



POLICY BUNDLES: Transforming food systems through policy change

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Whilst Africa faces increasing challenges related to malnutrition and unhealthy food environments, new opportunities are emerging to increase awareness of and commitment to bold, ambitious policies for food systems change.
- ◆ Food policy bundles offer a comprehensive approach to address the growing burden of multiple forms of malnutrition and can play a vital role in transforming food systems towards healthier, more sustainable diets.
- ◆ IDRC is supporting research to generate evidence for and promote the adoption of food policy bundles in Africa.

BACKGROUND

Malnutrition – from undernutrition to obesity and overweight – is growing globally. Africa is currently undergoing a nutrition transition, whereby under- and over-nutrition are prevalent amidst changing food environments and increased consumption of unhealthy and highly processed foods. It is expected that, by 2030, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) will be the leading cause of death in Africa. As such, there is increasing evidence for the need to develop effective ‘double-duty policy bundles’ (DDPBs), which can enable more nutritious diets and effectively tackle under- and over-nutrition. To achieve food systems change, DDPBs integrate nutrition- and health-sensitive policies within broader strategies (e.g. environmental and agricultural policies).

While DDPBs are increasingly being implemented globally, few African countries have done so. Yet, awareness of and commitment to food systems

transformation is emerging across the continent, along with opportunities to implement ambitious policies nationally and regionally.

KEY TERMS

Food environment refers to the physical, economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts in which people engage with the food system to make decisions about acquiring, preparing, and consuming food.

Source: European Public Health Alliance: <https://bit.ly/40FxN5t>

The **double burden of malnutrition** is the coexistence of undernutrition along with overweight and obesity, or diet-related NCDs

Source: World Health Organization, 2017: <https://bit.ly/43fbF1H>

ONGOING RESEARCH

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is supporting research to build evidence for DDPB implementation in Africa.

In [Ghana](#), IDRC is supporting the University of Ghana in building evidence and mobilizing multi-stakeholder activities to develop a DDPB for healthier and more equitable consumer food environments to reduce malnutrition. Through a coalition of government agencies, academia, and civil society, they are establishing the evidence, tools, and policy pathways that enable food systems change. To date, the coalition has already helped government adoption of a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, with further policy changes anticipated to advance the DDPB work.

In [Kenya](#), a coalition of actors – comprising government and food system leaders and led by the African Health and Population Research Centre – is responding to political commitment by the Kenyan government to tackle the high level of unhealthy food consumption and lack of access to nutritious foods. The project is focused on developing a nutrient profiling model for Kenya, including rigorous evaluation to develop a DDPB comprising food labeling, public procurement, regulation of marketing unhealthy food to children, and fiscal policies.

IDRC also supports a project led by the University of Witwatersrand in [South Africa](#), in collaboration with counterparts in Kenya and Ghana. The project aims to provide evidence for the development of comprehensive

policies that restrict child-directed marketing in South Africa – thus influencing food environments and malnutrition. It is also studying the influence of marketing on children across South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, and analyzing entry points and barriers for policy change related to trade and investment within the context of DDPBs.

These projects are among several being supported through IDRC's partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, the [Catalysing Change for Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems](#) initiative.



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