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Food environments for improved nutrition

Food-SAMSA: Food environments in Africa: Addressing malnutrition using a syndemics approach

<i>country/countries</i>	Germany, South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa
<i>funding agency</i>	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture - BMEL
<i>project management</i>	Federal Office for Agriculture and Food – BLE
<i>project coordinator</i>	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), Munich, Germany
<i>project partner(s)</i>	Chronic Disease Initiative for Africa / University of Cape Town (CDIA/UCT), Cape Town, South Africa University of the Western Cape (UWC), Bellville, South Africa South African Medical Research Council, Cape Town, South Africa
<i>project budget</i>	1.168.116,56 €
<i>project duration</i>	1 November 2021 – 30 November 2024
<i>key words</i>	Food environments, food systems, malnutrition, obesity, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), informal food sector, policy evaluation, integrated knowledge translation, South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa

background	<p>Malnutrition in all its forms is a key risk factor for premature death and disease worldwide. The various forms of malnutrition include undernourishment, specific micro- and macro-nutrient deficiencies, unhealthy diets and overnutrition, as well as related conditions such as stunting, wasting, and overweight and obesity. Approximately 20% of the burden of disease and of all premature deaths globally are attributed to nutritional risk factors, including malnutrition and unhealthy diets. In many low- and middle-income countries, the different forms of malnutrition coexist and interact, both within households and communities and over the life course of individuals. The term double burden of malnutrition has been coined to describe this phenomenon. The double burden of malnutrition is therefore an example of a syndemic, i.e. a set of epidemics that co-occur in time and place, interact in complex patterns, share common systemic drivers and require concerted and coordinated responses.</p>
objective	<p>This project aims to address the double burden of malnutrition with a multi-level approach, leveraging key determinants of dietary choice at the policy, community and interpersonal level. It will use South Africa as an anchor country, while reaching out to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa through strong existing and newly established networks.</p>
short description	<p>This project aims to address malnutrition in all its forms, including over- and undernutrition, by assessing its determinants and by exploring interventions at the macro (policy), meso (community) and micro (interpersonal) level. As part of the project, we will (i) adapt existing approaches for assessing and improving food environments to circumstances that are typical of countries facing a double burden of over- und undernutrition, (ii) implement them in South Africa, and (iii) strengthen capacities and expand existing regional networks to support food environment and food system research and action across Sub-Saharan Africa. We will also conduct participatory research to develop conceptual models of selected parts of the South-African food system and pilot and evaluate interventions to improve local food environments. Furthermore, we will use integrated knowledge translation methods to liaise with a range of stakeholders, including policymakers, private sector and civil society actors, thus maximizing our research's practical and policy impact.</p>