



Wilton Park
USA



Executive summary

No more missed opportunities: advancing public-private partnerships to achieve the global nutrition goals

Monday 2 – Tuesday 3 October 2017 | WP1565

Held in the Harvard Club, New York City

In partnership with:



The USCIB Foundation, Inc.

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Poor diet is the number one risk factor for early death, contributing to 20% of global deaths with the burden falling disproportionately on children under five and women of reproductive age. Each year, malnutrition is a factor in almost half of the six million deaths of children under five and 155 million children are stunted, with impacts on their physical and cognitive abilities that last a lifetime. More than 600 million women are anaemic with an increased risk of maternal death and delivering premature and low-birth-weight babies. At the same time, 640 million adults are obese and 420 million have diabetes, with rates rising steeply. Every country is now struggling with some aspect of malnutrition, and a growing number are experiencing both undernutrition and obesity.

Despite the seriousness of the global nutrition crisis and its implications for economic growth and human development, governments and businesses are not actively and effectively working together to tackle the problem, a situation nutrition experts have described as a “missed opportunity” (Lancet, 2013). If this modus operandi continues, the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that relate to health and nutrition will not be achieved, including ending all forms of malnutrition (Goal 2.2), ending preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths (Goals 3.1 and 3.2), and reducing by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (Goal 3.4).

To achieve these ambitious goals, 193 governments have agreed to work in multi-stakeholder partnerships, including with the private sector (Goal 17). As food is produced, marketed and distributed by the private sector in all but the most extreme of humanitarian settings, new efforts are urgently needed to enable greater government-business collaboration in the service of nutrition goals.

This dialogue sought to support the accelerated achievement of the global nutrition goals, and broader commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, by convening a high-level group of leaders from government, business and other key stakeholders to:

- discuss a set of draft Principles of Engagement for Government-Business Collaboration to frame and guide progress towards achievement of the food and nutrition Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the UK Government’s commitment to Overseas Development Assistance

(ODA);

- identify and address ways to improve business engagement in global nutrition goals and engage multisector platforms to specifically address food and nutrition supply chains, distribution channels, and technical and scientific research, to accelerate achievement of the global nutrition goals and directly benefit ODA recipient countries; and
- forge new relationships between government and business food and nutrition leaders to kick-off a new era of constructive partnership.

The dialogue was co-sponsored by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the USCIB Foundation, the educational arm of the United States Council for International Business (USCIB), and Wilton Park USA in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and the UN Secretary-General's Every Woman, Every Child movement. It was consistent with several Sustainable Development Goal business engagement initiatives, including the Health Action Platform of the UN Global Compact and USCIB's Business for 2030.

Key points

- Successful initiatives are likely to be based on shared priorities and alignments of public and private interests;
- Contextual knowledge is highly important in order to provide interactive relationships, and ultimately a better understanding of specific country needs and the expertise that is available to address them;
- It may be most effective to choose specific goals around the convergence of ends, ways, and means in specific areas, working backwards from the 2030 goals to ensure success and scalability.
- Despite the challenges, public-private partnerships are crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- A set of Principles of Engagement developed at the meeting provide a useful framework through which to approach future cooperation and a valuable reference point for developing effective solutions.
- While there was no disagreement over the substance of the Principles, it was agreed they were a useful framework for guiding future partnerships, rather than as binding terms or obligations.

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Effective partnerships and better nutrition outcomes can be facilitated through policy and legislative frameworks that are more conducive to collaboration. This could include utilising financiers, shareholders, and consumers within businesses, and constituencies, NGOs, and civil servants in and around government.

Key components for success include trust, openness, an alignment of interests, common goals, the breaking of silos, and keeping to the rules, all whilst under the umbrella of an independent convener. In this context, attention is best focused around a few discrete areas in order to direct and concentrate immediate efforts. Small successes with new partners can indeed pave the road for bigger victories in the future.

While the degree of tangible progress within discussions around nutrition can sometimes be disheartening, it is important not to lose sight of the end goal. A number of ultimately

successful UN initiatives floundered for years, due in part to a lack of breadth in the early consultation stages. Efforts were more successful when conducted as a consensus-building, multi-stakeholder process. Cultural differences between the public sector and industry further underscore this need for shared principles on which to proceed.

Contextual knowledge is another important element which facilitates interactive relationships and allows actors to understand specific country needs, as well as the available technical expertise from within the business sector. A lack of access to finance, an arid business environment, and a lack of access to technical assistance are some of the primary barriers for preventing the growth of nutrition oriented small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries.

Successes within health morbidity and mortality rates highlight the effectiveness of targets that are ambitious, clear, and bold. To be most effective, these targets should be chosen around the convergence of ways, and means in specific areas, working backwards from the 2030 goals to ensure success and scalability.

Successful projects can be built from the ground up, based on shared priorities and the alignment of public and private interest. Six to seven partners may be optimal; balancing government representatives, independent bodies, and private sector partners, allowing for collective thinking as to where the most beneficial collaborations could be. Discussions should seek to encourage public-private partnerships by convening thought leaders, facilitating relationships, and incubating and prioritizing new ideas and collaborations.

Independently evaluated and assessed partnerships, shared metrics, communication, mutually reinforcing activities, and community engagement are all fundamental elements for success

It was agreed that, rather than act as binding terms or obligations, the Principles of Engagement instead provide a useful framework through which to approach future cooperation and a valuable reference point for developing effective solutions.

While the challenges posed by malnutrition around the globe are significant and complex, effective public-private partnerships offer an important and indispensable tool in achieving the SDGs and dramatically improving nutrition outcomes around the world.

Although business partnerships will be crucial in achieving the SDGs, effective public-private collaboration around nutrition is challenging. This is partly as a result of historical sensitivities but is also sometimes due in part to a lack of understanding about the motivations for business and industry to engage in public-private partnerships. Many businesses engage in partnerships not only to enhance their own reputations, but because they believe in their roles as corporate citizens. **There is significant concern across a wide spectrum of development actors as well as within industry groups that** recently introduced conflict of interest measures are excessively complicated and could discourage businesses from undertaking public-private partnerships and finding new ways to make markets work for global nutrition. Despite these challenges, it is widely agreed that strong public private partnerships will be essential for addressing global nutrition and successfully meeting the SDG targets

Wilton Park

January 2018

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