

## ADDRESSING DIET-RELATED NCDs THROUGH BUSINESS TO BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Marketing to children

The SUN Business Network (SBN) matches the expertise of its Global Members and the needs of its national members (mostly small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) to support better nutrition. Overweight and obesity may result in diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, kill more than 40 million people each year. In order to help address this issue, SBN with the support of the George Institute for Global Health has identified a set of business-to-business (B2B) technical assistance initiatives that could contribute to the prevention of diet-related NCDs. The analysis focused on four countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Bangladesh.

### RESPONSIBLE MARKETING TO CHILDREN IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

There is strong evidence that food advertising influences children's nutrition including through children's food purchase requests and short-term consumption of high-energy, low-nutrient foods and beverages.

Exposure to television advertising is associated with adiposity in children and teenagers. Marketing of foods and beverages high in sugar, saturated fat and salt increases dietary intake and preferences for energy-dense, low-nutrient foods among children and is an important contributor to childhood obesity. Interviews conducted in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania identified ongoing marketing of unhealthy foods (particularly sugary and salty foods) in each country.

For SMEs from low- and middle-income countries, there are limited incentives to invest in the prevention of marketing of unhealthy foods to children, especially if this is costly to implement.

For example, if marketing restrictions are based on nutrient profile scores, or nutrient benchmarks, the costs of nutrition expertise to determine whether products meet or do not meet the criteria may be high. However, if marketing restrictions are simple, such as complete bans on marketing of sugar-sweetened beverages or chocolate, there is little to no cost to food companies to comply.

Interviewees from Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania indicated that companies are interested in increasing marketing of healthier foods. To ensure that companies can effectively market healthier foods, affordable marketing channels need to be available. Considering competing industry interests in the definition of unhealthy food for products suitable for marketing to children, focusing on increasing marketing of healthier foods by SMEs might be less subject to controversy for global companies.



## WHAT TO DO

To improve practices around responsible marketing to children, SBN Global Members can help SMEs by:

- Providing basic nutrition information on healthy foods for children using widely recognized frameworks such as WHO regional nutrient profile models to help SMEs identify suitable foods to market to children.
- Supporting food analysis by offering training and/or access to laboratory capacity. This will help SMEs identify suitable food for marketing to children.
- Providing trainings on effective marketing practices based on affordable marketing channels available at national or regional levels.





## Existing business practices for responsible marketing to children

While evidence shows a strong impact of mandatory regulation of marketing to children, the private sector has initiated a set of initiatives to promote voluntary responsible marketing to children practices such as:

- the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI), launched in 2006. It is a voluntary self-regulation programme created in the USA to improve the children's food and beverage advertising landscape. The CFBAI has set core principles regarding advertising primarily directed to children under age 12, and CFBAI participants commit either to not advertise any foods or beverages to children in this age group or to advertise only foods that meet CFBAI's Category-Specific Uniform Nutrition Criteria.
- the International Chamber of Commerce Advertising and Marketing Communications Code, a globally applicable self-regulatory framework. It is intended primarily as an instrument of self-regulation for marketing communications structured around four chapters: sales promotion, sponsorship, direct marketing and digital marketing communications, and environmental claims in marketing communications. It is intended to demonstrate responsibility and good practice in advertising and marketing communications; enhance overall public confidence in marketing communications; ensure special responsibility for marketing communications towards children; and provide effective, practical and flexible solutions to consumer protection issues.



For more information about the SBN B2B technical assistance platform please consult our [webpage](#)

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