



# WHO's Food Marketing Recommendations for Child Protection

**For Prelims:** [World Health Organization](#), [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), HFSS foods

**For Mains:** Impact of Food Marketing on Children, Issues Related to Children

## Why in News?

Recently, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has released new guidelines, to help countries shape policies to protect children from the harmful effects of food marketing that promote unhealthy dietary choices.

- The guidelines recommend the implementation of comprehensive mandatory policies to **restrict the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages** that are high in **saturated fatty acids, High trans-fatty acids, sugars, and salt (HFSS)** to children of all ages.
- These guidelines are built on the WHO's '**Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children**' released in 2010.

## What are the Policy Recommendations to Protect Children from Food Marketing?

- **Recommendations:**
  - **Comprehensive Mandatory Policies:**
    - Restrict the **marketing of HFSS foods** and **non-alcoholic beverages** to protect children
    - Policies of countries should restrict advertisements of HFSS foods covering various marketing channels and forms, including **TV, radio, print, online platforms, social media, mobile devices, games, schools, public spaces, and point-of-sale.**
  - **Age Limit:**
    - The **age limit for protection should be up to 18 years**, aligning with the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).
  - **Nutrient Profile and Country Context:**
    - A nutrient profile model should be used to define HFSS foods and beverages based on **scientific criteria adapted to the country context.**
    - The guidelines emphasize the importance of considering the country's context, including its **nutritional situation, cultural context, locally available foods, dietary customs**, available resources and capacities, existing governance structures, and mechanisms, when formulating policies.
  - **Persuasive Techniques:**
    - Prohibition of persuasive techniques appealing to children, such as **cartoons, celebrities, toys, games, discounts, or free gifts.**
    - Effective mechanisms for **monitoring, enforcement, and evaluation** of policies

are necessary.

- **Involvement of Stakeholders:**

- Involvement of relevant stakeholders in policy development and implementation, ensuring transparency and avoiding conflicts of interest.

- **Importance:**

- **Evidence-Informed Guidance:**

- Policy recommendations provide **evidence-informed guidance to protect children** from harmful food marketing.
- Address **gaps and challenges in current policies**, highlighting the need for stronger regulations.

- **Urgent Action Needed:**

- Recommendations respond to the urgent need for action due to the **increasing burden of childhood obesity** and **non-communicable diseases**.
- Childhood obesity rates are projected to rise, posing a significant public health concern.

- **Long-Term Health Impact:**

- Childhood obesity is associated with **increased mortality** in adulthood.
- Implementing effective policies can help **mitigate long-term health consequences**.

- **Protecting Children's Rights:**

- Recommendations prioritize the **best interest of children**, ensuring their **right to health and adequate food**.
- Policies aimed at **curbing harmful marketing practices** benefit children's well-being.

## What are the Harmful Effects of Food Marketing on Children?

- Food marketing uses persuasive techniques to influence children's **food attitudes, preferences, and consumption**.
- HFSS foods (high in saturated fatty acids, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, and salt) are the main focus of food marketing which are associated with **increased risks of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and dental caries**.
- Food marketing affects **children's food choices by promoting unhealthy options** over healthier ones. It also increases the frequency and amount of HFSS foods consumed.
- Food marketing **displaces the consumption of nutritious foods** like fruits and vegetables and undermines **parental influence on healthy eating**.
- Food marketing can mislead children about the **nutritional quality and health benefits of HFSS foods**. It may exploit **emotional appeals, peer pressure, or celebrity endorsement to influence children's food choices**.

## What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?

- It is a treaty adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly** in 1989.
- It recognises a **child as every human being under 18 years old**.
- It sets out the **civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights** of every child, regardless of their race, religion, or abilities.
- It includes rights such as the Right to Education, the Right to Rest and Leisure, and the Right to Protection from Mental or Physical Abuse including Rape and Sexual Exploitation, Right to Life and Development.
- It is the **world's most widely ratified human rights treaty**.
- **India ratified the UNCRC in 1992** and has committed to implement its principles and provisions through domestic laws, policies and programmes.

### **Prelims:**

**Q. With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, consider the following: (2010)**

1. The Right to Development
2. The Right to Expression
3. The Right to Recreation

**Which of the above is/are the Rights of the child?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (d)**

**Exp:**

- The United Nations (UN) took its first step towards declaring the importance of child rights by establishing the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1946. In 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making it the first UN document to recognise children's need for protection.
- The first UN document specially focused on child rights was the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, but instead of being a legally binding document it was more like a moral guide of conduct for governments. It was not until 1989 that the global community adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it the first international legally binding document concerning child rights.
- The convention, which came into force on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1990, consists of 54 articles covering various categories of child rights including right to life, right to development, right to engage in play and recreational activities, right to protection, right to participation, expression, etc. Hence, 1, 2 and 3 are correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

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### **Mains**

**Q. Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. (2016)**

**Source: DTE**