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Transforming Food
Systems for Children

UNICEF
AT WORK

LEAD TEAM

Victor Aguayo and Harriet Torlesse.

CONTRIBUTORS *(in alphabetical order)*

Maaïke Arts, Francisco Blanco, Mauro Brero, Tesfaye Chuko, Nita Dalmiya, Elhadji Issakha Diop, Jui Yee Eng, Alison Feeley, Karan Courtney Haag, Chika Hayashi, Jo Jewell, Claire Johnson, Roland Kupka, Grainne Mairead Moloney, Rowena Katherine Merritt, Preetu Mishra, Mohammad Shahnewaz Morshed, Zivai Murira, Simeon Nanama, Anuradha Narayan, Veronica Lorena Risso Patron, Francis Wambua Robert, Christiane Rudert, Vani Sethi, Linda Shaker, Vilma Tyler, D'Arcy Williams and Rizwan Yusufali.

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Julia D'Aloisio (editing) and Nona Reuter (design).

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Email: nutrition@unicef.org

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Transforming Food Systems for Children

UNICEF AT WORK

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Every child has the right to nutrition

Children everywhere have the right to nutritious and affordable food, essential nutrition services and positive nutrition and care practices that put them on the path to survive and thrive.

The world has moved closer than ever to the goal of ending child malnutrition in the previous two decades: stunting in children under 5 years of age has declined by one-third and there are 60 million fewer undernourished children in the world today than two decades ago.

These achievements prove that investments in nutrition can drive positive change for children and their families, across countries and continents. But important work remains to make the right to nutrition a reality for every child, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Our latest data indicate that 148 million children under 5 years of age are not growing well because of chronic undernutrition and one in three is living in severe food poverty in early childhood. Further, 135 million children 5–9 years of age suffer from overweight or obesity, a form of malnutrition that is increasingly prevalent among poorer households and countries.

The poor quality of children's diets is the most important driver of all forms of child malnutrition. Undernutrition, in the form of stunting and wasting, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity are increasingly concentrated in low- and middle-income countries and largely driven by a broken food system that is failing to provide children with the nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets children need to grow and develop to their full potential.

For UNICEF, the food systems transformation agenda called for by the United Nations Secretary-General is a child rights agenda. Together with child rights advocates globally and locally, UNICEF will contribute to transforming global and local food systems to ensure that the policies, practices and products of all stakeholders in food systems around the world are aligned with children's right to food, nutrition, health, information, protection and a sustainable planet.



Catherine Russell
Executive Director, UNICEF

Child malnutrition today

A triple burden

Every child has the right to nutrition. Today, as many countries face the brunt of a global food and nutrition crisis – caused by conflict, climate change and growing inequities – the need to protect, promote and support good nutrition for all children has never been greater.

The past decades have seen important progress in improving child nutrition. Yet the burden of child undernutrition remains unsolved, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where over 190 million children are affected by stunting and wasting and at least 340 million suffer from deficiencies in vitamins and other essential micronutrients.

At the same time, childhood overweight and obesity continue to rise, increasingly affecting children from poorer households in all regions and countries. Currently, an estimated 135 million children 5–9 years of age live with overweight or obesity.

These problems have culminated in a triple burden of child malnutrition: undernutrition, in the form of stunting and wasting, widespread micronutrient deficiencies, and a growing prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity.

This triple burden of child malnutrition coexists within the same region, country and community and sometimes within the same child's life-cycle, from early childhood to adolescence.

A new reality

In 2019, UNICEF's flagship State of the World's Children report – **Children, Food and Nutrition: Growing Well in a Changing World** – highlighted how new forces drive the nutrition situation of children.

Globalization and urbanization have changed food availability, food environments and food practices. Millions of families have left the countryside and moved to cities, replacing traditional foods and diets with unhealthy nutrient-poor ultra-processed foods and beverages.

Socioeconomic inequities are increasing in most parts of the world and many families are changing the way they eat or feed their children because of poverty, the rising cost of nutritious and safe foods, and the inability to afford a healthy diet.

Finally, the climate crisis, the damage done to water, air and soil, and the loss of biodiversity pose critical challenges to feeding children sustainably today and for generations to come.

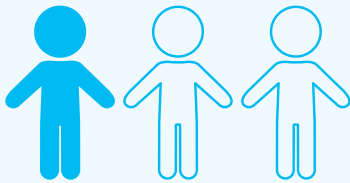
As the report makes clear, the evolving face of child malnutrition demands a food systems transformation that supports nutritious, safe and affordable diets for every child – from infancy, through the school years and adolescence – while contributing to a sustainable and liveable planet for all children.

Very poor diets

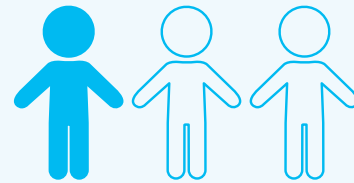
Globally, millions of children do not benefit from diets that support healthy growth and development. Half (52 per cent) of infants under 6 months of age are not exclusively breastfed as recommended in the first six months of life, and two in three (72 per cent) children aged 6–23 months are not fed the minimum diverse diet they need to grow and develop to their full potential.

This translates to approximately 202 million children under 5 years of age (31 per cent) living in severe food poverty in early childhood. These children are fed extremely poor diets consisting of one to two food groups, day in, day out. Among these, 43 per cent are fed grains and breastmilk only while less than 1 in 10 eat nutrient-dense foods, such as meat, fish, eggs, fruits or vegetables.

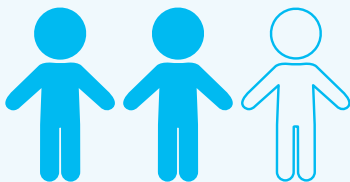
Many school-age children and adolescents are also deprived of the nutritious foods they need, with diets composed of minimal fruits and vegetables and too many foods and beverages high in sugar, salt, saturated fat and food additives, which are directly marketed to them. Surveys among school-age children and adolescent girls in low- and middle-income settings across six diverse UNICEF regions indicate that 21 per cent of school-age children and adolescents consume vegetables less than once a day, 34 per cent consume fruit less than once a day, 42 per cent consume soft drinks daily, and 46 per cent consume fast food at least weekly.



At least
1 in 3 children
is not growing well because
of malnutrition



At least
1 in 3 children
is living in severe food
poverty in early childhood



At least
2 in 3 children
suffer from deficiencies in
vitamins and other
essential nutrients



At least
2 in 3 children
are not fed the minimum
diverse diet they need to
grow healthy

UNICEF nutrition strategy

A strategy towards 2030

The UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 sets forth UNICEF’s strategic intent to support national governments and partners in upholding children’s right to nutrition and ending child malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere.

Our **vision** is a world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to nutrition. This vision is inspired by the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the world’s most widely ratified human rights treaty – which recognizes the right of every child to adequate nutrition.

The **goal** of our Strategy is to protect and promote **diets, services and practices** that support optimal nutrition, growth and development for all children, adolescents and women. It aims to contribute to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to end poverty and hunger, in all their dimensions, ensure children’s access to nutritious diets, and end child malnutrition in all its forms.

Prevention first, for every child

The vision of the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 is universal, applying equally to all children, adolescents and women, everywhere. This vision is implemented through context-specific programmes that share a universal premise across countries and continents: prevention comes first, in all contexts; if prevention fails, treatment is a must, in all contexts.

Prevention comes first everywhere, including in fragile and humanitarian settings: the primary objective of UNICEF nutrition programmes is to prevent malnutrition in all its forms across the life cycle, from early childhood, through middle childhood and adolescence.

If prevention fails, treatment is a must, everywhere: when efforts to prevent malnutrition fall short, UNICEF nutrition programmes aim to ensure the early detection and treatment of children with life-threatening malnutrition through facility- and community-based approaches, in both humanitarian and non-humanitarian settings.



FIGURE 1

The goal of the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 is to protect and promote diets, services and practices that support optimal nutrition, growth and development for all children, adolescents and women, everywhere.

Systems first, everywhere

To support this vision and goal, the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 calls for a systems approach to improving nutrition outcomes. We engage the five systems with the greatest potential to deliver nutrition specific interventions and results for children: food, health, water and sanitation, education, and social protection. We aim to make these systems better equipped and more accountable for addressing child malnutrition in all its forms.

Our Strategy acknowledges the central role of the food system – working together with the health, water and sanitation, education, and social protection systems – in providing nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets for children, while supporting adequate nutrition services and positive nutrition practices. Achieving nutrition results depends on the capacity of these five systems to deliver essential nutrition-specific interventions at every stage of life and contribute to nutrition-responsive development at scale.

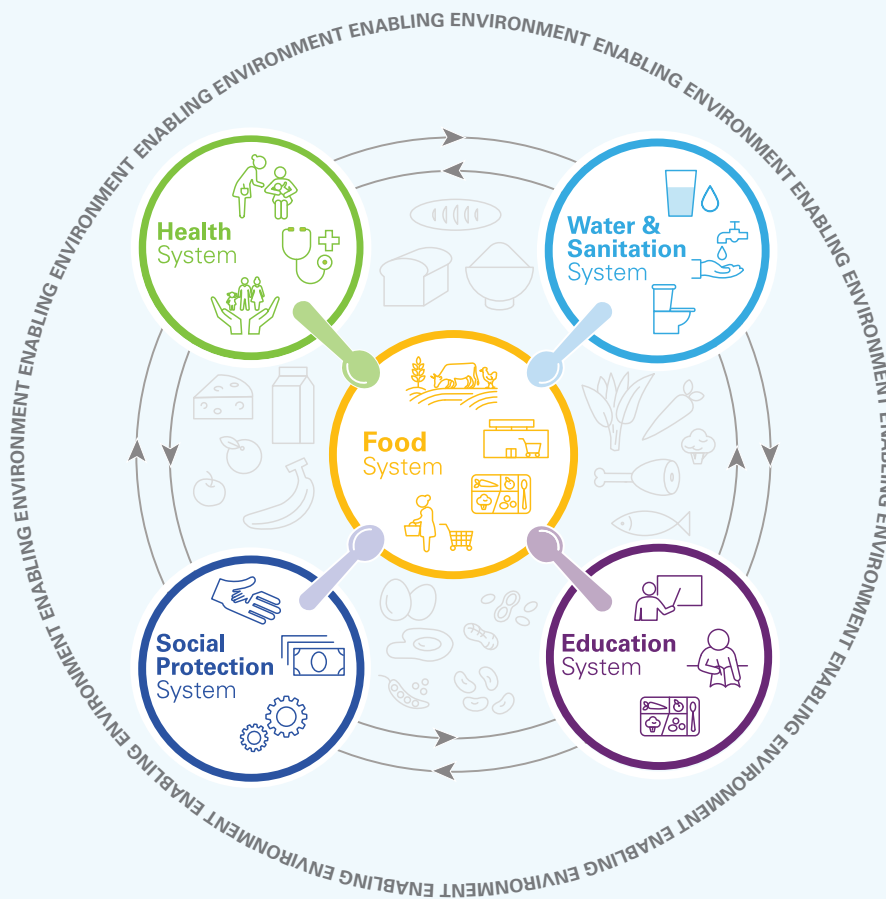


FIGURE 2

A systems approach to maternal and child nutrition. UNICEF's systems approach to nutrition acknowledges the central role of the food system in providing nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets for children.

UNICEF Conceptual Framework on Maternal and Child Nutrition

The UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 is guided by UNICEF’s Conceptual Framework on the Determinants of Maternal and Child Nutrition, 2020. The Framework builds on previous conceptual work by UNICEF, acknowledges the triple burden of malnutrition, and highlights the role of diets and care as immediate determinants of maternal and child nutrition. Diets and care influence each other. The co-occurrence of good diets and good care leads to adequate nutrition for children and women across the life course.

Using a positive narrative about what contributes to good nutrition in children and women, the Framework provides conceptual clarity on the enabling, underlying and immediate determinants of adequate nutrition, their vertical and horizontal interconnectedness, and the positive survival, growth, development, learning, economic and social outcomes resulting from improved maternal and child nutrition.

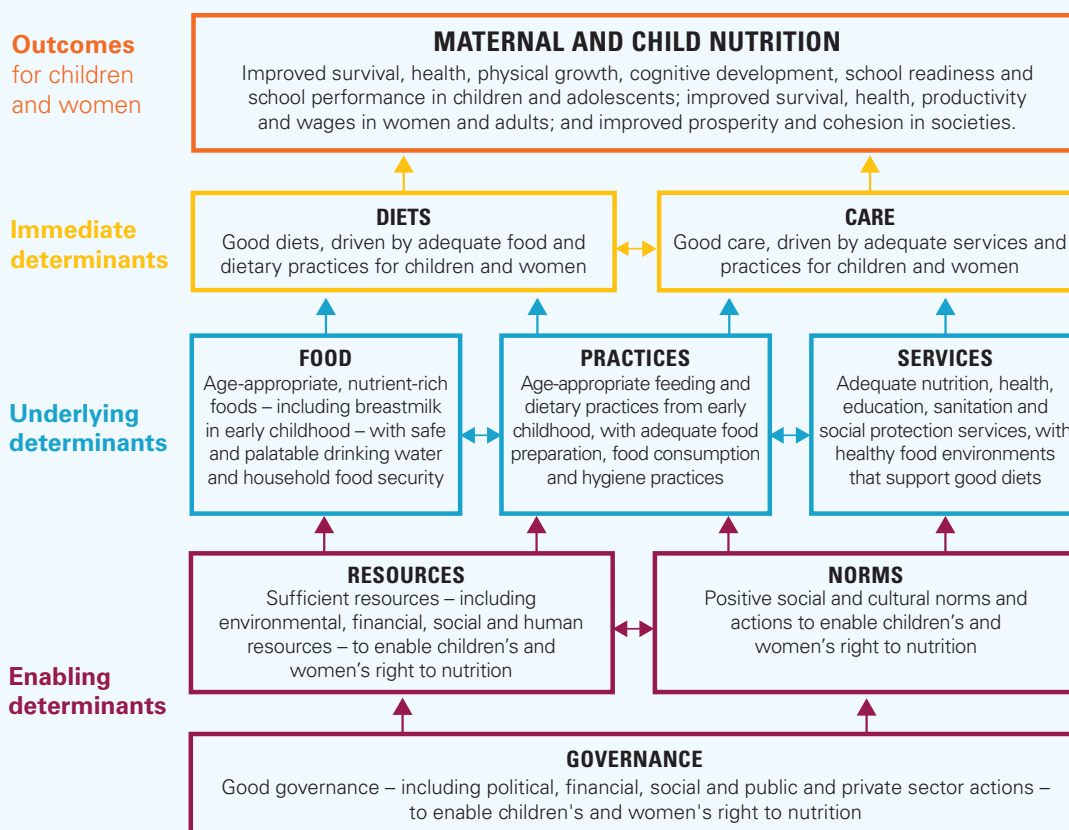


FIGURE 3
UNICEF Conceptual Framework on the Determinants of Maternal and Child Nutrition, 2020.
A framework for the prevention of malnutrition in all its forms.



The food system



The food system comprises the actors, policies and services needed to ensure children's access to good diets – defined as diets that are nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable. Food systems bear critical responsibility for the nutritional quality, safety, affordability and sustainability of children's diets. However, food systems often fail to account for the nutrition rights and special nutritional needs of children and adolescents when determining what foods need to be produced, processed, packaged and marketed. Therefore, the food system needs to operate in ways that ensure that nutritious, safe and sustainable diets are available and affordable. The food system also needs to empower children, adolescents and families to demand foods that are nutritious, safe and sustainable. Finally, the food system needs to create food environments that support good nutrition for children; evidence shows that when nutritious and safe options are affordable, convenient and desirable, children and families make better food choices.

Public and private.

Food systems require public and private sector actors to take full responsibility for their unique roles in shaping children's diets. Governments have primary accountability for upholding the right to food and nutrition for their children. Governments must set standards that are aligned with children's best interests and create a level playing field for food producers and suppliers. Producers and suppliers need to ensure that their actions – including food production, transformation, distribution, labelling, marketing and retailing – are aligned with such standards. Food systems must deliver nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable food options for children, and the food and beverage industry has a key role to play as a provider of food and essential goods and services for children and adolescents; as a source of employment and livelihoods for women and families; as a shaper of food markets, food prices, and consumer demand; and as a driver of climate and environmental change.

Food system transformation.

The urgent need for a food system transformation to ensure the health of people and the planet is now globally recognized.

However, the nutrition rights and special dietary needs of children and adolescents have not been sufficiently considered in this global agenda. Today's food systems are driving pervasive undernutrition (both stunting and wasting), widespread micronutrient deficiencies, and rising rates of overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases – including type-2 diabetes and poor mental health – among children and adolescents. Food systems are also putting pressure on the environment, threatening children's right to nutrition and a sustainable planet. Collaboration across diverse disciplines has increased our understanding of the linkages between people, food and the planet, but analyses and narratives rarely include children and adolescents as nutrition rights holders. Further, the unique role children, adolescents and young people in transforming food systems has not been adequately recognized and leveraged to drive change.

UNICEF and food systems for children

For UNICEF, the food systems transformation agenda called for by the United Nations Secretary-General is a child rights agenda: children’s right to nutrition must be at the heart of food systems transformation.

The UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030 calls for UNICEF programmes to engage strategically with food systems and their public and private sector actors to advocate for policies, practices and products that support good nutrition for all children.

UNICEF is well positioned to mobilize food systems’ public and private sector actors to tackle the global challenge of child malnutrition given:

- UNICEF’s multisectoral mandate for children and long-standing role as a trusted policy and programme adviser to governments and partners at national, regional and global levels.
- UNICEF’s wide on-the-ground presence, with 16,000 staff and nutrition programmes for children, adolescents and women in more than 130 countries across 7 regions and all country income categories.
- UNICEF’s nutrition mandate for every child – including children affected by humanitarian crises – through our agency’s role as sector and cluster lead agency for maternal and child nutrition.

UNICEF works to improve the quality of children’s foods, food environments and food practices. Our intended result is that food systems protect, promote and support diets, services and practices that prevent child malnutrition in all its forms.

This involves leveraging the policies, resources, and actors – public and private – of the food system to make food systems better equipped and more accountable for improving the quality of children’s food, food environments and food practices globally and locally.

UNICEF’s work on food systems for children focuses on three action areas:

1. **Improving children’s foods** through actions in public policy, guidelines and standards, and food supply chains – including fortified foods, food supplements and therapeutic foods for children.
2. **Improving children’s food environments**, including the places where children live, learn, eat and meet, through actions in public sector policies and programmes and in private sector practices and products.
3. **Improving children’s food practices** through policies, strategies and programmes that promote positive individual behaviours, caregiver practices and social norms.

Action Area 1: Improving children’s foods	Action Area 2: Improving children’s food environments	Action Area 3: Improving children’s food practices
1.1 Food guidelines 1.2 Fortified foods 1.3 Specialized foods	2.1 Food policies and programmes 2.2 Food in schools and beyond 2.3 Food labelling and marketing	3.1 Child feeding practices 3.2 Food and nutrition education 3.3 Food and feeding data

ACTION AREA 1

Improving children's foods

UNICEF aims to improve children's foods through actions in public policy, guidelines and standards, and food supply chains, including fortified foods, food supplements and therapeutic foods for children.

1.1 Food guidelines. UNICEF advocates for and supports the development, adoption and enforcement of national guidelines on child feeding and the implementation of national standards and guidelines for foods aimed at children. This includes guidelines related to commercial milk formula, complementary foods, and foods and meals for children in early childhood development centres and school-based programmes, as well as nutritionally adequate foods for children in public sector and social protection programmes.

1.2 Fortified foods. UNICEF advocates for and supports fortification of complementary foods for children aged 6–23 months, while breastfeeding continues. We advocate for and support mandatory large-scale fortification of staple foods and condiments, including cereal flours, rice, cooking oil and salt, to address nutrient intake gaps in children and women where nutrient-poor diets are prevalent, while we promote diversification in food production to increase the supply of nutrient-rich foods.

1.3 Specialized foods. UNICEF supports the sustainable and cost-effective production of ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) for children with life-threatening wasting. We also support the production of lipid-based food supplements and multiple micronutrient powders for home-based fortification of children's foods to prevent malnutrition where nutrient-poor diets are common. We expand and diversify production capacity at regional and national levels to build ownership and sustainability.



UNICEF's global leadership in improving children's foods



At global level, UNICEF generates evidence, issues global programme guidance, drives global action, mobilizes global partners and shapes global markets to improve the quality of children's foods. Recent examples of UNICEF's work at global level are as follows:

Global thought leadership: UNICEF acts as a global knowledge broker to generate and share evidence on the determinants and drivers of children's food and guide the design and implementation of policies and programmes. For example, the 2021 Child Nutrition Report, [Fed to Fail – The Crisis of Children's Diets in Early Life](#), synthesized the latest evidence on the barriers to nutritious, safe and age-appropriate foods in early childhood, and the actions needed to transform systems – including food systems – to deliver the diets that young children need.

Global programme guidance: Over the course of the last five years, UNICEF has issued evidence-based programme guidance and tools to support global, regional and national efforts to improve children's foods from birth to adolescence. These include programme guidance on [Improving Young Children's Diets During the Complementary Feeding Period, Nutrition in Middle Childhood and Adolescence](#), and the [Prevention of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents](#).

Global partnerships: UNICEF's partnerships with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Iodine Global Network and USAID have steered global progress on universal salt iodization for the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency in children and women around the world. Now, UNICEF's efforts are focused on eliminating iron deficiency anaemia – a major driver of poor brain development and school performance – through large-scale fortification of wheat flour with iron, as highlighted in [UNICEF's Vision and Approach for Advancing Large-Scale Food Fortification](#).

Global standards:

In 2022, UNICEF successfully advocated for the [Codex Alimentarius Guideline on Ready-to-](#)

[Use Therapeutic Food \(RUTF\)](#), which sets standards for the nutritional composition and food safety of RUTF and paves the way for the development of new recipes that cater to local food preferences. In addition, UNICEF led global efforts to gather evidence that supported the decision to include RUTF in the WHO Essential Medicines List, which will help countries to include RUTF in national essential medicines lists and mobilize public and global resources for RUTF.

Global standards: In 2023, UNICEF and partners successfully advocated to include a reference to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes in the [Codex Alimentarius Standard for Follow-up Formula](#). This breakthrough was achieved despite strong opposition from the commercial formula milk industry to the standard for more than a decade. This global standard enables low- and middle-income countries to include WHO guidance in national breastfeeding laws without fear of international trade challenges.

Essential supplies: [UNICEF procures ~80 per cent of the global supply of RUTF](#) to provide life-saving treatment to children suffering from the more severe forms of wasting. UNICEF has diversified the supplier base for RUTF, from a single global manufacturer in 2000 to 21 global and local manufacturers in 2023. Eighteen of these 21 manufacturers are located in countries with a high prevalence of wasting, and 7 out of 10 children with severe wasting are now treated with RUTF produced in a country in the Global South.

FOOD GUIDELINES

Mexico — Food-based dietary guidelines for children and families

In recent decades, the Mexican diet has shifted from mainly grains, vegetables and legumes to ultra-processed foods high in sugar, salt and fats.

School-age children consume sweet snacks, cereals and desserts at least three times a week, and only one in five consumes vegetables and legumes. These unhealthy diets are fuelling a steep rise in overweight and obesity among children, alongside persistent stunting and micronutrient deficiencies.

As part of a comprehensive effort to improve children's diets in Mexico, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and National Institute of Public Health to update the national food-based dietary guidelines. Food-based dietary guidelines have traditionally been used to inform and empower consumers on nutritious and healthy diets. But when designed appropriately and integrated in food, health, education, water and social protection policies and programmes, they also have the potential to help transform food systems for children and families.

With UNICEF's support, the National Food-based Dietary Guidelines were updated based on the latest global recommendations, international evidence, and formative research conducted in Mexico. UNICEF ensured that the Guidelines had a specific focus on the dietary needs of children from birth to adolescence, and that they considered gender and incorporated regional variations in locally available foods and dietary preferences.

Deliberate steps were also taken to ensure that the process was free of interference from the food and beverage industry and conflicts of interest.

The updated Guidelines were released in 2023. They identify a set of 10 key recommendations to guide children, caregivers and families on diets that are nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable for the planet. For example, the recommendations recognize the crucial role of breastfeeding for nutrition in early childhood and in protecting against overweight and obesity. They advise that from 6 months of age, children should consume more vegetables, fruits, beans, pulses and whole grains. And they warn that children should avoid ultra-processed foods and sugar-sweetened beverages, especially those that carry warning labels for high sugar, salt, saturated fat or trans-fat content.

These new guidelines will be used by the Government of Mexico, UNICEF and other partners to guide and align national policies, legal measures and programmes to ensure the food system delivers nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets to all children and their families.



FORTIFIED FOODS

Ethiopia — Universal salt iodization for children and households

Iodine deficiency causes irreparable damage to children’s brain development but is entirely preventable. Salt iodization – the fortification of edible salt with iodine during processing – improves iodine intake, prevents iodine deficiency and protects children’s brains.

Ethiopia launched a universal salt iodization programme in the 1990s, but by 2011, there were clear signs that it was not functioning optimally. Only 15 per cent of household salt was iodized, and iodine intake in school-age children and pregnant women was inadequate.

At that time, the quality of iodized salt was poor because the salt supply was dominated by large numbers of small-scale salt producers who used rudimentary methods – portable sprayers and manual mixing – to add iodine to crude salt. Salt iodization was not mandatory, and so many producers were not iodizing salt at all, nor was it regulated effectively. As a result, non-iodized salt and inadequately iodized salt were able to circulate in markets.

The poor performance of the salt iodization programme and persistence of iodine deficiency prompted the Government to review its policy and strategic approach. With the technical support of UNICEF and partners, the Government took action to make salt

iodization mandatory, support the centralization and modernization of salt iodization through the private sector, and strengthen monitoring and enforcement.

Today, salt is iodized in centralized iodization facilities that purchase salt from small-scale salt producers, use improved processes to iodize salt to a high quality, and distribute iodized salt throughout the country. More than 90 per cent of iodized salt is produced by just three salt processors, greatly simplifying the monitoring requirements.

This transformation to large-scale food fortification was not without challenges. In particular, it was crucial to overcome the initial scepticism of small-scale producers. Through engagement and dialogue between these producers and private investors in centralized iodization facilities, they were reassured that their livelihoods were not at risk and that they would benefit from a secure market for their crude salt.

Currently, more than 85 per cent of households are consuming iodized salt, and surveys show that iodine intake in pregnant women and school-age children is now at adequate levels. The shift to centralized iodization facilities in Ethiopia is protecting more than 3 million newborns from iodine deficiency each year.



SPECIALIZED FOODS

Kenya — Locally produced ready-to-use therapeutic food for children

When young children become dangerously thin – a condition known as severe wasting – they need urgent care to prevent the risk of dying. Ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) is a peanut-based specialized food that is used to treat children with severe wasting at community level.

In Kenya, wasting can affect more than 20 per cent of children under 5 years of age in arid and semi-arid lands counties, where families and their young children are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Community-based treatment of severe wasting with RUTF began in Kenya in 2004 but experienced challenges because RUTF was procured from international suppliers and was not included in the Government-led supply chain for essential commodities.

With technical and financial support from UNICEF, Kenya has been able to develop the capacity to produce RUTF within the country and rapidly scale up supply. The manufacturer, INSTA, now meets all RUTF needs in the country.

The local production of RUTF has reduced the lead time for supply, lowered transportation costs and helped Kenya achieve self-sufficiency in production. This has expanded the value chain of RUTF to benefit the local economy through direct employment and raw materials procured locally, as well reducing the carbon footprint of RUTF. In addition, it has benefited other countries: INSTA has become the largest supplier in East Africa and is one of the top five suppliers to UNICEF globally.

Alongside the efforts to increase local production, UNICEF assisted the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority in fully integrating RUTF into the Government-led supply system.

The Government of Kenya now manages the procurement, warehousing and distribution of RUTF. This has enhanced the Government's commitment to and accountability for the availability of and access to RUTF, created cost and time efficiencies in production and distribution, and simplified monitoring and reporting procedures.



ACTION AREA 2

Improving children's food environments

UNICEF aims to improve children's food environments where children live, learn, play, eat, meet and play through actions in public sector policies and programmes and in private sector products and practices.

2.1 Food policies and programmes. UNICEF advocates for and supports public sector policies and programmes that facilitate children's access to nutritious, diverse, affordable and sustainable food choices, including through financial incentives and subsidies that facilitate children's access to healthy foods and through food taxes and other financial disincentives that limit or discourage children's consumption of unhealthy, nutrient-poor ultra-processed foods and beverages.

2.2 Food in schools and beyond. UNICEF advocates for and supports policies, standards and services that improve the availability of nutritious healthy foods and free, safe and palatable drinking water in schools and around schools. This includes policy and guidance to serve nutritious and healthy meals in schools and protect children from unhealthy and ultra-processed foods and beverages rich in sugar, salt and fats in children's food environments in and beyond schools.

2.3 Food labelling and marketing. UNICEF advocates for and supports policies that protect children from harmful food marketing practices in alignment with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and WHO recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children. We advocate for and support legislation that mandates front-of-package labelling to discourage the consumption of ultra-processed foods, helping children, adolescents and families identify and choose healthy foods at the point of purchase.



UNICEF's global leadership in improving children's food environments



UNICEF leads global advocacy and discourse to make food environments fit for all children and adolescents through policies, legal measures and programmes that facilitate access to nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable foods and protect children from unhealthy foods, including ultra-processed foods and sugar-sweetened beverages. Recent examples of UNICEF's work at global level are as follows:

Global thought leadership: UNICEF's [Framework on Food Systems for Children and Adolescents](#) identifies food environments as a key determinant of children's diets, while three UNICEF programme guidance documents – [Improving Young Children's Diets](#), [Nutrition in Middle Childhood and Adolescence](#) and the [Prevention of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents](#) – and UNICEF's advocacy on [Protecting Children's Right to a Healthy Food Environment](#) promote a child rights-based approach to shaping food environments in ways that enable children's access to nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable foods.

Global programme guidance: UNICEF's [Programme Guidance on Engaging with the Food and Beverage Industry](#) sets out the commitment of UNICEF programmes to contribute to ensure that the policies, practices and products of the food and beverage industry are aligned with children's right to food, nutrition, health, information, protection, and a sustainable planet (see Annex). The guidance relates to the food and beverage industry in general and to the ultra-processed food and beverage industry in particular and offers a framework that can be used by other organizations.

Global strategic direction: Based on an [Evidence Review of Food Retailer Actions to Support Healthier Supermarket Food Environments for Children](#), UNICEF developed the [Guidance Framework to Support Healthier Food Retail Environments for Children](#). The Framework provides practical guidance for investors and the food retail sector on effective steps that food retailers can take to create healthy food retail environments and contribute to improved business practices that support good nutrition for children, adolescents and families.

Global partnerships: UNICEF and WHO expose the [negative impact of the marketing of commercial formula milk](#) on infant feeding practices, and assist countries in strengthening the [National Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes](#) and related World Health Assembly resolutions. UNICEF and WHO also lead the Global Breastfeeding Collective and the Global Complementary Feeding Collective, partnerships of organizations working to increase commitment to and investments in infant and young child feeding.

Global standards: UNICEF's [Guide for Policy Makers on a Child Rights-Based Approach to Food Marketing](#) highlights the harm caused by the marketing of unhealthy foods to children and provides recommendations to better protect children in the context of pervasive marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages. UNICEF has since conducted the first global survey to examine the [Key Barriers to Food Marketing Regulation](#) in low-, middle- and high-income countries.

Global evidence: UNICEF synthesizes evidence on country-level actions to protect children from unhealthy foods and beverages in order to identify good practices, lessons learned and recommendations that can assist other countries. This includes producing a synopsis of country developments in [Implementing Taxes on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages](#), which presents detailed case studies on four countries – France, Hungary, Mexico and Norway.

FOOD POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Malaysia — Taxing sugar-sweetened beverages to protect children

Sugar-sweetened beverages are a leading source of added sugar in the diets of children and adolescents and are driving the rise in overweight and obesity across the world. These drinks are often cheap, heavily marketed and readily available, even in remote rural areas.

In Malaysia, the consumption of sugary drinks has increased sharply in recent years. By 2017, more than one-third (36 per cent) of adolescents consumed at least one sugary drink every day, and the average daily sugar intake was 10 teaspoons, up from seven teaspoons in 2012 and more than the recommended limit for adults.

With the support of UNICEF and WHO, the Government of Malaysia took action to address these concerning trends. In July 2019, a tax of MYR 0.40 per litre (equivalent to US\$0.08) was introduced on packaged sugar-sweetened beverages that are either imported into or manufactured in Malaysia. Efforts to build political and public support for this policy and counter the strong resistance from sugar sweetened beverage manufacturers were crucial to this success.

The purpose of this tax is two-fold: first, to incentivize beverage manufacturers to reduce the sugar content of sugar-sweetened beverages, and second, to encourage consumers to reduce the purchase and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

While the sugar tax is a significant step towards reducing sugar consumption among children and adolescents in Malaysia, the Government and UNICEF are closely tracking its impact to determine whether there is a need to refine its design and implementation.

In 2021–2022, a comprehensive evaluation, commissioned by the Government of Malaysia with the support of UNICEF, revealed promising results. In particular, manufacturers have reformulated some beverages to reduce the sugar content and have increased production of low-sugar beverages.



However, most of the larger manufacturers have absorbed the tax rather than passing it to consumers, and so their retail prices have not increased to the extent needed to discourage consumption. This evidence is building the case to increase the tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.

Global evidence shows that taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages, when designed and implemented appropriately, reduce the purchase and consumption of taxed beverages and contribute to reducing obesity in adolescence.

FOOD IN SCHOOLS AND BEYOND

Nepal — Providing nutritious meals for schoolchildren

Schools provide an opportunity to reach school-age children with a nutritious meal every day and positively influence lifelong dietary practices.

However, the quality of school meals varies considerably across the world.

In Nepal, children's food environments are rapidly changing. Ultra-processed foods and beverages are widely available, even in remote mountain villages, and are entering children's diets from a very young age. Children are exposed to these unhealthy foods at home, in the community and – until recently – at school.

The Government of Nepal introduced the midday meal programme in 2008 to ensure children have access to a nutritious meal at school and to encourage school attendance. Initially, there were no standards on the contents of these meals, and some schools relied on ultra-processed foods, such as instant noodles. In addition, some food manufacturers and private companies lobbied with schools to influence them to use their unhealthy products.

To improve the food environment for schoolchildren, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Ministry of Health and Population to develop the National Health and Nutrition Midday Meal

Guidelines for School-Age Children.

These guidelines set standards for the provision of nutritious and safe meals in pre-primary and primary schools using locally available foods that meet 30 per cent of children's requirements for energy, protein and essential micronutrients (iodine iron, vitamin A and zinc), and restrict the use of ultra-processed or 'junk' foods and beverages that are high in sugar, salt and fats.

Some local governments have taken additional action to prohibit the sale and distribution of unhealthy ultra-processed foods such as noodles and biscuits within a 50 metre radius of schools.

The guidelines were released in 2022 and have been disseminated to all seven provinces in the country. School management committees in almost 29,000 schools are now implementing the guidelines, benefiting approximately 640,000 school-age children.

The close engagement between the ministries of education and health on these guidelines has paved the way for further collaboration on nutrition, including the review and revision of the nutrition content of the curriculum for school-age children.



FOOD LABELLING AND MARKETING

Argentina — Protecting children’s right to healthy food

The right to adequate food is under threat for children across the world due to the widespread availability and aggressive marketing of ultra-processed foods and beverages that are high in salt, sugar and fat. As a result, overweight and obesity affect a growing number of children and adolescents, including in Argentina, where 41 per cent of children aged 5–17 years were living with overweight or obesity in 2019, due to the obesogenic environments in which they live, study, eat and meet.

Research conducted by UNICEF Argentina has shown that children and adolescents are heavily exposed to the digital marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages, and that these foods and beverages are widely available in schools as well as in the community.

Using evidence from Argentina and international best practices, UNICEF advocated with the Government and parliamentarians for legislation to reduce children’s access to and consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages. The Pan American Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization and National Coalition to Prevent Childhood Obesity were important allies in this process. UNICEF and partners also provided technical support to develop the new legislation.

As a result of these actions, the Government adopted the Healthy Eating Law in December 2021. This law mandates that packaged foods and beverages that contain excessive levels of sugar, salt or trans-fats and those that contain any caffeine or artificial sweeteners must have a front-of-pack warning label in order to guide consumers in their food choices.

The law also prohibits the distribution and sale of foods and beverages with warning labels in schools; mandates nutrition and health education in schools; and prohibits all forms of marketing of foods and beverages that have warning labels and are aimed at children, including digital marketing.

Industry lobbying and opposition was a constant challenge throughout the policy development process. However, UNICEF worked closely with the National Coalition to debunk the misleading arguments of the industry and amplify evidence-based information on the benefits of legal protection.

UNICEF is working now to monitor the implementation of the law and ensure that it is protecting the rights of children and adolescents in Argentina.



ACTION AREA 3

Improving children's food practices

Improving children's food practices through policies, strategies and programmes that promote positive individual behaviours, caregiver practices and social norms.

3.1 Child feeding practices. UNICEF programmes use counselling and other social and behaviour change strategies and approaches to promote and support optimal feeding practices in early childhood, including breastfeeding, age-appropriate complementary foods and feeding, and related child nutrition and care practices. We also promote hygienic food handling and handwashing with soap at critical times, which are key to food preparation and to food preparation and child feeding.

3.2 Food and nutrition education. UNICEF supports the design and implementation of up-to-date school curricula to improve knowledge and skills about good food, diets and nutrition among school-age children and adolescents. We support the design and implementation of large-scale multichannel communication programmes that use engaging communication approaches to promote positive food practices, leveraging the cultural and social aspirations of children, adolescents and families.

3.3 Food and feeding data. UNICEF strengthens national capacities to collect and analyse data on child feeding, children's dietary practices and maternal and child nutrition. We support the use of data to inform national policies and programmes on the nutrition of children, adolescents and women. UNICEF is the custodian of the Global Database on Infant and Young Child Feeding and leads reporting on the key child nutrition indicators and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



UNICEF's global leadership in improving children's food practices

UNICEF is at the forefront of global efforts to leverage systems to improve children's feeding and dietary practices, and to generate data on the status, trends and inequities in these practices at global, regional and national levels. Recent examples of UNICEF's work at global level are as follows:

Global thought leadership: UNICEF has developed and refined the [Community Infant and Young Child Feeding \(IYCF\) Package](#) to guide the design and implementation of IYCF counselling services at scale. Currently, more than 90 countries are using locally adapted versions of the package. An innovative complementary bowl and spoon adds value to the package by reminding caregivers about the quantity, diversity and consistency of food to feed their young children.

Global programme tools: UNICEF has applied global evidence from behavioural insights to develop a [Toolkit on Social and Behavioural Change Communications for Prevention of Childhood Overweight and Obesity](#). UNICEF supports social and behaviour change communication as part of a larger programme that addresses the multiple interacting causes of overweight and obesity. The toolkit outlines approaches to influence food practices across the life course, from pregnancy to adolescence.

Global partnerships: In partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNICEF is developing the capacity of ministries of education to integrate age-appropriate food and nutrition education in school curricula in primary and secondary schools. UNICEF has also joined forces with governments, UN agencies, donors, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector to build the [School Meals Coalition](#), which aims to ensure that every child, every day, has the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal by 2030.

Global voice for children:

UNICEF harnessed the voices of more than 600 adolescents in 18 countries around the world to understand the challenges they face in accessing nutritious, safe and affordable food and in adopting healthy dietary practices; these were documented in the [Food and Me](#) report. UNICEF also provided a platform to enable these adolescents to voice their expectations to policymakers, governments, and stakeholders for a responsive, inclusive, and sustainable food system in [Fix My Food: Children's Views on Harnessing Food Systems](#).



Global knowledge: UNICEF is the world's leading source of data on children's dietary practices in early childhood. As the custodian of the [Global Database on Infant and Young Child Feeding](#), UNICEF tracks the status, trends and inequities in breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices across seven regions and more than 130 countries. This includes indicators on exclusive breastfeeding and minimum dietary diversity, which are used to measure progress towards the World Health Assembly global nutrition targets.

Global thought leadership: UNICEF seeks new measures to assess the quality of children's diets. A new indicator on [child food poverty](#) identifies children who are fed two or fewer food groups (severe child food poverty) versus the minimum five food groups recommended in early childhood. In addition, UNICEF has developed the Child Food Insecurity Experience Scale to identify children experiencing food insecurity. Furthermore, through our involvement in the Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative, UNICEF is working to ensure that new guidance being developed on how to monitor healthy diets at population level will include children.

CHILD FEEDING PRACTICES

Nigeria — Strengthening feeding practices in early childhood

Feeding practices in the first two years of life shape the growth and development of children.

Accurate information and quality counselling on what and how to feed infants and young children can contribute to improving feeding practices and meeting dietary needs in early childhood.

Nigeria was one of the first countries to adopt UNICEF's global Community Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Package as a national programme. This package empowers community-based health and nutrition workers with skills, knowledge and tools to counsel mothers and other caregivers on breastfeeding, complementary feeding and other essential feeding and care practices, such as safe food handling and handwashing with soap at critical times.

Following an evaluation of the package, it was rolled out by the Federal Ministry of Health to all states in Nigeria. Between 2018 and 2022, the number of caregivers reached with counselling on infant and young child feeding in Nigeria doubled from 0.6 million to 1.3 million, and the percentage of children aged 6–23 months consuming a minimally diverse diet increased from 23 per cent to 31 per cent.

However, dietary practices remain suboptimal for many young children. UNICEF and the Government are continually seeking ways to better address the barriers that caregivers experience in feeding their young children.

In Kano State, UNICEF is partnering with the state health authorities, the Kano Emirate Council and the Society for Women Development and Empowerment of Nigeria to introduce innovative approaches to improve dietary practices.

For example, UNICEF is trialling a complementary bowl and spoon that helps caregivers recall nutrition messages when they are preparing food for their children. Demarcations and illustrations inside the bowl provide guidance on what to feed (a variety of food groups), how much to feed (quantity of food) and how often (feeding frequency). A slotted spoon ensures that foods are of the correct consistency and are not watered down. In addition, caregivers of young children are given seeds, seedlings, chickens and goats to enhance the production and supply of nutritious foods at household level.

The Government and UNICEF will use the lessons learned from this initiative to inform the replication and roll-out to other states in Nigeria.



FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION

India — Building the food and nutrition literacy of school-age children

Schools provide a unique setting for delivering interventions to school-going children and adolescents, including education to promote healthy diets and build lifelong nutrition literacy.

India is home to more than 250 million adolescents – the largest cohort worldwide – and is at the forefront of school-based nutrition programming. The Government of India has evolved its approaches over the past two decades to tackle the rising prevalence of overweight among adolescents, alongside persistent underweight, micronutrient deficiencies and anaemia.

The triple burden of malnutrition is addressed through a package of interventions, including screening and referral for undernutrition, weekly iron and folic acid supplementation, twice-yearly deworming, the provision of fortified foods in school lunches, the provision of safe drinking water in schools, and age-appropriate education on nutrition, hygiene and health.

In 2019, UNICEF and selected partners provided technical support to the National Council of Education Research and Training to develop a set of 11 training modules to equip schoolteachers with the knowledge and skills to deliver food, nutrition, health and hygiene education. These modules include content to build adolescents' understanding of a nutritious diet, the importance of avoiding ultra-processed foods and beverages, how to interpret processed food labels and the importance of being physically active.

With the support of UNICEF and other partners, the national Government trained the National Resource Group, a pool of master trainers to roll-out the new modules to public secondary schools across the country. To date, more than 320,000 teachers, known as 'Health and Wellness Ambassadors,' have been trained in about 175,000 schools across half of the districts in the country. These Ambassadors, half of whom are women, have the responsibility to promote nutritious diets, healthy lifestyles and disease prevention through morning assemblies and classroom activities.

The programme is currently reaching 11 million schoolchildren and will be scaled up to all districts of the country by 2025. In addition, approximately 50 million schoolchildren are being reached with nutrition education on micronutrient-rich diets together with weekly iron and folic acid supplementation.

Alongside these efforts, the Government of India is taking action to improve food environments within and around schools: regulations issued in 2020 prohibit the marketing or sale of unhealthy foods and beverages in schools and within 50 metres of school premises.



FOOD AND FEEDING DATA

Bangladesh — Data-driven decision-making for children’s food practices

National nutrition information systems can improve decision-making and lead to better nutrition outcomes, making them a key element of success in programmes to improve children’s diets.

Since 2009, the Bangladesh Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has monitored the number of mothers and caregivers reached with counselling services on infant and young child feeding. However, there have been challenges to the quality and timely reporting of data, the consolidation of data on facility-based and community-based services, and the effective use of data to improve programme performance.

UNICEF supported the Nutrition Information and Planning Unit of the Institute of Public Health to resolve these challenges. First, UNICEF worked with District Nutrition Support Officers to develop the capacity of frontline health workers on how to collect, record and report data on counselling services. Subsequently, the Government integrated this training into a Government-funded competency-based training course for frontline workers.

Second, UNICEF provided technical support to develop an online data platform to summarize and visualize data on nutrition counselling and other priority

nutrition indicators using dashboards. This platform now combines service coverage at both facility-based and community-based levels to capture the total coverage of services.

Third, UNICEF worked with the Institute of Public Health Nutrition to institutionalize a mechanism to check the quality of service coverage data at district level and to use these data to review the performance of nutrition services. Data are screened on a monthly basis by the District Statistician to ensure that data anomalies, such as the unusually high number reported in January 2019 (Figure 4), are identified and promptly addressed. The service data are discussed during monthly coordination meetings at national and subnational levels in order to identify districts that are lagging behind, discuss barriers to performance and initiate corrective measures.

These efforts to strengthen the availability, quality and use of monitoring data to improve programme performance have contributed to a more than four-fold increase in the number of caregivers counselled on infant and young child feeding between 2018 and 2022 (Figure 4).

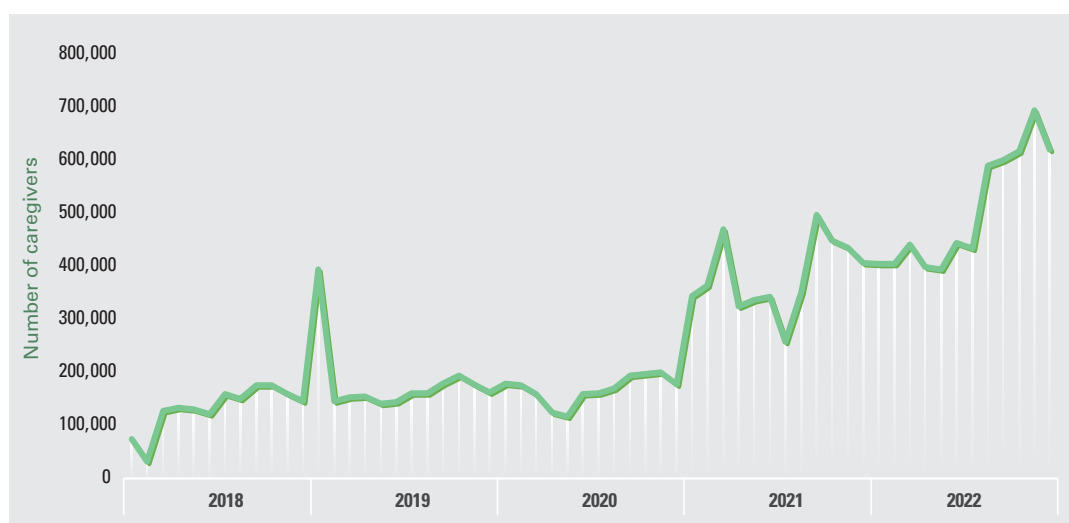


FIGURE 4
Number of caregivers counselled on infant and young child feeding, 2018–2022



Rationale for UNICEF's leadership on food systems for children

1

Children's rights as an imperative.

All children have a right to good nutrition and a sustainable planet. Yet current food systems do not support the diets that all children need to survive, grow, develop and learn. Food systems are a major driving force behind climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, which means that the world children are inheriting is increasingly unsustainable. Unhealthy and unsustainable diets undermine children's rights, everywhere.

2

Children's unique nutrition needs.

Children have specific dietary needs. They require a high diversity of foods and foods of higher nutrient density than adults. UNICEF data indicate that globally, two in three young children under 5 years of age do not consume the minimally diverse diet they need to grow and develop to their full potential. Delivering nutritious, safe, affordable, and sustainable diets for all children must be central to the food systems transformation agenda both at national and global levels.

3

Unacceptable cost of inaction.

The burden of child undernutrition – stunting and wasting – and micronutrient deficiencies, combined with the growing burden of overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases, will result in massive individual and societal costs. In addition, the impact of current food systems on the climate and environmental crisis makes the current global generation of children the first that will grow up in a world that is far more dangerous and uncertain.

4

Children as agents of transformation.

As the future stewards of our planet, children can and must be empowered to understand the crucial role of food systems for human and planetary health. Children, adolescents and young people also have the right to participate, to share their opinions on matters affecting them and to have their voices heard and considered. They can and must be part of the food system transformation agenda – locally and globally – the same way they are inspired and engaged to take action against climate change and environmental degradation.



UNICEF's workforce: Leading food systems transformation for children

To deliver on the Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, UNICEF counts the largest multisectoral workforce working to improve child nutrition across the globe. In 2023, this workforce included 16,000 staff and nutrition programmes for children, adolescents and women in more than 130 countries across seven regions worldwide.

UNICEF's multisectoral mandate for children, wide on-the-ground presence and long-standing role as a trusted adviser to national governments, position UNICEF to mobilize national, regional and global partners – across public and private sectors – to advocate for and support the transformation of local and global food systems in the best interests of all children.

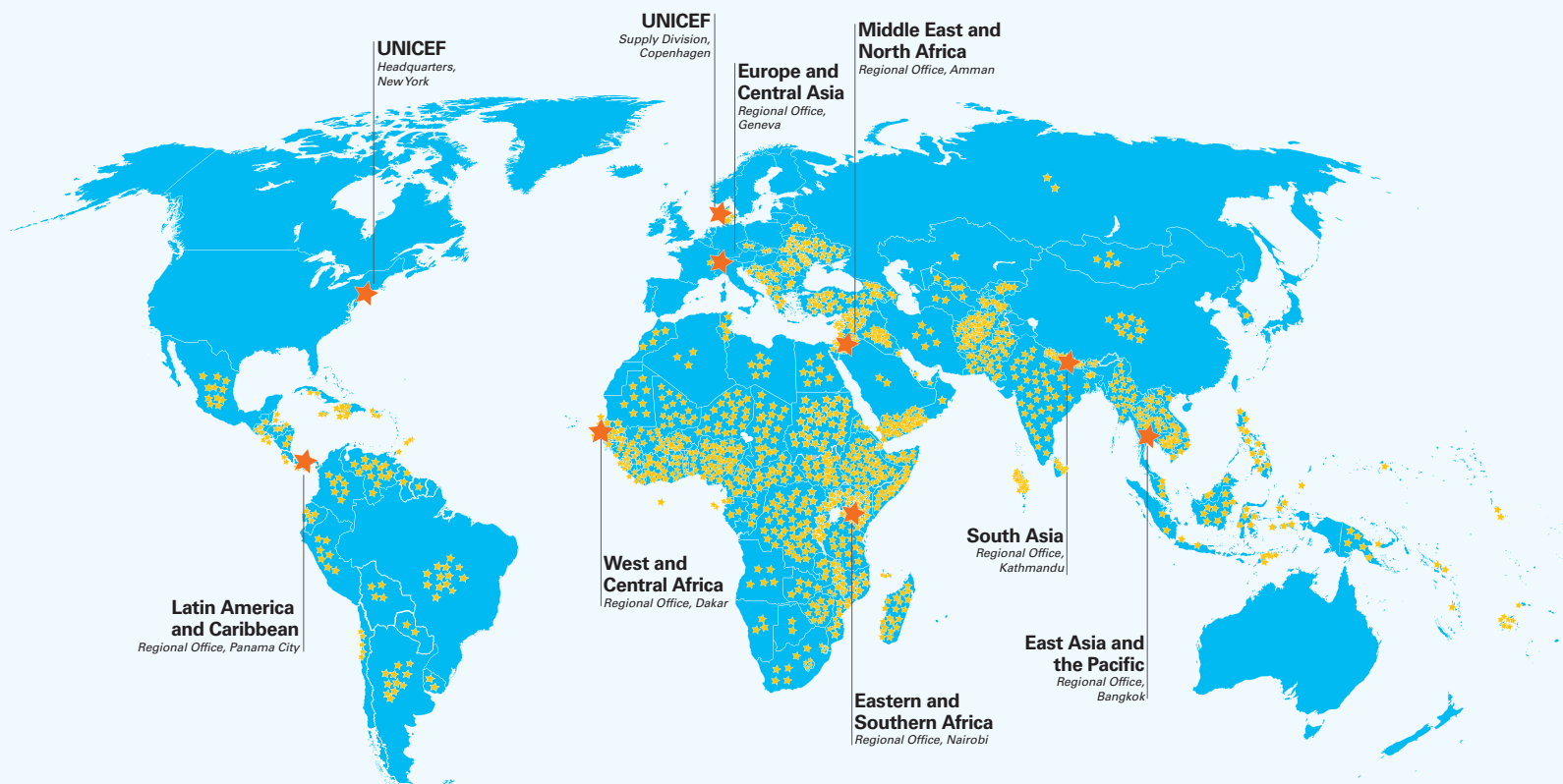


FIGURE 5
UNICEF's global workforce, 2023.

Note: This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontier.



Annex

Engaging with the Food and Beverage Industry: UNICEF Programme Guidance*

For UNICEF, the food systems transformation agenda called for by the United Nations Secretary General is a child rights agenda.

With child rights advocates globally and locally, UNICEF programmes will contribute to ensure that the policies, practices and products of the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry around the world are aligned with children's right to food, nutrition, health, information, protection, and a sustainable planet.

UNICEF programmes are principled and strategic. Therefore, *our engagement on and engagement with* the F&B industry is driven by the best interests of children. The goal is to ensure the effectiveness of our programmes by maximizing the impact of UNICEF's thought and action leadership, protecting the credibility of UNICEF as a trusted advisor to governments and partners, and preventing conflict of interest.

The F&B industry plays a central role in the production, distribution, marketing and retailing of foods that are consumed by millions of children and adolescents across the world. As such, the F&B industry is a key driver and shaper of global and national food systems, impacting children's nutrition, health and development globally and locally through its practices and products. The F&B industry can and must be a force for good, for all children, everywhere, without exception.

Currently one in three children under five years of age – or about 200 million children – is not growing well because of malnutrition; and two in three are not fed the minimum diverse diet they need to grow and develop to their full potential. Further, 380 million children and adolescents suffer from overweight and obesity – a condition that is increasingly prevalent among poorer households and countries across continents. This hurts children and hurts all of us.

The poor quality of children's diets is the most important driver of the triple burden of child malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight. This triple burden is increasingly concentrated in low- and middle-income countries and is largely driven by a broken food system that is failing to provide children with the nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets children need to grow and develop to their full potential.

The practices and products of a subset of the F&B industry whose primary business is the production, distribution, marketing and retailing of ultra-processed foods and beverages (UPF) pose particular concern. The companies producing these unhealthy, nutrient-poor UPF – rich in sugar, salt, trans-fats and food additives and preservatives – are major drivers of today's broken food system and the global epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases, including type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and poor mental health among children and adolescents. It is now widely accepted that the practices and products of the UPF industry harm children's and adolescents' lives and have become the main commercial determinant of childhood malnutrition and disease.

Evidence shows that direct partnering with the UPF industry (i.e., *working with*) and voluntary UPF industry initiatives do not translate into large-scale sustainable results in transforming food systems for children. Further, direct funding engagements with UPF industry stakeholders pose a significant reputational risk to the credibility of UNICEF programming and independence as governments' trusted advisor for policy formulation, normative guidance and programme scale-up for children and adolescents.

*This annex provides the executive summary of [UNICEF's Programme Guidance on Engaging with the Food and Beverage Industry](#).

Informed by ample evidence on nutrition, health and water and sanitation from within and outside of our organization, UNICEF's programme engagement on food systems transformation for children will prioritize working with national and local governments and municipalities to protect children's right to food, nutrition, health, information, protection and a livable future by creating a policy and normative environment that is aligned with the best interests of children and the planet.

UNICEF's Programme Guidance for *our engagement on* and *engagement with* the F&B industry is rights-based and recognizes States as primary duty-bearers for children's rights, including the protection and promotion of food systems and food environments that deliver nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets for children. This Programme Guidance applies to all UNICEF programming areas in development, fragile and humanitarian settings, without distinction, and is summarized in the following **10 parameters for engagement**.

These 10 parameters for engagement reflect principled and strategic considerations and should be applied as a minimum common standard across all UNICEF programmes:

1. UNICEF's primary strategy to transform food systems for children is to strengthen public policy.

This includes advocating for improved practices and products by the F&B industry and supporting national and local governments and municipalities to formulate and enforce policies, normative guidance and regulatory frameworks that address the production, distribution, marketing and retailing of foods and beverages and ensure children's access to nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable foods, everywhere.

2. UNICEF will continue to engage with selected F&B industries on better foods for children.

We need effective innovations to produce nutritious, safe and affordable foods for children: therapeutic foods to treat child wasting; food supplements to prevent severe undernutrition in humanitarian settings; and fortified and nutrient-rich foods for children and their families. UNICEF will prioritize engagement with local producers to generate sustainable opportunities for local economies.

3. UNICEF will engage with F&B retailers to improve children's food environments and diets.

Engagement to promote responsible business for children by F&B retailers can support social and behaviour change and supply-demand of healthy food. Engagements will build on solid assessments of retailers' commitment to product

placement, packaging, promotion and pricing that supports nutritious, safe and healthy F&B options for children.

4. UNICEF will continue to advocate for the F&B industry not to be included in public policy making.

To be effective, policy, normative and guidance processes and frameworks must be free of conflict of interest with the F&B industry. As a trusted policy and programme advisor, UNICEF will continue to discourage governments and countries from involving the F&B industry in public policy-making, norm-setting, programme guidance, programme implementation, research and evaluation processes.

5. UNICEF will continue avoiding all partnerships with F&B industries that violate the Code.

As per our procedure on due diligence for private sector entities, UNICEF will continue avoiding all forms of funding partnerships and/or co-branded collaborations with business and entities that manufacture and market breastmilk substitutes in ways that violate the International Code of Marketing Breast-milk Substitutes and related World Health Assembly resolutions (the Code).

- 6. UNICEF will avoid all partnerships with ultra-processed food and beverage (UPF) industries.** To preserve our thought and action leadership, align with our programming strategies, and maintain our credibility as a trusted advisor for public policy, normative guidance, and programme implementation for children, UNICEF will avoid all forms of financial and non-financial partnerships and collaborations with the UPF industry. This includes individual companies as well as associations, platforms, and front groups representing UPF industries and their interests.
- 7. UNICEF will not include Code violators and UPF industries in UNICEF-led business platforms.** Producers, marketers and retailers of UPF, business entities that manufacture and market breastmilk substitutes in ways that violate the Code – including Resolution 63.14 on the marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children – and associations and front groups that defend their interests shall not be part of UNICEF-led business platforms aimed at building technical collaborations and/or cultivating fundraising opportunities.
- 8. UNICEF will engage responsibly with multi-stakeholder platforms involving the F&B industry.** Engaging with multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) may be an opportunity for UNICEF to make its voice heard in potentially influential fora to advance children’s rights. UNICEF will engage strategically and responsibly with MSPs involving the F&B industry after careful evaluation of evidence that benefits outweigh costs and risks. UNICEF will avoid any association – financial or otherwise – with MSPs representing the interests of UPF industries or industries that are in violation of the Code.
- 9. UNICEF will engage responsibly with the F&B industry in humanitarian response.** Private sector entities can contribute to UNICEF-led humanitarian response with expertise and resources. Their financial support to humanitarian response is considered a one-off contribution and not a partnership. UNICEF will consider financial contributions for humanitarian response by the F&B industry on a case-by-case basis if the child rights outcome that UNICEF pursues cannot be achieved through alternative means. While UNICEF will ensure accounting transparency requirements, there will be no brand asset exchange or promotional communication about the financial contribution on either side. UNICEF will not accept financial contributions from breastmilk substitutes and UPF industries for humanitarian response.
- 10. UNICEF Programme Group leads UNICEF programmatic engagement with the F&B industry.** UNICEF’s work on food systems for children is led by its Nutrition Programme and so is our *engagement on* and *engagement with* the F&B industry. Guided by the UNICEF Global Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, UNICEF favours upstream advocacy and public policy work and – as a general approach – prioritizes *engagement on* over *engagement with* the F&B industry. Engagements with the F&B industry will be evaluated taking into consideration the objective, type of industry and type of engagement.

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UNICEF
Nutrition Section, Programme Group
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA

Email: nutrition@unicef.org

Website: www.unicef.org