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Business as a Partner in Overcoming Malnutrition **AN AGENDA FOR ACTION**

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In September 2005, The Conference Board, International Business Leaders Forum, and CSR Initiative, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard, with support from Walter H. Shorenstein, made a joint commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative to host a series of *Leadership Dialogues* focused on the role of the private sector as a partner in supporting *systemic and scalable solutions to key global challenges*.

The three organizations worked with other partners to host a series of seven dialogues between February and July 2006. These brought together over 400 leaders in business, government, development agencies, civil society, and academia to share good practices and identify practical and feasible models of *collective business action* and *public-private partnership*. The dialogues aimed to achieve more systemic and scalable solutions to the following global challenges:

- Tackling Youth Unemployment, Extremism and Alienation, hosted by the International Business Leaders Forum
- Conflict Prevention and Resolution, hosted by Nestlé
- Responding to Natural Disasters, hosted by Walter H. Shorenstein
- Business and the Millennium Development Goals, hosted by Harvard University
- Strengthening Public Health Systems in Developing Countries, hosted by Pfizer Inc.
- Improving Global Road Safety, hosted by USAID
- Overcoming Malnutrition, hosted by the World Bank Institute.

This publication is part of a series that highlights some of the key challenges, opportunities and practical examples that were identified in these dialogues – and makes recommendations for ways that companies can get directly engaged in specific initiatives on-the-ground.

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and participants at the Leadership Dialogues and do not imply endorsement by the Conference Board, International Business Leaders Forum, Harvard University, the World Bank Group or the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition.

**In memory of
Dr. Rainer Gross
Chief of Nutrition, UNICEF.
A tireless advocate
for child nutrition and
champion of public-private
partnerships.
1945 – 2006**

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS (left to right)

1. SUDAN Gereida, Southern Darfur
Mariam Issa preparing food for her family.
Photocredit: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures.

2. Photocredit: The World Bank, Curt Carnemark.

3. BANGLADESH
Health and nutrition worker teaching village
women how best to use local foods for
maximum nutrition.
Photocredit: Penny Tweedie/Panos Pictures.

Business as a Partner in Overcoming Malnutrition

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

Many of today's pressing challenges impact government, business and civil society, and are too complex for any one sector to solve unilaterally. Partnership is vital if we are to find scalable solutions. The case of malnutrition, which undermines the health and livelihoods of millions worldwide, is no exception.

Frannie Léautier, Vice-President, World Bank Institute
Host of Malnutrition Leadership Dialogue, Washington DC, June 22, 2006

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I What is the challenge?

Overcoming malnutrition is essential to poverty reduction. Nutrition is not just a health and welfare issue. It is not just a human rights issue. Nor is it primarily a food or consumption issue alone. Nutrition is also an investment issue and improved nutrition is one of the drivers of economic growth.

Meera Shekar

Senior Nutrition Specialist, The World Bank
Comments at Malnutrition
Leadership Dialogue
Washington DC, June 22, 2006

Over half of all deaths in children under the age of five are due to underlying undernutrition ...and 32% of the global burden of disease would be removed by eliminating malnutrition, including micronutrient malnutrition.

Alan Court, Director, Programme Division,
UNICEF

Comments at Malnutrition
Leadership Dialogue
Washington DC, June 22, 2006

In 2006, the World Bank published a seminal report *Repositioning Nutrition as Central to Development*. It made a strong case that investments in proven technologies and interventions to tackle malnutrition offer potentially very high economic returns. Yet, as the Bank and others argue, “the international community and most governments in developing countries have failed to tackle nutrition over the past decades, even though well-tested approaches for doing so exist. ...The unequivocal choice now is between continuing to fail, or to finally make nutrition central to development so that a wide range of economic and social improvements can be realized.”¹

The opportunity for action is summarized in this report, with a focus on the role of the private sector as a key partner. The report draws on research from the World Bank, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Micronutrient Initiative, the World Economic Forum, the Hunger Task Force of the UN Millennium Project, Harvard University’s Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, the International Business Leaders Forum, and individual companies, and from the conclusions and recommendations of the Leadership Dialogue hosted by the World Bank Institute on June 22, 2006.²

The report has four clear messages:

1 Tackling malnutrition should be a much higher priority for leaders everywhere:

Malnutrition is not only an urgent global health issue. It is also an impediment to productivity, economic growth and poverty reduction. Failure to tackle it will render many of the Millennium Development Goals unachievable. It deserves far greater attention and investment by public, private and civic leaders than it currently receives.

2 Proven solutions already exist and need to be replicated and scaled: There are now proven interventions and technologies to tackle undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency, and growing evidence on how to implement cost-effective and affordable programs on a large scale. The challenge is to replicate and scale these up, especially in the poorest countries and communities where markets often fail and there are serious governance gaps, lack of public information and institutional constraints.

3 The private sector can be a valuable partner: Although government leadership is essential, the private sector can play a vital role as a partner in many of these solutions. Corporate leadership is starting to come from companies in the food and beverage, agribusiness, healthcare, retail, packaging, media, financial,

logistics, and transportation industries, and from companies with extensive consumer distribution networks and supply chains. These companies are combining core business activities, products and services, with cause-related marketing and public health messages, philanthropic contributions, and engagement in public policy dialogue, advocacy and institution building.

4 Institutional innovations and partnerships are crucial: New types of partnership, institutional innovations, and better coordination between donors, between government agencies within developing countries, and between the public and private sector and civil society, are essential if the challenge of malnutrition is to be overcome. Some exciting cross-sector partnership initiatives have been established in the past ten years and deserve the active support and engagement of leaders from all sectors.

BOX 1: DEFINING HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

Hunger occurs in three different forms: acute, chronic and hidden. Acute hunger and starvation typically occurs during famines and disasters, but represents only about 10 percent of the world's hungry. Most of the hungry, approximately 90 percent, are chronically undernourished. Chronic undernourishment is caused by constant or recurrent lack of access to food of sufficient quality and quantity, often coupled with poor health and caring practices. It results in underweight and stunted children as well as high child mortality brought about by associated diseases. Hidden hunger, caused by a lack of essential micronutrients (vitamins

and minerals), afflicts more than two billion people, even when they consume adequate amounts of calories and protein. **The Hunger Task Force, UN Millennium Project**

Malnutrition – the state of being poorly nourished – is not merely a result of too little food, but of a combination of factors: insufficient protein, energy and micronutrients, frequent infections or disease, poor care and feeding practices, inadequate health services and unsafe water and sanitation. Malnutrition's most devastating impact is in the womb – when the foetus

can fail to develop properly – and during the first years of a child's life, when it can irreversibly hamper her or his physical and mental development. **UNICEF**

Obesity and related non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease, are another increasingly serious form of malnutrition in both developed and low-income countries, but the focus of this report is on undernutrition, including micronutrient deficiency.

Malnutrition is a major global health issue

Malnutrition remains one of the world's most serious health problems. It is estimated that 32% of the global burden of disease would be removed by eliminating malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiency.

Malnutrition is the single biggest contributor to child mortality, with over 50% of all deaths of children under the age of five attributed to underlying undernutrition. Nearly one-third of all children in the developing world are either underweight or stunted, severely affecting their mental and physical development. Of these children, UNICEF estimates that nearly three quarters live in the following ten countries: India; Bangladesh; Pakistan; China; Nigeria; Ethiopia; Indonesia; Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Philippines; and Viet Nam.

More than 2 billion people, some 30% of the population in developing countries, suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. The major deficiencies are in vitamin A, iron, iodine, folic acid and zinc. Mineral and vitamin deficiency results in the deaths of approximately 60,000 women a year in pregnancy and childbirth, and the birth of some 200,000 babies a year with birth defects.

BOX 2: INVESTING IN NUTRITION IS CRITICAL TO ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Malnutrition erodes human capital through irreversible and intergenerational effects on cognitive and physical development.

2: Achieve universal primary education

Malnutrition affects the chances that a child will go to school, stay in school, and perform well.

3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Anti-female biases in access to food, health and care resources may result in malnutrition, possibly reducing women's access to assets. Addressing malnutrition empowers women more than men.

4: Reduce child mortality

Malnutrition is directly or indirectly associated with most child deaths, and it is the main contributor to the burden of disease in the developing world.

5: Improve maternal health

Maternal health is compromised by malnutrition, which is associated with most major risk factors for maternal mortality. Maternal stunting and iron and iodine deficiencies particularly pose serious problems.

6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Malnutrition may increase the risk of HIV transmission, compromise antiretroviral therapy, and hasten the onset of full-blown AIDS and premature death. It increases the chances of tuberculosis infection, resulting in disease, and it also reduces malarial survival rates.

Sources: *Repositioning Nutrition as Central to Development: A Strategy for Large-Scale Action*. Adapted from Gillespie and Haddad (2003). The World Bank, 2006.

Malnutrition is also linked to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in that it makes adults more susceptible to the virus, inadequate infant feeding aggravates its transmission from mother to child, and there is evidence to suggest that it makes antiretroviral drugs less effective.

Malnutrition is a particular challenge in emergency situations caused by conflict, famine and other natural disasters. Micronutrient deficiencies can develop or be made worse in these situations due to factors such as the loss of food crops and livelihoods, the interruption of food supplies, and the outbreak of diarrhoeal and infectious diseases.

Malnutrition is an impediment to productivity, economic growth and poverty reduction

Malnutrition is also a serious drain on the economy, costing low-income countries billions of dollars a year. The World Bank estimates productivity losses to individuals at more than 10 percent of lifetime earnings, and gross domestic product (GDP) lost to malnutrition running as high as 2 to 3 percent. It identifies the following three routes through which malnutrition slows economic growth and perpetuates poverty:

- Direct loss in productivity from poor physical status
- Indirect loss in productivity from poor cognitive development and deficits in schooling and
- Losses in financial and other resources from increased health care costs of ill health.

The Bank's research shows that the scale of the nutrition problem is large and extensive. Although malnutrition is decreasing in Asia, South Asia still has both the highest rates and the largest numbers of malnourished children. Malnutrition is on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even in East Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, many countries still face a serious problem of undernutrition or micronutrient deficiencies. If not significantly reduced, nutritional deficiencies could cost the global economy about \$180-250 billion over the next ten years, and yet total public investments to address these deficiencies are estimated to be in the order of only \$4-5 billion.

More broadly, the World Bank, UNICEF, WHO, and others make a compelling case that many of the MDGs will not be reached unless malnutrition is tackled, as outlined in Box 2.

Proven and cost-effective solutions exist

The problem of malnutrition is extensive and growing in many countries, but proven and cost-effective interventions exist – especially in the areas of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. The World Bank argues there is, "...now unequivocal evidence that there are workable solutions to the malnutrition problem and that they are excellent economic investments. The May

2004 Copenhagen Consensus of eminent economists (including several Nobel laureates) concluded that the returns of investing in micronutrient programs are second only to the returns of fighting HIV/AIDS among a lengthy list of ways to meet the world’s development challenges.”³ Few other technologies offer as large an opportunity to improve lives at such low cost and in such a short time. Other nutrition-related interventions that were ranked by the Copenhagen Consensus in the top 13 proposals were: new agricultural technologies; improving infant and child malnutrition; and reducing the prevalence of low birth weight.

The World Bank distinguishes between short routes or interventions to improve nutrition and long routes. Examples include the following:

SHORT ROUTES	LONG ROUTES
Exclusive breastfeeding	Income growth
Appropriate complementary feeding	Women's education
Ante-natal care and maternal healthcare	Agriculture and food production
Gender interventions	Trade policies
Micronutrient fortification and supplementation	Macro-economic policies
Health and nutrition education and public campaigns	
Feeding programs in schools/after disasters	

UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank and others argue that the most critical ‘window of opportunity’ for addressing undernutrition is from before pregnancy through to a child’s first two years of life. It is during this short period of time that investments and interventions are likely to have their greatest impact in terms of both improved health outcomes and high economic returns.

Solutions need to be dramatically scaled-up through new types of partnership

The challenge for public, private and civic leaders is to dramatically scale-up the interventions and technologies that have been proven to work, focusing investments on the critical ‘window of opportunity’ and on micronutrients where appropriate, and balancing between short and long routes, and demand-side and supply-side interventions. Attention must also be paid to improving the broader enabling environment. In particular, to integrating and prioritizing nutrition more effectively into national Poverty Reduction Strategies and development budgets, supporting community-based programs, and strengthening public health systems, and building health capacity more generally.⁴

It can be done. According to UNICEF, the number of households in developing countries with access to iodized salt has risen from less than 20 percent in 1990 to over 70 percent today. About half the world’s children now receive vitamin A supplements, oral rehydration programs have prevented thousands of deaths from diarrhea, and breastfeeding rates have improved in a number of countries. While government leadership has been essential, partnerships with the private sector and others have played an important role in these achievements. Even more could be achieved through the private sector playing a increased role, as outlined in the following pages.

II Why does it matter to business?

There is a 'business case' for investing in addressing malnutrition. The food industry is in the business of offering healthy and nutritious foods. Fortified foods provide new opportunities for value addition, branding and market expansion as part of the company's core mandate. ...Economies of scale for fortified products will lower prices and reach new customers. Raising product quality and nutritive value will stimulate competition and trade within the country, regionally and globally. Improving product quality and benefits is not just corporate social responsibility. It could be a new way of doing business.

Venkatesh Mannar
President, The Micronutrient Initiative
Comments at Malnutrition
Leadership Dialogue
Washington DC, June 22, 2006

Research by the World Economic Forum concludes that, "The 'business case' for companies to engage in hunger-reduction efforts varies by industry, by company, and by the company's activity. ...Nearly every step in the food production and consumption process offers opportunities for some type of business involvement."⁵

Key components of the 'business case' identified by the World Economic Forum, and endorsed by other organizations such as the International Business Leaders Forum, and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government include the following:

- New market and product development that is commercially viable or has the prospect of becoming profitable with market expansion and economies of scale
- Stimulating innovation within the company
- Reputation management and building positive brand value by being associated with efforts to improve health and nutrition
- Motivating employees directly through volunteering activities and support for their research and indirectly through their association with a company that addresses social issues
- Strengthening community and government relations, especially in developing countries and with international development agencies and non-governmental organizations
- Developing a healthy and productive local labor force in low-income countries and communities
- Contributing to economic development and building long-term markets by improving physical and mental development of future generations of consumers and workers
- Enacting corporate values.

In 2006, GAIN commissioned a study for its Ten Year Strategy Project. It surveyed over 150 stakeholders active in the area of combating vitamin and mineral deficiencies, including over 40 private sector organizations ranging from major multinational corporations to national companies and business associations. The survey concluded, "Most private sector stakeholders interviewed along the food supply chain believe that there is a business case to be made for providing micronutrients through fortified foods to the poor. Overall 70% expressed confidence that the double bottom line of CSR and profit could be achieved and among the multinational companies it was nearly 90%. Those who said they could not make a business case for fortification were national food companies, and millers and their associations for whom profit margins are already very low."⁶

III How can the private sector play a role?

The private sector can play a critical role in ensuring the delivery of fortified products. The role of companies should go beyond philanthropic funding, to include innovation, product development, distribution, and marketing, even advocacy and lobbying. There needs to be a business value proposition at the core of the partnership between companies and the development community. And we need time to build trust.

Marc Van Ameringen
Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
Comments at Malnutrition Leadership Dialogue
Washington DC, June 22, 2006

The contribution that a company can make to overcoming malnutrition will obviously vary depending on the industry sector, stage in the food value chain and type of intervention in question. It will also be influenced by the capacities and roles of other actors such as governments, donors, NGOs and research institutions, and whether companies are acting individually, on a collective industry-wide basis or in collaboration with other sectors.

The World Economic Forum has identified the following top opportunities for companies in different sectors to apply their core competencies and capabilities to tackling hunger:

BOX 3:

TOP OPPORTUNITIES FOR APPLYING BUSINESS CAPABILITIES TO REDUCE HUNGER

Increasing food production and strengthening market systems in hungry regions:

- Sourcing from small-scale producers
- Developing and supporting small and medium enterprises for production, processing and distribution of food and agricultural products
- Expanding farmers' access to new and existing products, technologies, and information
- Extending essential services and infrastructure to hungry areas
- Acting to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Improving nutrition through fortified products and consumer education, especially for mothers and young children:

- Fortifying food and beverage products for the 'bottom of the pyramid'
- Empowering and educating women and girls.

Strengthening governments' commitment and capacity to act against hunger:

- Building public and political support for increased investment in hunger reduction
- Partnering with public agencies and NGOs to strengthen their capacity.

Source: *Harnessing Private Sector Capabilities to Meet Public Needs*. The World Economic Forum, Geneva: 2006.

Regardless of industry sector or stage in the value chain, most companies can assess their potential to get engaged by reviewing their risks, opportunities and possible stakeholder alliances in the following three main spheres of influence:⁷

- **Core business operations and investment**
- **Philanthropy and social investment**
- **Public policy dialogue, advocacy and institution building.**

III AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

10 PRACTICAL ACTIONS THAT BUSINESS CAN TAKE

CORE BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND INVESTMENTS	1 Invest in process, product and service innovation 2 Create local business linkages along the food supply chain – in both sourcing and distribution 3 Undertake health and nutrition-related marketing, advertising and consumer education 4 Develop and transfer technology to improve food productivity and quality 5 Build physical and institutional infrastructure
PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL INVESTMENT	6 Partner with NGOs, donors, social entrepreneurs and community organizations to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support education, training, health, nutrition, water, energy, environmental and enterprise development projects• Build the managerial and technical capacity of local civil society organizations, and civic leaders• Encourage women's participation and empowerment• Facilitate early warning systems and disaster preparedness and response 7 Invest in universities and research institutes to support multi-disciplinary research in the related areas of nutrition, health, economics, agricultural development, operations and institutional analysis, program and project evaluation etc.
PUBLIC POLICY DIALOGUE, ADVOCACY AND INSTITUTION BUILDING	8 Build industry-wide alliances – to mobilize and leverage business leadership, resources and influence 9 Engage in policy dialogues to advocate for good governance in general and to advocate for greater donor and developing country government commitment to the production, distribution and consumption of nutritious food in particular 10 Strengthen public institutions and health systems – help to build better technical and managerial human resource capacity, institutional and infrastructure capacity, public communications and education capacity, national policing planning, coordination and monitoring capacity.

Source: Adapted from Nelson, Jane. *Business as Partners in Development*. The World Bank, UNDP and IBLF, 1996; *More Food for Thought*, IBLF, 2006; and *Harnessing Private Sector Capabilities to Meet Public Needs*, World Economic Forum, 2006.

2 CORE AREAS OF INTERVENTION

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION: Ensuring sustainability, quality and security of food production and distribution systems

- Better inputs and infrastructure including new seeds, technologies, fertilizer, and equipment
- Better practices and methods, especially water management and soil management
- More localized and efficient value chains and strengthened market mechanisms
- Improved food and agricultural trade policy



MARKETING, RETAIL AND CONSUMPTION: Improving nutrition and public health

- Promote breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding
- Micronutrient fortification and supplementation
- Ante-natal care and maternal and child healthcare
- Health and nutrition education and public campaigns
- Feeding programs in schools and after disasters
- Gender interventions – girls and women's education and economic empowerment
- Link macroeconomic and health policies

V Examples of corporate leadership

Individual corporate action

The following examples illustrate some of the initiatives being undertaken by three of the companies that made presentations at the June 22, Malnutrition Leadership Dialogue. They represent a very small sample of the many practical ways that companies can harness their core competencies, products, services and business networks to help overcome malnutrition. Other firms that are playing innovative roles in tackling malnutrition globally include Procter & Gamble, Tetra Pak, The Coca-Cola Company, SABMiller, Pick 'n Pay, Heinz, Seaboard, Nestlé, DSM, and Group Danone.

<p>Cargill – Established in 1865, Cargill is an international marketer, processor and distributor of agricultural, food, financial and industrial products, providing solutions in supply chain management, food applications, and health and nutrition. Its partnerships with nonprofit organizations aim to meet the following criteria: where Cargill can make a distinctive contribution; engagement of the company's employees; solving problems rather than treating symptoms; ability to meet the company's unique</p>	<p>business interests; and opportunities to collaborate with customers and stakeholders. Cargill has played a key role in the funding and governance of the global Flour Fortification Initiative and has also been working with the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH) to support nutrition programs for pregnant and lactating women, school children and people living with HIV/AIDS in Honduras. It has worked with CARE International for over ten years on integrated health, education and micro-finance</p>	<p>programs aimed at reducing child labor and promoting market access for sustainable cocoa production among small farmers. The company is also working with the World Food Programme to support integrated education, health and nutrition programs in Latin America and Africa. It has signed a memorandum of understanding with GAIN to work on oil fortification and food fortification for emergencies.</p>
<p>Sodexo – The Sodexo Alliance is one of the world's leading food and facilities management companies serving over 40 million people a day with operations in companies, restaurants, events, military and correctional services, health facilities and education institutions in over 70 countries and employing about 320,000 people. In addition to ensuring the food safety, nutritional quality and health impacts of its core food services, the company has joined the UN Global</p>	<p>Compact and is developing a global campaign called Stop Hunger to help reduce hunger and malnutrition. Established over a decade ago in the United States, the program is now running initiatives in close to 20 countries with a focus on harnessing the company's core competencies through four major components: sharing Sodexo knowledge in areas such as providing nutrition, food safety, food waste education and job and life skills training; food donations of</p>	<p>perishable and non-perishable food to hunger relief organizations; employee volunteering; and financial donations targeted at programs that fight hunger and malnutrition. Sodexo has also played a key role in the governance of the Alliance to End Hunger, established in 2002 to engage diverse institutions in building public will to overcome hunger.</p>
<p>Unilever – Founded in the 1890s, Unilever is one of the world's largest consumer goods and food companies, serving about 150 million people around the world every day. It is engaged in a wide range of sustainable agriculture and health and nutrition activities around the world, ranging from the management of its global supply chain to its Food and Health Research Institute and its Nutrition Network. In Africa, for example, the network has been central in the</p>	<p>development and roll-out of Popular Foods Africa, a new business group created in 1999 to work with local manufacturers to produce, market and distribute affordable fortified foods. In 2000, Annapurna iodized salt was launched in Ghana, resulting in household consumption of this product increasing from 28% in 2000 to over 51% in 2002. Fortified whole maize flour and biscuit products have also been launched in small pack sizes, using local distribution</p>	<p>networks to make them accessible and affordable to low-income communities. In India, Unilever has partnered with UNICEF, Synergos and others to launch Bhavishya, the Indian Partnership for Child Nutrition, with the goal of halving child malnutrition within 10 years, and in Latin America it is a participant in the Latin American School Feeding Network, which aims to integrate education and good nutrition.</p>

There is an enormous opportunity to bridge the gap between what we do individually and what we do collectively. One of the most important areas of innovation is in engagement strategies. There is a lot being done on R&D relating to nutrition and health, but we need to also focus on researching and evaluating what engagement models work. What types of partnerships are the most effective and sustainable? What kind of partnerships can achieve short-term gains, but also longer-term investments to secure the viability of the business model and its contribution to tackling malnutrition?

Paulus Verschuren
Senior Director Partnership Development,
Unilever Health Institute and Chair,
GAIN Business Alliance
Comments at Malnutrition
Leadership Dialogue
Washington DC, June 22, 2006

Collective business action

One of the most important contributions companies can make to increasing the scale and sustainability of efforts to overcome malnutrition is to work on a collective basis – either through global and national trade and industry associations or through specifically targeted ‘business leadership’ alliances that focus on harnessing business resources and competencies to tackle a specific challenge. Depending on their purpose and structure, these collective initiatives offer a high potential mechanism for companies to leverage their individual contributions, spread their risks, share lessons, and overtime increase their impact ‘on-the-ground’.

In 2005, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) launched its Business Alliance, which is an excellent example of such collective action. This initiative is outlined below, along with some other business alliances focused on tackling malnutrition and hunger that companies can become members of:

GAIN’S BUSINESS ALLIANCE

GAIN was launched in 2002 as a multi-sector alliance, grant-giving and technical assistance body, and advocacy network with a core purpose to tackle micronutrient deficiency primarily through food fortification.

Over the past three years GAIN has set clear measurable targets for itself, which include the goals to:

- Reduce the prevalence of vitamin and mineral deficiencies by 30% in the areas where GAIN support projects
- Reach 1 billion people with food that has been fortified with vitamins and minerals
- Ensure that 500 million of the people most in need, such as children and pregnant women, regularly consume fortified foods
- Achieve these results at a cost of less than 25 US cents per person, per year.

GAIN delivers its funding and technical assistance through multi-sector National Fortification Alliances in about 17 countries, each with its own targets. At the global level, GAIN has a multi-sector Board of Directors and a multi-sector Reference Group. Over the past three years, it has made a strategic commitment to systematically increase its dialogue and engagement with the business community, increasing the number of companies with which it has significant interaction from less than 5 to over 100 between 2003 and 2006. Central to this strategy has been the establishment of the *GAIN Business Alliance*. Launched in Beijing in October 2005, the Business Alliance operates globally, regionally and nationally in countries such as China and India, as well as through regional networks in the Americas and in Africa. It is chaired by Unilever and currently focuses on:

- Mobilizing companies in developing countries to promote food fortification through providing technical assistance, recognition and other support
- Creating media attention and visibility for food fortification
- Creating a clear and rigorous process for engaging the private sector in a manner that makes clear business sense to the companies and offers clear development benefits in terms of results.

The Business Alliance Against Chronic Hunger is harnessing core business competencies and cross-industry expertise to generate sustainable, market-based solutions to hunger and implement them in partnership with governments, NGOs and donors along the entire food value chain. The companies will leverage their expertise and capabilities across multiple areas, including innovation, scalability, distribution networks and logistics, cost-effective operations, communications, project management and marketing.

Lisa Dreier

Associate Director, World Economic Forum
and Senior Advisor, BAACH

Comments at Malnutrition Leadership
Dialogue, Washington DC, June 22, 2006

Other examples of business-led alliances to tackle malnutrition and hunger include:

THE BUSINESS ALLIANCE AGAINST CHRONIC HUNGER

In 2006, the World Economic Forum and some of its member companies jointly launched an innovative new initiative with the mission to form a network of businesses committed to taking action to reduce chronic hunger in Africa, in cooperation with the public sector, civil society and community partners. The Alliance is currently focusing its activities in one pilot district in Kenya, through a locally-led and multi-sector National Council. To date over 30 companies have committed to action in the Kenyan pilot district, working with 10 partner organisations to strengthen value chains for locally produced products. The Alliance strategy is to take an integrated approach to solving hunger by focusing on using business expertise and market power to strengthen food value chains and build more sustainable and equitable market systems through multi-stakeholder partnership, testing these new approaches in a specific region, and then disseminating lessons globally. The Alliance is looking at business and partnership opportunities at every stage of the value chain: agricultural inputs; selling and trading; processing and packaging; distribution; and consumption – working with a variety of companies in different industry sectors. In Kenya, it has identified four priority areas for action:

- Staple crop production and marketing
- Processing and packaging of high-value products
- Retail and consumer market development
- Entrepreneurship capacity building, with a focus on youth.

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC ALLIANCES

Another approach that a growing number of companies are taking is to support alliances focused on a specific industry sector, food commodity, or vitamin and mineral deficiency. In the past ten years there has been a marked growth in such alliances, some with their main focus on ensuring more sustainable patterns of food production, others on improving nutrition, and others on an approach that integrates both the production and consumption aspects of tackling malnutrition.

The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) – in the area of vitamin and mineral deficiency the MI has played a pioneering role in engaging with business at both a global and national level, and with both individual corporations and trade associations. Among many other activities, it also serves as the Secretariat for the *Iodine Network*, which has effectively engaged the salt industry in having a major impact on raising levels of iodine consumption, and works with the *Flour Fortification Initiative*, which is mobilizing millers, retailers and other partners around the goal of ensuring that 70 percent of all wheat flour rolled in roller mills around the world is fortified with at least iron and folic acid by 2008.

Sustainable agriculture and commodity alliances – there have been a number of such networks launched in the past few years, such as the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative, the Sustainable Food Lab, the World Cocoa Foundation, the Marine Stewardship Council, the Palm Oil Initiative and others.

VI Recommendations for joint action and partnerships

Key messages from Leadership Dialogue

Participants at the Malnutrition Leadership Dialogue were drawn from a variety of sectors and countries, but shared many common perspectives on what is needed to scale up the global effort to overcome malnutrition. Some of the most common themes and messages from the dialogue are summarized below:

“It is urgent that we raise nutrition as a public policy priority locally, nationally and internationally, with local implementation and national enforcement.”

1. Combine global advocacy with national ownership

There are not enough strong links between global advocacy campaigns and nationally-led initiatives to tackle malnutrition. And even at the global level, there are lots of campaigns and initiatives operating in the same ‘space’ with insufficient synergies between them. This undermines the opportunities for greater leverage and for increasing the number and volume of voices calling for more political leadership to tackle the challenge. The effort being coordinated by GAIN to develop a 10-year strategy and broad alliance to address micronutrient deficiencies is one example of how greater synergy needs to be harnessed.

At the national level, several participants emphasized the crucial importance of working with existing networks and institutions and not ‘reinventing the wheel’. One set of actors that could be very effective are regional and national business coalitions – chambers of commerce and trade and industry associations that exist in most countries and whose members have a long-term interest in having a healthy and well-educated workforce and consumers. Yet, there are very few national business coalitions addressing the challenge of health, nutrition and education – and efforts are needed to provide them with a more compelling ‘business case’ and technical assistance on what they and their members can do in practice.

“The crucial linkages between agriculture and nutrition are simply not being addressed.”

“We need to be more efficient and eliminate a lot of redundancy in the system.”

“We need to focus on consumption as well as production.”

“Engage Ministers of Finance and Education, not only Ministers of Health.”

2. “Connect the dots” – Make better links between agriculture and nutrition/ production and consumption/ health and economics / governance gaps and market failures/ public policy and implementation programs

There was strong feeling that leaders in the health, nutrition, economics, and business communities need to come together to make more of a concerted and sustained case for greater public and private investment in supporting proven solutions to tackle malnutrition. Even within the business community, it is rare for the food, beverage and agribusiness companies to get together with the healthcare companies, for example. Within the World Bank there are over a thousand economists, but few nutritionists, and no guarantee they will interact. The problem is similar in most development agencies – and reversed in public health organizations. Linked to this is the challenge that efforts to tackle malnutrition tend to be either focused solely on public health and public policy solutions, or on business, market-led solutions and there are not enough integrated approaches that look at both governance gaps and market failures and the relationships between them.

BOX 4: POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR BUSINESS

The Malnutrition Leadership Dialogue illustrated a wide-range of existing and possible alliances both within the business community, and between business, governments, health experts, NGOs and research institutions. These include:

- Nonprofit organizations and networks dedicated to nutrition and/or health – for example, the Micronutrient Initiative; the Alliance to Stop Hunger; and Helen Keller International.
- Nonprofit development NGOs and networks with a wider development remit – either advocacy or operational – but programs or policies targeted at malnutrition and hunger. Examples include: InterAction; Oxfam; CARE International; and Synergos.
- Universities and research institutes with programs on malnutrition
- Bilateral and multilateral development agencies – USAID's Global Development Alliance which has supported nutrition initiatives among others by leveraging several billion dollars, as well as products, technology, and supply chains from partnering with the private sector. UNICEF, the World Food programme, WHO, PAHO, FAO, UNDP, and UNIDO are all examples of UN agencies that have developed comprehensive business partnership initiatives.
- Private foundations – Bill & Melinda Gates; Rockefeller, Ford, and GAIN.
- International and national business leadership networks – The International Business Leaders Forum; Business for Social Responsibility; the World Economic Forum, Instituto Ethos in Brazil, National Business Initiative in South Africa, Philippines Business for Social Progress.

3. Engage business beyond philanthropy

Although participants recognized the contribution of corporate philanthropy and the fact that it has mobilized millions of dollars to support health, nutrition and education projects around the world, there was strong consensus of the growing need to engage companies around their core competencies and business models. Numerous people spoke about 'market-failures' and the potential for market-based solutions within an appropriate enabling framework and policy environment. Specific proposals included the provision of tax incentives, advertising discounts and awards for companies that fortify foods.

4. Focus joint efforts on top priority and high-impact interventions

Many of the corporate and public health participants commented on the importance of identifying specific country-level or sector-based priorities with clear goals and measurable targets and then focusing combined efforts on these. Initiatives might include food fortification, campaigns to promote breastfeeding, complementary feeding, oral rehydration initiatives, anti-malaria insecticide treated bednets, school-based feeding, health and nutrition education, small enterprise development in rural areas, micro-credit to empower women – all of which offer proven approaches and/or technologies that need to receive more concerted attention and effort.

5. Harness the potential of communications, public health campaigns and information sharing

Several participants emphasized the valuable role the private sector can play in mobilizing marketing and advertising expertise, information technology and business distribution and logistics networks to support more effective communications, public health campaigns and information sharing on crucial issues related to health and nutrition. There were suggestions that governments or donors could establish a well-recognized 'seal' for fortified foods or a national 'micronutrient balance sheet' against which to track and compare progress.

6. Invest in 'action-learning' – simultaneous experimentation and evaluation of projects

Participants spoke of the need to develop more creative and cost-effective approaches to evaluate projects, and to provide experiential learning opportunities for companies and other actors in order to monitor what works, but at the same time learn together and build necessary trust.

7. Identify and support internal champions and intermediary organizations

"We need agents and intermediaries if we are going to scale up."

Participants highlighted the crucial role of 'champions' and 'brokers' within their organizations. Either individuals or dedicated units that can do the analysis and build the relationships that are necessary in making cross-sector partnerships work.

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VIII Endnotes and references

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 - *Harnessing Private Sector Capabilities to Meet Public Needs: The Potential of Partnerships to Advance Progress on Hunger, Malaria and Basic Education*. The World Economic Forum, Geneva: 2006.
 - Bekefi, Tamara. *Business as a Partner in Tackling Micronutrient Deficiency: Lessons in Multisector Partnership*. CSR Initiative Report No. 7, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge: 2006.
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COMPANIES AND BUSINESS LEADERS interested in making a commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative linked to projects that help to overcome malnutrition and hunger in developing countries should contact:

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GAIN aims to save lives and improve health, productivity and cognitive function by reducing nutritional deficiencies of populations at risk, including through the use of food fortification to alleviate vitamin & mineral deficiencies. GAIN has a key alliance-building function, bringing together public and private partners around common objectives, and also provides grants and technical expertise. A distinctive and essential feature of GAIN's approach is its work with the private sector, applying new, innovative business models to make markets work sustainably for the benefit of those suffering from malnutrition.

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