

Study Title: Investigating Ghanaian Children's Interaction with Urban School Food Environments and Opportunities for Healthier Food Choices

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Abstract

Background: There is evidence that children in Ghana consume poor quality diets in the school food environment; however, there has been little scrutiny of the factors influencing their consumption patterns in schools. Additionally, there has been little research on ways to improve the school food environments of children. Around the world, implementing actions that promote healthy dietary behaviour among children are critical to ensure intergenerational transmission of health and well-being.

General Objective: This PhD study aims to explore how children in Ghana interact with urban school food environments and identify actions to enable healthier food choices.

Specific Objectives: 1. To examine factors in the physical and social school food environment that influence children's food choices.

2. To determine the factors that are most important for food choice by children in the school food environment.

3. To determine the readiness and capacity of school-community stakeholders to improve the healthiness of school food environments.

4. To determine potential actions that could improve the healthiness of school food environments.

Proposed methods: A combination of secondary data analysis and primary data collection will be used to address the objectives of this study: Qualitative secondary data analysis of Focus Group Discussions; Semi-structured interviews with free listing and pile sorting exercises; Community Readiness Model (CRM), Participatory workshops with *a*) children attending schools in the study areas and *b*) local community members such as parents, opinion leaders, food vendors in and around schools; The prioritization of actions shortlisted from the participatory workshops with national and regional level stakeholders using a semi-structured questionnaire based on a tool known as multi-criteria mapping (MCM).

Expected Outcome/Results: It is anticipated that this PhD study will identify context-specific opportunities that could help improve the healthiness of food environments in and around Public Basic Schools in Urban Ghana. If schools implement actions to improve the school food environment, then children will be exposed to healthy foods (e.g., fruit/ vegetables), which will have a positive impact on their food choices, leading to reduced consumption of unhealthy food and increased consumption of healthy foods.