

Press release

Novo and UNICEF expand partnership to support a healthier start for more than 80 million children

- The four-year expansion will focus on childhood overweight and obesity prevention for over 80 million children across seven priority countries: Mexico, Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Egypt and Kenya
- Novo will commit USD 18 million from 2026 to 2030. The four-year programme will run from 2027 to 2030, while funding begins in 2026 to support programme inception and preparation
- Childhood obesity has surpassed underweight globally for the first time on record. One in five children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 is now living with overweight, including obesity¹

Bagsværd, Denmark / New York, United States, 22 September 2026 – Novo Nordisk and UNICEF today announced a four-year expansion of their global partnership to help prevent childhood overweight and obesity, aiming to support a healthier start in life for more than 80 million children. Novo is committing USD 18 million from 2026 to 2030 to advance evidence-based policies and prevention services in seven priority countries. The expansion arrives at a turning point in global child health: childhood obesity has now surpassed underweight globally for the first time on record, according to UNICEF's 2025 Child Nutrition Report.¹

From 2026 to 2030, the partnership will support governments to create environments that ensure healthier options are more accessible to children and families— from the food that is offered and promoted to children, to the schools, cities and health services they rely on every day.

“It is concerning that childhood obesity has surpassed underweight, affecting 1 in 10 school-aged children and adolescents globally,” said Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, UNICEF. “The moment to act is now. Through our partnership with Novo, UNICEF will work with governments to turn evidence into policies, build services, and create environments that protect children early, so every child has a fair chance to eat well, move, feel supported and grow up healthy.”

“Preventing childhood obesity requires long-term, collective action to create healthier environments for children,” said Elin Jäger, chief of staff and head of CEO Office, Corporate Strategy and Sustainability, Novo. “Through our continued partnership with UNICEF, we want to support proven prevention approaches that can become part of the systems children rely on every day, helping create healthier environments for more than 80 million children.”

Building on joint progress since 2019

Since 2019, Novo and UNICEF have helped raise childhood overweight and obesity from an under-recognised issue to a growing global policy and public health priority. Building on this foundation, the next phase of the partnership will deepen efforts in existing countries and expand to new contexts, combining evidence-based policy advocacy, technical assistance, youth-led advocacy and peer support, and social and behaviour change communication.

Scope of the expanded programme

The expanded programme will support action in Mexico, Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Egypt and Kenya, while accelerating learning across regions.

Interventions will include:

- Growth monitoring
- Nutrition and physical activity counselling
- Peer and family support
- Community- and facility-based prevention activities
- Youth advocacy
- Basic mental health screening and support
- Legislation to promote better diets and healthy food

Success will be measured by the number of children reached by evidence-based prevention policies and interventions. Progress and challenges will be reported transparently.

The scale of the challenge

Childhood overweight and obesity now affect around 35 million children under 5 and more than 391 million children and adolescents aged 5 to 19, with 81 per cent of them living in low- and middle-income countries.¹ The impacts can be immediate and lifelong, increasing the risk of early-onset type 2 diabetes and other non-communicable diseases, while also affecting children's wellbeing through stigma and discrimination.

Delivery will be country-led and anchored in UNICEF's Centres of Excellence model, led from Nairobi with satellite support in Bangkok and Panama.

For further information on the partnership and programme progress, visit novonordisk.com/sustainable-business and unicef.org

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References

1. [Feeding Profit: How food environments are failing children - 2025 Child Nutrition Report - UNICEF DATA](#) - last accessed September 2026