Foodshed Analysis for Nutrition Security Planning in Ghana

An international team of researchers, led by the University of Ghana are investigating how to optimize complex urban food systems to respond to nutrient needs and malnutrition among key vulnerable groups in Ghana. Ghana's food system is characterized by an urban-rural food supply chain that is complex and highly informal. Most food is produced in rural, often hard to reach areas, and transported to urban market centers. Although these urban markets are growing rapidly in size, its characteristics have changed very little. Most urban food markets are open market settings where food handling practices are largely sub-optimal, with respect to sanitation and food safety. The use of informal transportation systems and lack of appropriate food storage and cold chain contributes to the high cost and waste of of nutrient-rich foods, particularly, fruits and vegetables.

There is a dearth of studies focusing on how this food supply system is linked with sub-optimal diets and malnutrition among urban consumers. Further, it is not clear what strategies can best support the efforts of urban planners to address malnutrition in Ghanaian cities. The current study aims to generate evidence on origins of food that supplies key nutrients to selected cities: Takoradi (Western Region) and Asesewa (Eastern Region). This evidence will enable us to better understand the role of markets, to address nutrient deficiencies, and explore how to use such evidence for community-level intervention planning and decision-making.

The study is a collaboration between the University of Ghana and the University of Sheffield (UK). It builds on our long-term and ongoing research partnership existing between the two institutions. Professor Richmond Aryeetey from the University of Ghana's School of public Health is leading the study and recognizes that "this study responds to a critical gap in evidence in diets in urban Ghana, given that Ghana's urban population and cities are growing at a rapid pace. The study will fill an important gap by working with decision-makers in the selected cities in Ghana"

Dr Robert Akparibo, an Associate Professor of Global Health and Nutrition, and co-lead of the study at the University of Sheffield (UK), said "the study provides another unique opportunity for our two institutions to expand on our research activities in Ghana to generate local relevant evidence to help the government make informed evidence-based policies and programming

decisions". According to him, previous projects completed by the two institutions have informed the development of Ghana's first Food-Based Dietary Guidelines, which is an important policy decision taken by the government of Ghana as part of efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of Ghanaians.

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IMMANA is focused on development and validation of innovative methods and novel metrics in agriculture and food systems for improved nutrition and health. This is through its research grants, capacity development, and facilitating knowledge sharing and creating knowledge networks and collaborations.

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