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Urban Food System of Kampala, Uganda: a Participatory Approach to Map Systemic Drivers for Healthier Diets

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Abstract

Africa is urbanizing, poverty and malnutrition hotspots are moving from rural to urban communities. The urban population is faced with malnutrition in all its forms. Personal and external food environments are changing. The questions “Who is and Why are they affected” remain unclear. The project NOURICITY seeks to answer these questions by engaging in a chain of multi-stakeholder participatory activities meant to deliver a blueprint for partnerships seeking to improve urban people towards healthier diets in Africa.

A series of participatory approaches are applied to understand the current food system of Kanyanya parish, Kawempe division in Kampala, Uganda. First, stakeholders at policy and parish levels were engaged in two separate workshops to collect information on urban food system challenges and to map with geo-references the common food outlets. Secondly, three Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with 30 parish representatives each (disaggregated into women, men and youth) in 2020.

Identified challenges within the food system included elements of the food supply chain (post-harvest losses, poor transport), food environment (availability, affordability, food safety) and consumer behaviour (waste, awareness). A key limitation to eat healthy, stakeholders mentioned the lack of cash, the price and availability of food, as well as the awareness of healthy and safe food. The main source of information regarding food safety and nutrition was the community radio and meetings. In total, 500 formal and informal food outlets locations were mapped, including kiosks, food markets, restaurants and hotels, butcheries, dairies, and supermarkets.

The participatory engagement of the community identified not only challenges and limitations but also gave opportunities and showed the willingness of the community members to act. An entry point to enhance awareness and dietary knowledge could be the local community radio, community meetings and leaders.

Keywords: Food environment, food mapping, Kampala, participatory approach, Uganda, urban areas