

Food environments in Africa: Addressing malnutrition using a syndemics approach (FoodSAMSA)



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THE DOUBLE BURDEN OF MALNUTRITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

• Double Burden of Malnutrition

Co-existence and interaction of high rates of **undernutrition** (*stunting, wasting, underweight, micronutrient deficiencies*) with high rates of **overweight, obesity, or diet-related noncommunicable diseases**, at the **population, household and/or individual level**



• Nutritional situation in South Africa

- ~27% of children < 5 years are stunted,
- ~31% of women >15 years are anemic,
- > 12 million people are overweight or obese

• Aim of the FoodSAMSA project

Addressing the *Double Burden of Malnutrition* in South Africa with a multi-level approach, by assessing its determinants and by exploring interventions at various levels

WP4: ASSESSING COMMUNITY FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

Aim & Method:

- Mapping the **outdoor food and beverage advertising environment** of **three townships** in Cape Town (Gugulethu, Kensington, Nyanga)
- Direct observation and documentation of ads in the field following the **INFORMAS Outdoor Food Advertising Protocol** – mapping of ads with QGIS software

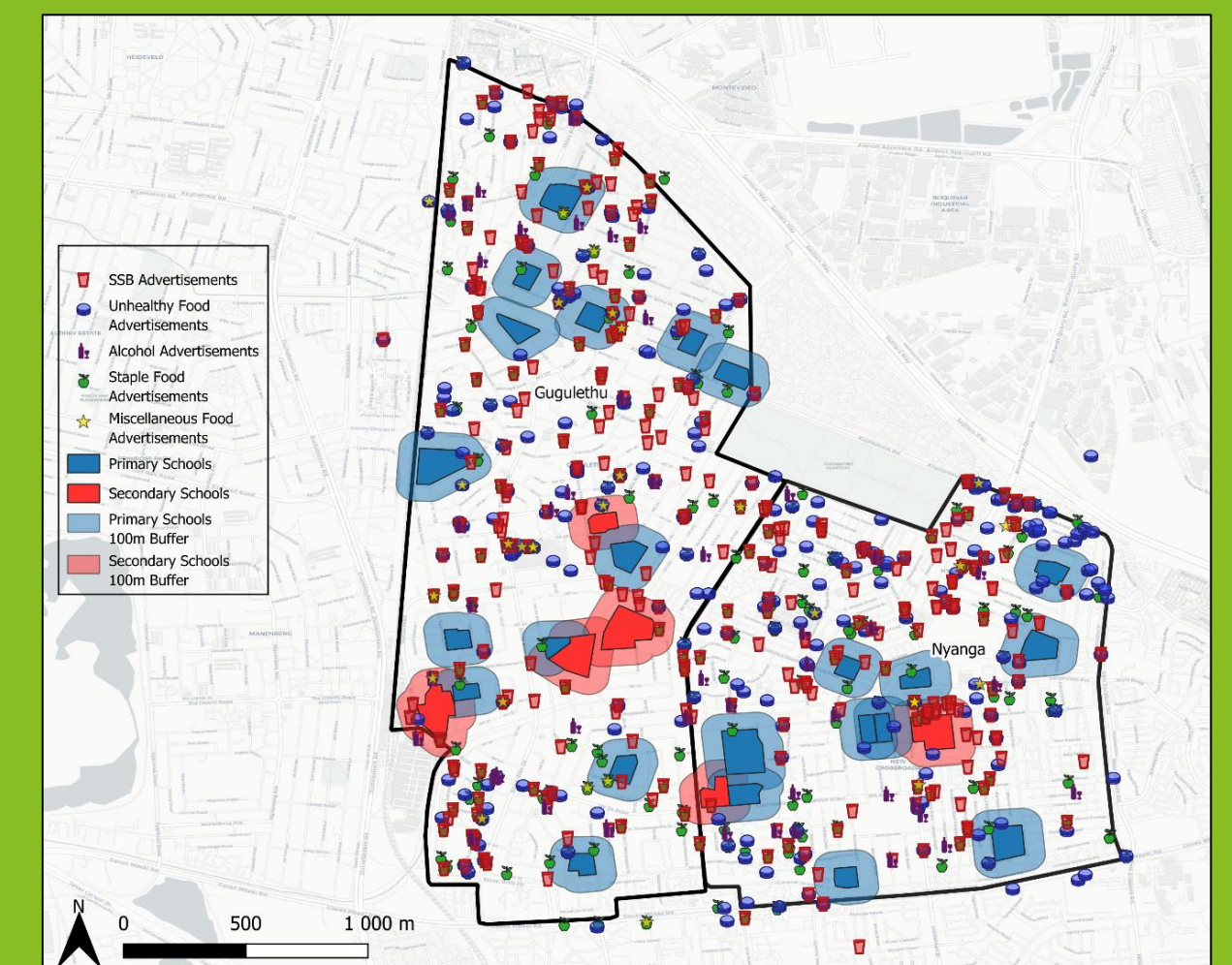


Figure 2: Outdoor food and beverage advertisements in Gugulethu and Nyanga

Main Findings

- 1,840 food and beverage ads** on billboards (15%), storefronts and building walls (32%), small scale advertisements (16%), containers (11%), mobile vending carts (2%), banners and other miscellaneous (12%), and standalone awnings (12%)

- Unhealthy ads comprised **69.9%** and **68.5%** of all observations within **100m- and 400m Primary and Secondary school buffer zones**, respectively
- Higher rates of SSB ads around **Secondary schools**
- Within 400m buffer zones, **highest number of SSB (335, 53.8%) and unhealthy food ads (224, 54.9%) in Nyanga**

WP3: MAPPING AND BENCHMARKING OF PUBLIC NUTRITION POLICIES

Aim & Method:

- Assessing the extent of implementation of healthy food environment public policies in South Africa using the **INFORMAS Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI)** protocol across 60 good practice indicators
- Invitation of 23 national experts from government, academia, and civil society to benchmark and develop priority actions

Main Findings:

- 70% of indicators** were rated **very low to low** levels of implementation
- Improvement** of mean level of implementation **since 2016**
- Areas with **higher level** of implementation included *Food Labeling, Food Provision, and Food Composition*
- 10 priority actions for the South African government:**

Macro level: Policy determinants

- WP2: Mapping and benchmarking of formal food industry policies (BIA-Obesity)
- WP3: Mapping and benchmarking of public nutrition policies (Food-EPI)

Meso level: Community determinants

- WP4: Assessing community food environments
- WP5: Improving the informal street food environment (Street Food Vendor Business Model)

Micro level: (Inter-)Personal determinants

- WP6: Leveraging digital solutions (multi-media edutainment intervention) and local social networks (Community Health Worker Training)

Figure 1: FoodSAMSA project overview

WP1: Complex systems mapping

WP7: Capacity and network building

WP8: Integrated knowledge translation

WP6: LEVERAGING DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

Aim & Method:

- Development** of an acceptable, suitable, and feasible **Multi-Media Edutainment intervention** to improve the food and nutrition literacy of community health workers (CHWs)
- Nutrition and health messages** distributed through WhatsApp & SMS, conveyed through **entertaining short stories** in the form of comic booklets and animation videos
- Focus Group Discussions** with 30 CHWs to receive feedback on their perceptions and acceptability of the materials

Main Findings

- CHWs found the materials to be **user-friendly, easy to understand**, and generally **acceptable** with regard to time and language

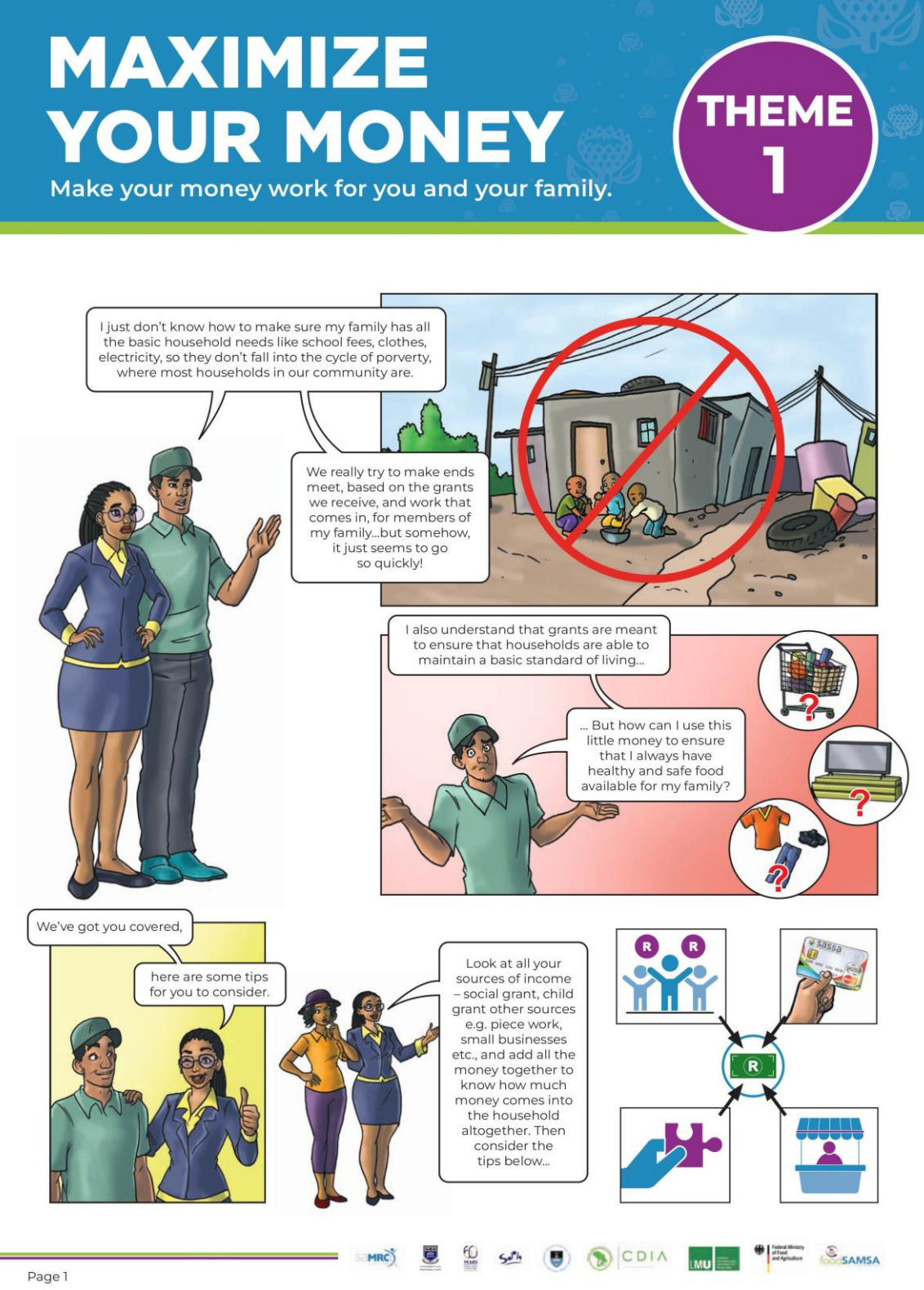


Figure 3: Comic booklet developed as part of the Multi-Media Edutainment intervention

CONCLUSION / HIGHLIGHTS

- High levels of exposure to unhealthy outdoor food and beverage advertisements** around schools in three townships in Cape Town, with secondary schools being significantly more exposed to outdoor SSBs ads
- Potential of digital platforms to enhance food and nutrition literacy** of community health workers and their respective communities, especially when they are involved in the co-creation of materials
- Slight progress in the implementation of healthy food environment policies** in South Africa since 2016, but **more action needed to strengthen public nutrition policy** to address the *Double Burden of Malnutrition*

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