Kick-Off Event 29 March, 2022

Food environments in Africa: Addressing malnutrition using a syndemics approach

A collaborative project between the University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, South Africa Medical Research Council, and Ludwig-Maximilians University (Munich)

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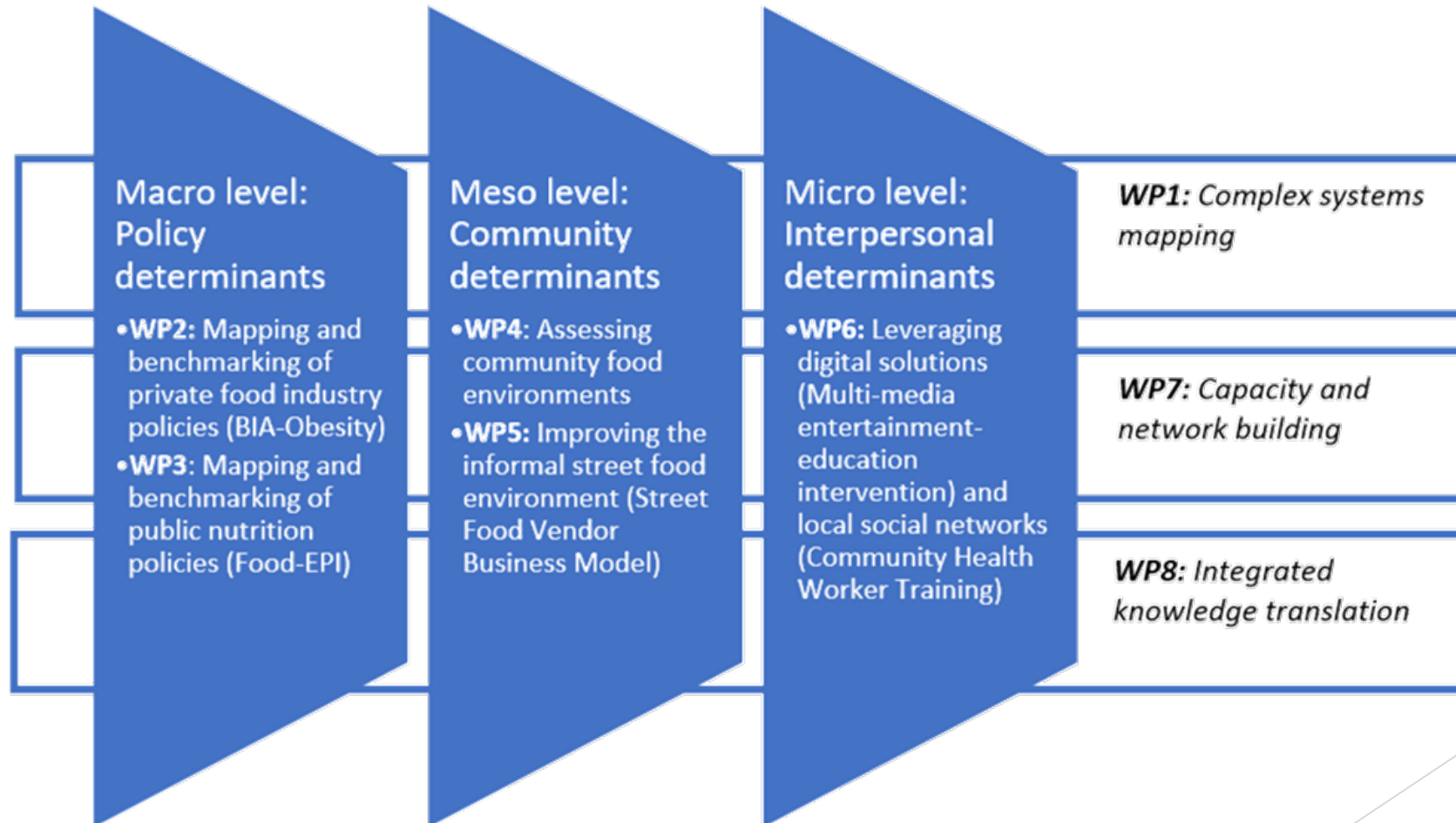

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Aims of the project

- To address malnutrition and its determinants and explore interventions at macro-(policy), meso-(community) and micro-(interpersonal) level

  i) *Adaptation* of existing approaches for assessing and improving food environments to the double burden of malnutrition

  ii) *Implementation* of these (adapted) approaches in South Africa

  iii) *Leveraging* and strengthening existing regional networks

- Use of integrated knowledge translation throughout the process

Project overview

WP0: Management, coordination and communication

Macro level: Policy determinants	Meso level: Community determinants	Micro level: Interpersonal determinants	
•**WP2:** Mapping and benchmarking of private food industry policies (BIA-Obesity) •**WP3:** Mapping and benchmarking of public nutrition policies (Food-EPI)	•**WP4:** Assessing community food environments •**WP5:** Improving the informal street food environment (Street Food Vendor Business Model)	•**WP6:** Leveraging digital solutions (Multi-media entertainment-education intervention) and local social networks (Community Health Worker Training)	*WP1: Complex systems mapping* *WP7: Capacity and network building* *WP8: Integrated knowledge translation*

Macro level: Policy determinants

▶ **WP2: Adaptation of the BIA-Obesity framework for countries facing a DBM and implementation in South Africa**

  ▶ INFORMAS BIA-Obesity framework (Business Impact Assessment on Obesity and population-level nutrition) → **i) assess policies and commitments** related to the DBM of the **private food sector** in SA, **ii) benchmark** them against **international best practices**, and **iii) identify priority actions** for change

▶ **WP3: Update of the Food-EPI for South Africa in the context of a DBM**

  ▶ INFORMAS Food-EPI framework (Healthy Food Environment Policy Index) → **measure** the **extent of implementation of food environment policies** related to the DBM by the South African government **compared to international best practices**

  ▶ Currently adapted by INFORMAS to the DBM (pilot-tested in Uganda and Tanzania (unpublished work by Vandevijvere *et al*. 2021), update in SA (first Food-EPI in SA conducted in 2016)

Meso level: Community determinants

- **WP4**: **Assessment of the community food environment in South Africa**

  - **Geospatial mapping of outdoor food and beverage advertising** in three townships in the Western Cape (using the INFORMAS Outdoor Advertising Protocol)

  - **Mapping of residents' interaction with local food environments** (food choice & procurement questionnaires, diaries and maps)

  - **Identify community-level actors, organisations and programmes** that influence the FE in these communities
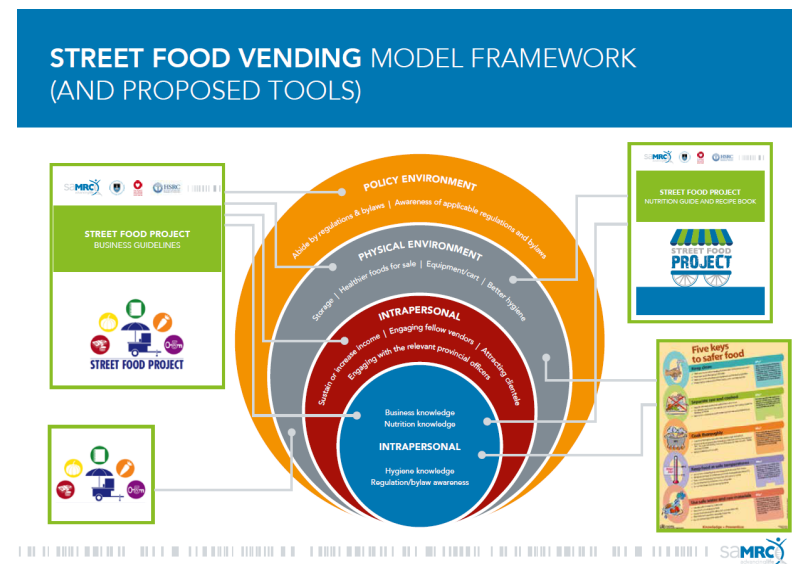

INFORMAS
Benchmarking food environments

Meso level: Community determinants

- **WP5: Leveraging informal food business to improve the community food environment**

  - **Conducting business analyses of informal food outlets** in three townships in the WEC

  - **Updating, expansion and adaptation of the existing business model** developed for *Street Food Vending* to form the *Informal Business Model (IBM)* that accommodates both the *street food vendor* & spaza / community shop businesses

- **Pilot-testing and refining the newly developed IBM** to support financial sustainability of street vendors and spaza shops and creating an enabling environment for consumers to make healthy food choices
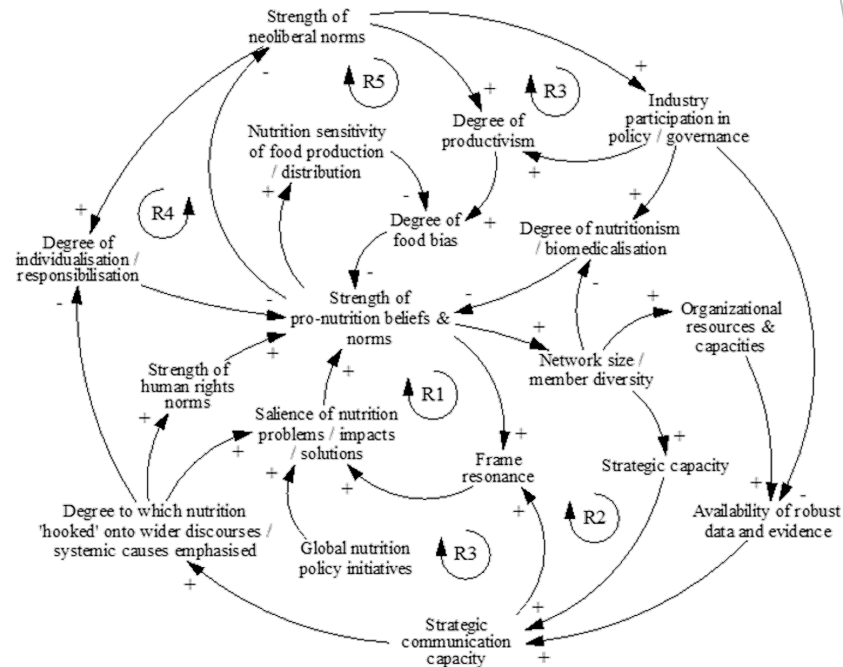

STREET FOOD VENDING MODEL FRAMEWORK (AND PROPOSED TOOLS)

Micro level: Interpersonal determinants

- **WP6**: **Leveraging local networks and social / traditional media to improve nutrition literacy using multi-media entertainment-education (MM-EE)**

  - Updating and expansion of already existing nutrition and **health related messages that form the MM-EE curriculum** so that they include messages with skills to improve food choice and financial freedom

  - **These messages are** conveyed as entertaining short stories in the form of comic booklets and videos to the community via SMS, WhatsApp

  - **Pilot-testing** and finalising the expanded MM-EE curriculum

Cross-cutting components

- **WP1: Complex systems mapping to identify drivers and outcomes of the DBM**

  - **Develop complex systems maps** using group model building in three townships in the Western cape depicting drivers and outcomes of the DBM from the **meso-level** and **macro-level** perspective

Cross-cutting components

- **WP7**: **Building a Sub-Saharan African food environment and systems research, policy, and practice network**

    - Leveraging and **strengthening existing networks** among food environment and systems researchers in SSA (**collaboration** with **FERN**); **mapping** of **researchers** in food environment and systems research in SSA

    - Exploring opportunities and needs for **capacity building**; facilitate mutual learning, knowledge exchange and evidence uptake

    - **Open-access toolbox** on food environment and systems research, policy and practice (online library MEDBOX)

Cross-cutting components

- **WP8: Integrated knowledge translation (IKT) with food environment and systems policy and practice in South Africa**

  - Development of a **stakeholder analysis, engagement, and communication strategy**

  - **Methodological support** for WPs-specific stakeholder engagement strategies

  - **Capacity building for IKT** among internal and external stakeholders, development of a **IKT toolbox**

  - Overall **project related knowledge translation** and **dissemination**

Thank you!