



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



NAIROBI CITY COUNTY

Policy Brief



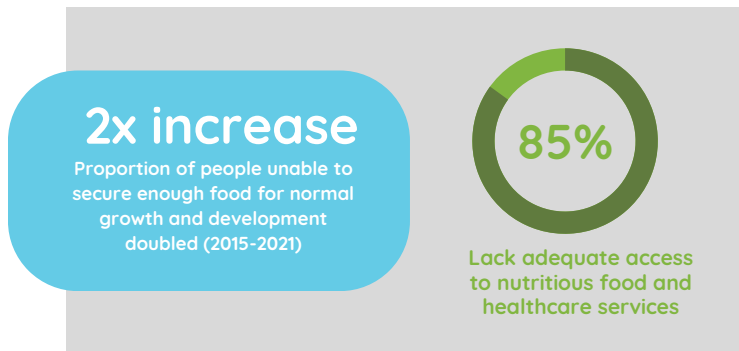
Enhancing Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing for Children: School Feeding Programs as a Vital Component in Urban Informal Settlement

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Background Rationale

Rapid urban development as a result of sharp increases in population growth is associated with a number of challenges, especially for people living in urban informal settlements. Compared to their counterparts in other parts of the city, people living in informal settlements face challenges such as increased incidences of poverty and food insecurity, poor health and nutrition, poor waste management, and inadequate access to clean water supplies. In particular, the poorest households lack adequate and consistent supplies of nutritious food.



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization

Recent research has shown that 85% of people living in the informal settlements of Nairobi do not have adequate access to nutritious food and healthcare services. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the proportion of people who did not have access to regular and enough food to support normal growth and development doubled between 2015 and 2021.

Furthermore, there is increasing concern that poorest households in urban informal settlements bear a rising burden of food-related diseases and non-communicable diseases because of difficulties in accessing healthcare services. Health, the ability of people to live quality life and make their contributions to society in a meaningful way (wellbeing), and access to nutritious food, are closely related.

Approach

The African Cities Research Consortium (ACRC) in collaboration with the University of Nairobi and LVCT Health conducted a study to explore the state of health, wellbeing and nutrition in Nairobi, Kenya. Specifically, the study focussed on factors that enable or limit the uptake of healthy diets among people with low incomes, and living in conditions with inadequate access to health services, water supplies, poor housing conditions, and waste management services in Nairobi.

Aims of the study



Understand Patterns of poor health and poor nutrition among people living in informal settlements of Nairobi



Understand Political and Policy Factors

how they may hinder or promote access to healthy foods for people living in informal settlements in Nairobi



Understand Predetermining factors

that make it easy or difficult for people living in poor households in informal settlements in Nairobi



Beatrice, a dweller from Viwandani sourcing vegetables for dinner

Call to action

Invest in and support coordinated school feeding programs to enhance the health, nutrition, and wellbeing of children in Nairobi's urban informal settlements

Key Findings



Stakeholder Influence

- **Impact:** National and county stakeholders, including NGOs, promote nutritious food production and consumption
- **Challenge:** Lack of coordination and cooperation limits effectiveness

High Food Prices

- **Impact:** Healthy diets are expensive, especially staple foods like maize
- **Influence:** Prices influenced by political factors such as elections

Household Income and Fuel Affordability

- **Impact:** Income and fuel costs determine food choices and access
- **Challenge:** Lack of money leads to poor nutrition, stress, and health issues

Nutritional Awareness

- **Challenge:** Widespread lack of awareness about high-nutrition foods in informal settlements
- **Role of CHPs:** Community Health Promoters (CHPs) enhance awareness but face limitations due to unpaid work

Water Sanitation

- **Challenge:** Poor access to clean water and sanitation, and unhygienic food processing/handling, increase disease risk

Role of Street Vendors

- **Impact:** Street vendors provide cheap but lower nutritional value foods
- **Vulnerable Group:** Children are the primary consumers of street-sold foods

Schools as Nutritional Hubs

- **Opportunity:** Schools can enhance access and consumption to healthy foods
- **Benefit:** Provide nutrition education and promote healthy eating habits
- **Community Engagement:** Ideal for involving community members in promoting good nutrition practices



School feeding programme, Enhancing Health nutrition

Implications for health, nutrition and wellbeing



Affordable Healthy Foods

Governments must ensure essential healthy foods are affordable to reduce reliance on cheaper, unhealthy alternatives



Support for Community Health Promoters

Providing stipends to community health promoters will enhance awareness and identification of healthy foods



Engage Street Vendors

Governments to empower street vendors to promote healthy foods and provide market incentives to influence healthier food choices



Promote Hygienic Food Environments

Strengthen enforcement of food handling requirements and increase awareness of foodborne diseases to ensure access to hygienic food

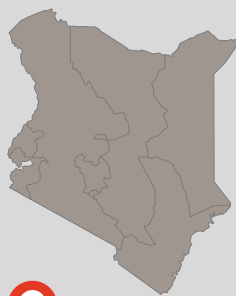
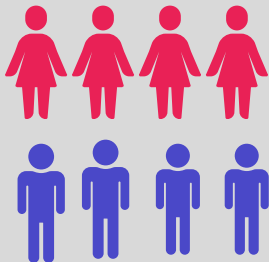


Support School Feeding Programs

Allocate budget resources to school feeding programs to improve children's nutrition, eating habits, and overall wellbeing in informal settlements

DEMOGRAPHIC

Young men and women (15-24 years)



- Viwandani
- Mathare

This study is part of the African Cities Research Consortium project led by The University of Manchester and aims to build evidence and support coalitions of urban reformers to collectively solve complex problems in African cities