

Principles of Engagement

DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESSES TO IMPROVE NUTRITION

Poor diet is a leading risk factor for early death. Each year, more than 10 million men and women lose their lives due to chronic diseases directly related to poor diet, while a further 3 million women and children lose their lives due to low birthweight, suboptimal breastfeeding, child malnutrition, and vitamin deficiencies.²² When more than 600 million adults are struggling with obesity and more than 420 million adults have diabetes – and with rates of both rising sharply – we are in the midst of a “global nutrition crisis”.²³ The crisis results in at least 10% of global GDP lost every year, with families much more likely to live in poverty, and subsequent generations more likely to do so as well²⁴.

If this crisis continues, the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) with their 17 ambitious goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators cannot be achieved.²⁵ Encouragingly 193 governments have agreed to work in multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with the private sector, to achieve these goals²⁶. Despite the crisis and the commitment to work in a multi-stakeholder manner as enshrined in SDG17, governments and businesses are missing opportunities to work together to improve nutrition.²⁷

Many stakeholders think that the absence of a set of guiding principles is a barrier to greater positive collaboration. Hence, the discussion facilitated by Wilton Park in late 2017 between stakeholders from the private and public sectors sought to try to move towards a set of guiding principles.

The following guiding principles emerged from those discussions. We put them forward as a contribution to the wider dialogue that must happen to arrive at a consensus on the why, what, when, how and who of public-private engagements to improve nutrition.

PRINCIPLE #1: ALIGNMENT

Governments have the unique and singular responsibility to establish the goals and the priorities for national and global action to improve nutrition, and to do this on the basis of the best available scientific evidence. The establishment of these goals, priorities and the policies behind them is a critical task requiring public debate and engagement with all stakeholders, including businesses which shape food systems. It is incumbent on all stakeholders to act transparently and with integrity in carrying out these tasks. Equally, public policy is enhanced when all actors in the food system have the opportunity to contribute in open and accountable fora. This principle of open debate and mutual accountability in surfacing interests and evolving policy is a higher principle within which engagements should be developed. As such, dialogue should not exclude any stakeholder with the commitment and potential capacity to contribute to the achievement of one or more of the nutrition goals.

PRINCIPLE #2: PRIORITIZATION

To accelerate progress in achieving the global nutrition goals, governments and businesses agree to prioritize action that advances the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and World Health Assembly (WHA) Global Nutrition Targets: reducing childhood stunting and wasting and improving the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons (SDG 2.2); reducing the diet-related risks of death from non-communicable diseases (SDG 3.4); reducing female anemia (WHA 2), low birth weight (WHA 3), and child overweight (WHA 4); and increasing exclusive breastfeeding (WHA 5).

PRINCIPLE #3: IMPACT

Governments and businesses should base their investment decisions on an unbiased and transparent assessment of the peer-reviewed scientific evidence, relying on systematic reviews when available. A clear lack of evidence should not be an excuse for inaction as long the basis for action is transparent.

PRINCIPLE #4 DATA

Governments and businesses will generate and share data relevant to the global nutrition goals and will cooperate on data collection relating to the daily diets and nutritional status of populations, the coverage of specific nutrition-related interventions, the attitudes and behaviors of consumers and consumer uptake of specific nutrition-related products and services. These data have to be screened for quality by the scientific community and their conclusions published in peer-reviewed journals. Combining these data and making them publicly available, will improve government nutrition information systems, better align business efforts to invest in pro-nutrition actions (e.g. labeling, packaging, marketing), and enhance efforts to hold governments and businesses accountable for progress to the nutrition goals.

PRINCIPLE #5 INNOVATION

Governments and businesses will increase their efforts to invest in new technologies that can more cost-effectively reduce malnutrition by increasing the availability and affordability of nutritious safe foods. Joint efforts to build a pipeline of innovations with the power to make it easier for consumers, businesses and governments to make healthy food choices should be prioritized.

PRINCIPLE #6 ACCOUNTABILITY

Governments and businesses should demonstrate their accountability to the global nutrition goals by routinely measuring the impact of their individual and collective efforts against the relevant SDG targets and making the results available to their respective stakeholders and to the general public in easily accessible formats. The use of randomized control trials conducted by independent parties and other gold standard methods to measure the impact of government-business partnerships should be increased and supported.

Governments and businesses will commit to greater accountability and transparency in actions affecting the nutritional status of all of their stakeholders (e.g. citizens, consumers, employees etc.). They will cooperate with international accountability efforts such as the Global Nutrition Report, the Access to Nutrition Index, the [International Network for Food and Obesity/Non-communicable Diseases \(NCDs\) Research, Monitoring and Action Support \(INFORMAS\)](#) and [Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition \(GODAN\)](#). Greater accountability will improve the targeting of investments by demonstrating the success or failure of specific interventions, by improving the quality of the evidence-base and nutrition science, and by building a greater level of trust among stakeholders that will in turn facilitate further action and impact.

PRINCIPLE #7 INCLUSION

Government and business engagement to advance the nutrition goals will require processes that are transparent, open, and inclusive; where all actors operate with accountability, integrity and mutual respect. While engagement should not compromise any individual organization's independence or reputation, governments and businesses acknowledge that their interdependence and mutual accountability in the service of the nutrition goals will frequently require joint but de-conflicted work processes. As noted above, more needs to be done to establish clear mechanisms to define and measure engagement, but transparent reporting and accountability are fundamental, as is clear compliance with established policies. Upholding these basic ingredients is a critical part of these principles, and an essential requirement to enter into a public-private engagement recognised under them.

22 Gakidou, Emmanuela et al., [Global Burden of Disease Risk Factors](#), 2017, op cit.

23 [NCD Risk Factor Collaboration](#), op cit

24 IFPRI 2014 (Global Nutrition Report) op cit

25 Development Initiatives 2017 (Global Nutrition Report) op cit

26 SDG 17 includes targets to "Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships..." and "Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships". <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg17>

27 [Lancet Maternal and Child Nutrition Series](#), 2013 op cit and Haddad, Nature 2018 op cit.