
Civil society organisations call for stronger monitoring and accountability mechanism to end childhood obesity



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Earlier this year the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity published its [final recommendations](#) [1], a comprehensive package of public policies to turn the tide on what will be one of the greatest contributors to NCD morbidity and mortality in coming years if no action is taken. A recent [paper](#) [2] estimates that by 2025 some 268 million children aged 5-17 years may be overweight, including 91 million obese if business continues as usual. The authors also estimate the likely numbers of children in 2025 with obesity-related comorbidities such as impaired glucose tolerance (12 million), type 2 diabetes (4 million), hypertension (27 million) and hepatic steatosis (38 million).

In order to guide WHO Member States in the implementation of the Commission's recommendations a [draft Implementation Plan](#) [3] has been developed open for public consultation and expected to be adopted at the World Health Assembly in 2017. NCD Alliance, in collaboration with [World Obesity Federation](#) [4] and [World Cancer Research Fund International](#) [5], and supported by 21 global, regional and national civil society organisations has developed [a detailed statement](#) [6] calling for an improved Plan and stronger accountability framework to end childhood obesity.

Collectively, the signatories of the statement commend WHO for maintaining the integrity of the initial set of recommendations highlighting the need for a comprehensive package of policies to be adopted, across the life course and by different sectors of government and of society. It is clear that no one action is sufficient to address the growing epidemic, nor will one sector alone curb the issue. A piecemeal approach will achieve little and the implementation Plan should make a strong case for governments to take a systems approach to ending childhood obesity.

The statement welcomes the attention given to the role of civil society, particularly to the need for Member States to support and engage civil society. Civil society organisations around the world are supporting their governments in the development and implementation of ambitious public policies to protect and promote local, healthy and sustainable diets and physical activity.

Flagging strong concerns around the lack of specificity of the Plan's guidance and support to Member States on how to implement its recommendations and the lack of a robust monitoring and accountability mechanism, the signatories of the statement propose a second phase for the development of the Plan, namely the production of a Framework for Evaluating Progress of the Implementation Plan with clear targets and indicators.

Finally, the statement highlights the urgent need for a greater emphasis on protecting policy making and policy makers from corporate influence. The Plan needs to expressly acknowledge how industry actions can prevent, delay or reverse the implementation of public policies, regulation and legislation to address childhood obesity. Adoption of voluntary measures or dependence on industry self-regulation has proven to have limited value unless there is active government involvement in setting the standards required and the time-frame for achievement, and establishing sanctions for non-compliance. This should more strongly feature in the guiding principles and underlying tone of the

document and translate into more nuanced guidance on how to engage with the private sector.

Based on the input received on the draft document, the WHO Secretariat will produce an revised Plan for discussion at the WHO Executive Board in January 2017.

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Category - News: Announcements

Related Resource: [Joint Response: WHO Draft Implementation Plan for the Recommendations to End Childhood Obesity \(ECHO\) 2016](#) [7]

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Links

[1] <http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/news/launch-final-report/en/>

[2] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijpo.12185/epdf>

[3] <http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/implementation-plan/en/>

[4] <http://worldobesity.org>

[5] <http://wcrf.org>

[6] https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/102016_Joint%20ECHO%20Implementation%20Plan%20Response.pdf

[7] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/joint-response-who-draft-implementation-plan-for-the-recommendations-to-end-childhood-obesity-echo-2016>