CHASE-i
Centre for Health and Social Economic Improvement

Food and beverage Advertising to Children in Uganda (FACe-U)

Purpose

To measure children's food marketing environments and develop effective policies which improve children's health outcomes and prevent non-communicable diseases (NCDs in Uganda.

Food environments are "the physical, economic, political and social-cultural surroundings, opportunities and conditions that influence people's food choices." Healthy food environments protect children from the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to reduce their risk of developing NCDs such diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

Background

Globally, 5.6% of children under five years are obese; in Africa 5.2% of girls and 3.7% of boys 5-19 years old are obese. The 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) found: 4% of children under five years, and 16% of adolescent girls were obese, a rise from 2.4% of boys and

2.1% of girls in 2014. There is an increase in the prevalence of NCDs in Uganda, now contributing 35% of mortality. Despite this, Uganda's food environment encourages in-community food advertising of sweetened beverages, oily and fatty food, and there are no policy regulations. This practice predisposes children to increased obesity, a renown NCDs risk.

Uganda lacks evidence on the extent and nature of children's exposure to food and non-alcoholic beverage advertising. Global evidence shows that majority of food advertisements to children are unhealthy with a coinciding increase in obesity. Recently, on the World Health Organisation Global RECAP program, policy makers confirmed that 'marketing restrictions to children' is a number one priority issue in Uganda. Our study findings will inform government policy actions to design policy regulation, create healthy food environments that prevent childhood obesity, and contribute towards achieving the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan II (2020-2025) and the Strategic Development Goals. The study is a partnership between Makerere University (Mak) College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Makerere University School of Public Health.

Expected Outcomes

1. Empirical data on the nature and extent of food and non-alcoholic beverages advertising to children. This will be through identifying and categorizing advertising channels used to advertise to children.
2. Categories of food and non-alcoholic beverages advertised to children. Categorizing the types of food and beverages advertised shows the nature of food advertised to influence children's food choices and diets.
3. A comprehensive profile of the persuasive techniques used to promote food to children, and children's preferred media channels. Food and non-alcoholic beverages advertisers use content to persuade children to consume advertised food and to create early brand loyalty. This content also influences children's food preferences, and requests to parents to purchase advertised food.
4. Positive, informed and proactive attitudes among key stakeholders. Stakeholder attitudes towards food and beverage advertising to children are key to shaping food marketing regulations. Parents, the adolescents, leaders, other duty bearers and stakeholders are a powerful community agency that can and should advocate for healthy food environments, good child health and nutrition outcomes.

5. A stronger and supportive policy landscape for child health and nutrition.

About the Research

We shall use media monitoring and complementary empirical data to determine the trends of magnitude and type of food and non-alcoholic beverages advertised to children. We shall assess the content, and the persuasive advertising techniques advertisers use to influence children's food choices. Furthermore, parental and adolescent awareness and attitudes towards food advertising to children, and other stakeholder engagements will be critical to creating a healthy food environment to improve child and adolescent health and nutrition outcomes.

Study Location: Uganda.

Funding: Government of Uganda, through the Makerere Research and Innovation Fund (MakRIF-2)

Research Team
1. Dr. Gloria Kimuli Seruwagi – Principal Investigator (PI)
2. Florence Basiimwa Tushemerirwe – Co-Principal Investigator
3. Maureen Nabatanzi – Research Fellow
4. Maria Ssematiko – Lead, Administrative Compliance & Support
5. Flavia Nakacwa – Project Administrator

Mentors and Partners

Dr. Henry Wamani, PhD (MakSPH): Dr. Wamani is a Lecturer and he coordinates the Masters of Public Health Nutrition at the School of Public Health, Makerere University College of Health Sciences. He is a highly experienced Public Health Nutrition researcher, designer, implementer as well as evaluator of interventions, health systems and social development programs. He has special technical focus on public health nutrition; child development; maternal and child health especially in aspects of malaria, HIV, diarrhea, equity in health, nutrition programming and research. His additional experience includes health sector policy development and analysis. He will oversee project implementation, manuscript development and managing the policy stakeholder network.

Dr. Gershim Asiki, PhD (APHRC): Dr. Asiki is a senior medical epidemiologist, leading the NCDs research program at the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya. His research is focused on NCDs, maternal and child health; entailing both epidemiology and implementation research among populations in Kenya and in other African countries. He has the expertise, leadership, training, and motivation necessary to successfully carry out research projects in Africa. As PI or co-Investigator on several other research projects, he has grown relevant experience and expertise for administering projects for over

10 years with the UK Medical Research Council/Uganda Virus Research Institute, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, and leading HIV national surveys in Uganda, Cameroon and Namibia. He is the lead PI on the ongoing multi-country project "Developing a package of effective regulatory interventions for healthier food environment in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and is a Co-Investigator on the Ghana MEALS4NCD project measuring the healthiness of Ghanaian children's food environments to prevent obesity and NCDs. He oversees project implementation and leadership.

Dr. Jose Luis Peñalvo, PhD (ITM, Antwerp Belgium): Dr. Peñalvo is a Professor of Public Health at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp Belgium, where he leads the NCDs Unit and an Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Boston, MA, USA. He is an epidemiologist and public health specialist with a strong background in quantitative research and epidemiologic methods, including the design, and outcome and impact evaluation of primary prevention interventions, and estimating health impacts through modeling the effect of population-based dietary policies to reduce NCD-related burdens. He mentors the team on data analysis, interpretation, manuscript writing and will support the team in designing the next project phase.

Dr. Stefanie Vandevijvere, PhD (Sciensano, Belgium): Dr. Stefanie Vandevijvere is a senior public health nutrition scientist at Sciensano, Belgium. Her research focuses on nutrition policies for obesity prevention locally, nationally and globally. Her work aims to support the development and implementation of policies to effectively and equitably improve the quality of population diets. She is passionate about the role of food environments in determining people's dietary habits and how to hold governments and food businesses to account for their actions to create healthy food environments to effectively reduce obesity. She is a member of the leadership team of the International Network for Food and Obesity / NCDs Research, Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS), which aims to monitor, benchmark and support public and private sector actions to create healthy food environments and reduce obesity and NCDs. She oversees government and all policy stakeholder engagements on the project.

Project Contacts

- **Dr. Gloria K. Seruwagi**, SWSA Department, School of Social Sciences, Makerere University, **PI**; +256 774 700111, gloria.seruwagi@chuss.mak.ac.ug
- **Florence Basiimwa Tushemerirwe**, School of Public Health, Makerere University, **Co-PI**; +256 772 531445, ftushemerirwe@musph.ac.ug, ftusht01@gmail.com.