



# Global Complementary Feeding Collective Terms of Reference

## Background

Globally, we are failing to meet the nutritional needs of infants and young children during the complementary feeding period. About half of all children aged 6–23 months are not fed the minimum recommended number of meals; over two-thirds are not fed the minimally diverse diets they need to grow and develop; and over one-quarter lack the benefits of the most nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits, vegetables, eggs, fish or meat (UNICEF, 2021). According to the most recent Child Food Poverty Report, one in three children live in severe food poverty (defined as eating fewer than two food groups a day) (UNICEF, 2022). The state of children’s diets therefore remains a persistent bottleneck to greater progress on nutrition and child development.

In the context of the commitments made during the Nutrition for Growth Summit, WHO and UNICEF are collaborating to develop Implementation Guidance on Complementary Feeding Policies and Programmes, which will align with the recently released WHO Guideline for complementary feeding of infants and young children 6-23 months of age.

At the moment, a number of existing active networks and initiatives tackle specific aspects of complementary feeding, including the Home Fortification Technical Advisory Group (HF-TAG), the Micronutrient Forum, the Infant Feeding in Emergencies Core Group, the Global Breastfeeding Collective, the SQ-LNS informal taskforce, the COMMIT Initiative (Consortium for Improving Complementary Foods in Southeast Asia), the Anaemia Action Alliance, the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting and others. However, there is no single group/forum that brings these various actors and networks together to make the best use of collective resources for improving the diets of young children.

During an initial informal consultative meeting held in February 2023, participants confirmed the need for a ‘collective on complementary feeding’ and a scope of work was developed.

## The Global Complementary Feeding Collective

### Aims and Objectives

The Global Complementary Feeding Collective is a partnership of agencies co-led by UNICEF and WHO and comprised of global agencies dedicated to improving complementary feeding, diets and practices through improved programming, policies, and advocacy.



The **aim** of this Collective is to:

*Improve the survival, growth, and development of children 6-23 months by driving joint actions to support optimal complementary feeding*

The **objectives** of this Collective are to:

- Build and communicate a **common narrative** on the need for improving complementary feeding
- Build consensus on **priority actions** to improve complementary feeding
- Facilitate **alignment of initiatives** and efforts globally towards improving complementary feeding
- Capture and share existing and new **knowledge** related to complementary feeding evidence, tools, guidance, lessons learned and other resources
- **Track** and communicate progress related to complementary feeding

## Membership

Membership of the Global Complementary Feeding Collective (GCFC) is open to organizations committed to improving infant and young child feeding and providing leadership in policy, research and programming related to complementary feeding. Members include United Nations Agencies, non-governmental organizations, donor agencies, and academic institutions. Membership is not open to individuals, although the steering committee may invite individuals to contribute to certain tasks.

### Membership criteria

In line with WHO and UNICEF's commitment to protecting infant and young child feeding, the following membership criteria will be followed:

- Organizations should support the overall aim and objectives of the collective and demonstrate commitment and leadership towards improving the feeding of infants and young children during the complementary feeding period.
- Organizations should lend institutional support to the collective, contributing to advancing the aim and objective of the collective.
- Organizations should have a demonstrated global or regional reach (e.g. with operational presence and activities that are funded in multiple countries and at least two regions that contribute to improving infant and young child feeding). Organizations should also demonstrate reach by having five or more active volunteers and/or staff members.
- Organizations should be free of any **conflict of interest** in terms of ties to, representation of interest, or financial interest in manufacturers or distributors of breastmilk substitutes, commercially produced complementary foods or foods marketed for children 6-23 months. Organizations should also be free of any conflict of interest in terms of ties to other entities with policies, objectives, and goals that include or relate to an increase in promotion of the categories listed above that contribute to compromising diets and practices of infants and young

children. Individual representatives of the organization should also lack conflicts of interest in terms of the above-mentioned ties.

- Organizations should have a demonstrated clear plan for the management of conflict of interest in terms of ties to, representation of interest, or financial interest in manufacturers or distributors of soft drinks and drinks with substantial concentrations of added sugar, ultra-processed food products<sup>1</sup>.

## Application

- Organizations interested in becoming a member are asked to **submit an expression of interest** addressing the following points:
  - A clarification of the relevance of the organizations in terms of supporting the overall aim and objectives of the Collective and including capabilities and activities that the organization can contribute to advance the aim of the Collective.
  - Demonstrated global and regional reach as well as size of the organization.
  - A declaration of lack of conflict of interest as described in the membership criteria above.
    - When applicable, organizations must be able to report on any interest as well as any steps taken to manage conflict of interest, after which WHO/UNICEF will determine whether or not that interest would represent a conflict for the Collective.<sup>2</sup>
  - Identifying an individual who will represent the organization and be the focal point.

The expression of interest should be submitted to [complementaryfeeding@unicef.org](mailto:complementaryfeeding@unicef.org). Expression of interests will be reviewed by the coordinating committee (WHO/UNICEF) and will be evaluated against membership criteria. A response to the organization will be provided within one month of receipt.

## Ways of working

### Governance

The **governance structure** of the GCFC will be comprised of the following:

**Co-chairs:** UNICEF and WHO would co-chair and host the secretariat

**Steering Committee:** composed of five members rotating on regular basis (every 2 years) with UNICEF and WHO permanent members of the steering committee

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF has provided a description of what constitute Ultra Processed Foods in its programming guidance on engagement with the Food and Beverage Industry can be found on this [link](#).

<sup>2</sup>More details on UNICEF's engagement with the Food and Beverage Industry can be found on this [link](#).



The Steering Committee:

- Provides general support to the co-chairs on strategic directions and priority actions
- Ensures consensus-based decision making
- Helps identify needs and generates strategic directions
- Supports with the planning of the annual and regular meetings, including supporting with reviewing reports and other outputs
- Reviews and approves applications from new members

The Steering Committee will be comprised of the following:

- WHO and UNICEF (permanent members)
- One UN agency representative
- Three representatives from an operational agency, donor agency, or academic institution

Steering Committee members will be selected by the existing steering committee. Steering Committee members other than WHO and UNICEF will serve on the Committee for a minimum of one year and a maximum of 3 years.

**General membership:** comprised of UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, donor agencies, and academic institutions.

Members are expected to:

- Contribute to the overall aim and objectives of the GCFC by:
  - Participating in at least one activity of work identified within the plan or strategy that emerges from the work of the collective.
  - Participating in the GCFC annual meetings and regular calls.
- Commit to transparency, management and avoidance regarding conflicts of interest, including immediately informing the secretariat of any change in declared interests.

## Meetings

- The GCFC will hold monthly membership meetings
- The Steering Committee will hold separate monthly meetings
- Ad hoc meetings will be organized depending on need
- One face-to-face meeting will be held per year

*May 2025*