult to gain the interest of corporate entities if there is a lack of clear programming or endpoints.** Complex or long-term objectives, such as those related to upstream or structural drivers of malnutrition, may not attract the interest of business because they could lack a defined “end point” or clear programming “ask”. In contrast, businesses may show greater interest when results are more concrete and there is more clarity on when the objective will be achieved (e.g., enactment of legislation on mandatory salt iodization).

**Learning can go both ways for both UNICEF and the business entity.** Many times, UNICEF staff have learned new skills from the engagement with business; for example, this was the case in engaging with business to co-design social media advocacy campaigns around salt iodization in Thailand and to raise funds and awareness on childhood obesity through a global initiative. Not only could business provide enormous coverage through its immense social media reach and expertise in this type of massive communication effort, but UNICEF teams learned new skills in social media, which at that time, was a new technical area.

Likewise, staff from the business partner frequently learn new technical knowledge and skills from UNICEF through their engagement, including in the area of children’s rights, particularly with respect to child labour. In other cases, UNICEF’s engagement with some businesses have helped them to learn how: to reach vulnerable families with essential nutrition products in remote areas; to produce specialized therapeutic food products; and to integrate maternity protection and breastfeeding promotion into their workplaces. Having both business and UNICEF learn from each other helps to create the balance that is needed in UNICEF’s partnerships with business.

**UNICEF teams need to ensure a good return on investment when engaging with business.** The added value to be gained in engaging business should be considered against UNICEF’s overall contribution to the effort. It is important to consider the “time cost” of UNICEF staff who may contribute significant time to the engagement but not be covered by any engagement budget (addressed in Box 25). Understanding the potential extent of investment of staff time is imperative prior to moving ahead with an engagement.

**Understand how the government and the private company engage and interact.** While much of the focus has often been on how UNICEF and the business sector interact, as important is how the government views that particular business sector or company, and vice versa, to understand if there is any history of mistrust. In the immediate post-Soviet era, the great distrust between governments in Europe and Central Asia and the private sector (including salt producers) was an issue that UNICEF needed to account for in its programming with the salt sector. In Mexico, the close relationship between the food and beverage industry and the prior Government made it difficult for UNICEF to find space within which to work on nutrition issues. Understanding these dynamics is important when deciding to engage with business for programming outcomes, including in nutrition. It is also important to understand the regulatory and policy environment locally and in country where the company is headquartered with regard to good practice and compliance. This might include, for example, a consumer ombudsman/watchdog or health and safety executives.

**Concerns and risks continually evolve, thus need to be reassessed over time.** Engaging with private sector companies, it is important to realize that concerns and risks need to be reassessed by UNICEF since companies, industries, as well as political and social landscapes change over time. For example, in the case of early salt iodization work during the 1990s and early 2000s, while big salt producers were being encouraged by UNICEF to join iodization efforts decades ago, today some of these salt groups and processed food companies are actively lobbying against public health efforts to reduce salt intake; this has not been without controversy. Therefore, it is important for UNICEF to continuously assess and analyse its engagements with the business sector to factor in changes in prevailing nutrition situation. Specifically, this underscores how the array of benefits and risks related to engaging with the same business partners may dramatically evolve over time due to a changing nutrition or even political landscape.

**Legislation for mandatory actions by food and beverage companies is more effective than relying on voluntary measures by companies.** Whether it be the iodization of salt or controlling the unhealthy marketing practices of a sugar-sweetened beverage company, having a regulatory environment that stipulates mandatory actions to be taken by companies works more effectively than relying on companies to do so on their own volition.\(^{40}\) Mandatory legislation also creates a level playing field between companies that facilitates industry compliance and is the best way to ensure more vulnerable segments of the population are reached. As such, it results in a larger public health impact than voluntary efforts which may be designed to delay more effective regulations.
CONCLUSIONS

The business sector can add great value beyond the donation of funding for maternal and child nutrition outcomes and has a potential role to play in implementing some aspects of the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030. In UNICEF’s past experiences, this value has been demonstrated when UNICEF country teams clearly identified the strategic value added that business was uniquely able to offer to help the organization achieve important nutrition goals. As such, a business engagement must not be seen as an “objective” in and of itself, but rather, as strategically positioning UNICEF to be better able to achieve nutrition programme outcomes for children and mothers that otherwise may be unattainable. As underscored throughout this programme guidance, UNICEF teams must also take great care to ensure that engaging business poses minimal risks to the organization’s reputation, credibility and ability to carry out its mission to protect children’s rights, including the right to nutrition. Where risk is identified but considered acceptable, strategies and actions need to be taken to mitigate risk.

The technical programme guidance on engaging business for nutrition outcomes is the first of its kind and makes an important contribution to UNICEF’s growing experience on what it means to effectively engage with a wide array of business entities – including in the food and beverage sector – in a manner that supports the implementation of the Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 to achieve the desired vision of a world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to adequate nutrition. It is anticipated that as practical experience and insights are gained, the content of this programming guidance will continue to be refined and improved to respond to the realities and needs of field teams.
Prompt questions to guide the situation analysis on engaging business for nutrition programme outcomes

1. Is there a predominant or strategic industry in the country that defines and determines the national development plans or poverty reduction strategies, especially those that have the potential to impact nutrition outcomes?
2. Is there a part of the country where children are most nutritionally vulnerable and there is the strong presence of a company, sector or industry?
3. Is there significant migration inside the country to find jobs? What proportion of households are dependent on remittances from family members inside or outside the country?
4. Is there a national action plan for business and human rights (including children’s rights)?
5. Are there national action plans for improving child, adolescent and maternal nutrition (e.g., the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement)?
6. What is the size of the informal economy? How many families depend on the informal economy?
7. What is the size and structure of the formal economy? What is the workforce size and composition (e.g., are there large proportion of young women or mothers of young children)?
8. What is known about women in the workforce in terms of maternity rights and breastfeeding promotion in both the formal and informal sectors in urban and rural areas?
9. What is known about other aspects of workforce nutrition; for example, in ensuring that within the workplace there is accessibility of workers to: safe and nutritious food, health and nutrition services and information on healthy eating?
10. Are educational, nutrition, health or other services provided by business to the most disadvantaged children?
11. Do business leaders have influence over politicians and/or policymakers that could affect policies and regulations related to nutrition outcomes?
12. Is there a shortfall of nutrition relevant products or services that could contribute to the welfare of vulnerable population groups?
13. Are there any food and beverage products or services causing negative impact on children?
14. Is there evidence that business, in particular the food and beverage industry and its representatives, is lobbying against UNICEF nutrition priorities?
15. Does the government promote, regulate, engage or legislate business and its nutrition and health impacts?
16. Are there businesses in the country that have access to remote communities where UNICEF does not have a presence? Are these businesses the main (or only) provider of employment, goods and basic services, including for health and nutrition?
17. Can business make a significant contribution (both programmatic and financial) to strengthening systems that deliver essential social and nutrition relevant services for nutrition, including to the most disadvantaged children?
18. Can business and business leaders proactively engage in policy and public advocacy on a variety of human rights and nutrition-related issues?
19. Do business operations and practices have a major impact (directly or indirectly) on children’s nutritional well-being and enable or affect UNICEF’s ability to achieve its programmatic goals in nutrition?
20. What is the size of business in the economy? What are the main industry groups and major companies? Where are they located?
21. What is the performance and relevance of these businesses in relation to realizing children’s and women’s right to good nutrition?
22. How do the main food and beverage goods, consumer products and services that are produced by business impact women and children, both positively and negatively?
23. What is the government doing for women’s and children’s right to good nutrition?
24. What regulations exist related to food and beverage products (e.g., in terms of marketing, product composition, etc.) and what are the gaps in regulations?
25. What is the policy of the government with respect to strategic industries relevant for nutrition outcomes (e.g., food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, etc.)?
26. What are the power relations between business and government leaders, particularly food and beverage companies, but also other companies with the potential to improve nutrition outcomes?
APPENDIX 2

Guidance on the UNICEF Programme Strategy Note and Theory of Change

**Analysis.** A good Programme Strategy Note requires strong analysis of causality and stakeholders at the situation analysis phase. The underlying analysis of business as a nutrition programme stakeholder must go beyond regarding it simply as a supplier of goods and services to include its behaviour, employment practices, environmental impact, social and political influence, relationships and reach; each of these factors can impact nutrition outcomes in some way or another. This requires analysis of business impact on the nutrition situation of children (direct and indirect) and consideration of the interface between business and society. The analysis should take a social-ecological approach to identifying business influences.

**Theory of change.** The theory of change should include explicit hypotheses about where and in what way business is relevant for nutrition outcomes for children, adolescents and women. It should demonstrate how nutrition results will be achieved by addressing business practices and policies; how UNICEF and other actors will contribute to these results; and how UNICEF contributions will relate to the roles of additional partners.

**Step 1:** Articulate the vision of change for children’s nutritional well-being.

**Step 2:** Taking a social-ecological approach, describe the current and necessary conditions for change to achieve adequate nutrition for all children everywhere. This includes mapping the causal pathways leading to the desired nutrition results.

Consider how strategic action and advocacy with business can address identified bottlenecks and barriers in relation to supply, demand and quality of services; the enabling environment; and the attitudes, behaviours and social and gender norms that perpetuate child deprivation or disadvantage.

Be clear about risks and assumptions concerning business (and proposed mitigation measures). UNICEF takes a risk management rather than a risk avoidance approach to engaging with business. The risks depend on what UNICEF is seeking to achieve and what engagement or partnership strategy is adopted. For example, seeking funding from...
a major oil company may carry high reputational risk for UNICEF. On the other hand, it may be necessary to identify the adverse impacts on children associated with that company and define appropriate strategies to achieve positive outcomes. The minimum position is that UNICEF work should not cause harm to children or their families.

It is unlikely that business practices will be the sole factor behind children’s rights deprivations or that working with business will be the only necessary programme strategy. Nevertheless, since engaging business as a holistic social actor is relatively new for UNICEF, it is important to think these possibilities through without giving them disproportionate or irrelevant weight.

**Step 3:** Identify strategic actions by key players and UNICEF that will contribute to the change.

- Evidence is still emerging on how change on children’s rights issues happens within the business sector. However, other fields of development activity, corporate social responsibility and business sustainability approaches allow some reasonable assumptions of what influences business behaviour. Key influencers include regulation (and the threat of it); access to capital and markets; economic climate, profit, costs, and competition; consumer awareness and public opinion; sustainability strategies; employee loyalty; and senior management awareness of children’s rights and company responsibilities.

- Partnership or direct collaboration with business is one possible approach. Work on regulation or legislation may be necessary. Influencing investor decision-making may be a powerful tool. Strengthening national or trade sustainability platforms might be relevant.

- Business may have limited ideas on how to address adverse impacts on children, so there may be a need to address knowledge gaps. While UNICEF has much to offer, it may not have all the answers for the business context, and a degree of mutual learning and co-creation with business stakeholders (including government) is likely to be needed.

- See the hypothetical (and partial) theory of change on nutrition, which illustrates the potential roles of government and business.

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**Results and resources**

The theory of change results chain should be translated into the results and resources framework, which includes the programme outcome, outputs, baseline, targets and measurement indicators required to track results.

Programme Information Database (PIDB) coding should be done in a coordinated and consistent fashion across the office with the full involvement of technical programme staff. Poor coding can prevent reporting on quality work. If engaging business is part of the programme area strategy, ensure that the Programme Result Area PIDB code is cross-referenced with Special Purpose Area PIDB code 30-03. This will allow some tracking of the contribution being made by business to results.

It is recognized that the business-related indicators that are currently available are not fully fit for purpose. Nevertheless, use of the PIDB codes remains essential.
An example of a theory of change from Impact for Nutrition, UNICEF India
APPENDIX 4

Description of the food and beverage supply chain

ACTIVITIES

- Inputs into production
- Food Production
- Primary food storage and processing
- Secondary food processing
- Food distribution and trade
- Food retailing and catering
- Food promotion and labelling
- Food consumption and diet quality

ACTORS

- Crop breeders; seed, agrochemical and farm machinery companies
- Farmers, agricultural labourers, commodity producers
- Packers, millers, crushers, refiners
- Processed food manufacturers: artisan to global
- Importers, exporters, brokers, wholesalers
- Information retailers, supermarket chains, restaurants, fast food companies
- Advertising and communication agencies

APPENDIX 5

Lessons learned from UNICEF’s review of past engagements with the food and beverage sector to influence business practices

UNICEF’s historical experience indicates that partnering or working directly with food and beverage companies to change their policies around their core practices (e.g., production, distribution, promotion of food) has not yielded promising results for children’s nutrition and has provided little return on investment. Indeed, partnering has resulted in:

• Major reputational risks, including jeopardized relationships with key partners (e.g., WHO, civil society, philanthropic organizations and donor governments);

• Limited to no change to core business practices (as this would threaten company profits), with individual companies reluctant to act alone when there is no level playing field; and

• Difficulties in holding companies to account for policy change commitments as part direct engagements.

In situations where UNICEF previously accepted funding from the food and beverage sector, it has also put the organization’s credibility, reputation and mission at risk. Conversely, in countries where UNICEF has cut previous ties with the food and beverage sector, it has enhanced the organization’s reputation and led to new partnerships. Furthermore, these countries have reported no dent in their fundraising efforts.

Based on these experiences, UNICEF Nutrition has determined that the most appropriate line to follow with regards to companies whose core business involves the production, distribution and promotion of unhealthy foods is to: 1) focus on government regulation of harmful practices rather than industry self-regulation; 2) refuse any money from food and beverage industry actors whose core business is the production, promotion or distribution of unhealthy foods; and 3) avoid any formal partnerships with these same food and beverage industry actors.
Some foods are highly processed or "ultra-processed". They often have many added ingredients, such as sugar, salt, fat, starches as well as artificial colours, preservatives or stabilizers. Examples of these foods are frozen meals, soft drinks, hot dogs and cold cuts, packaged cookies, cakes, and salty snacks.

In this programme guidance, the term "childhood obesity" is used interchangeably with the term "child and adolescent overweight and obesity".

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