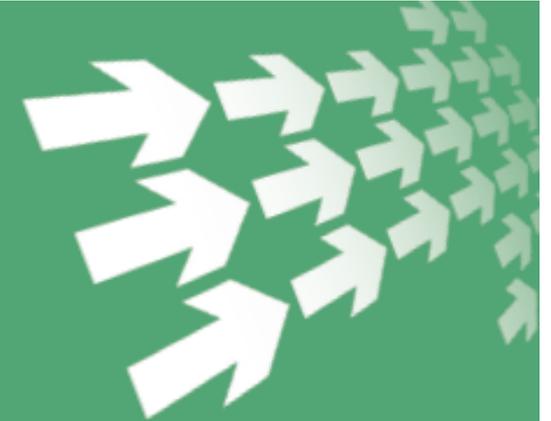




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***The challenge of the double burden of  
malnutrition in urban settings***

***by Denise Costa Coitinho Delmuè***

**SCN Networking Event**

**Rio de Janeiro, 25 March 2010**

# Undernutrition is still the most serious nutrition problem globally ...

10 million children die each year: 1 out of 3 due to undernutrition

1 out of 6 newborns have low birth weight

1 out of 6 children under 5 is too short for his/her age having failed to grow to his/her full potential

1 out of 2 children under five has some form of micronutrient deficiency

Nutritional problems are responsible for 29% of all disease burden in children under 5

*Source: Lancet Nutrition series based on WHO data and 6<sup>th</sup> RWNS – SCN draft*

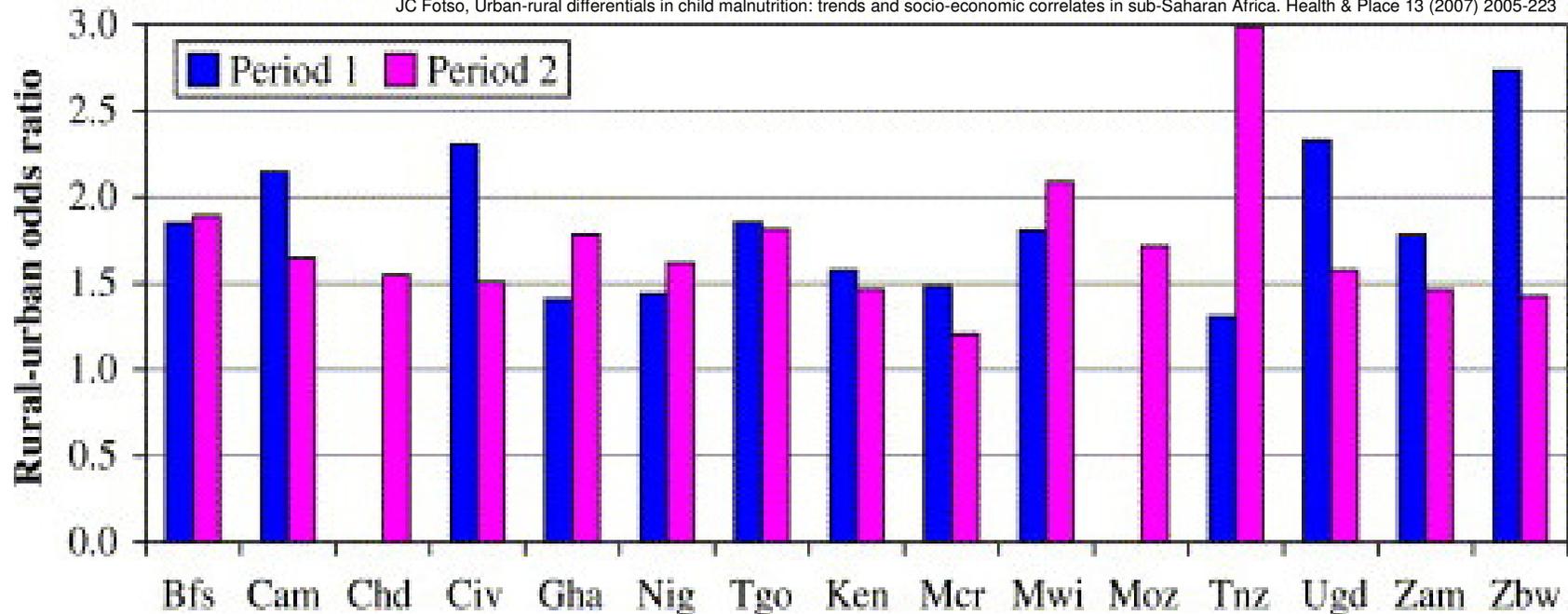


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# Levels and trends of urban–rural differentials in child undernutrition, Sub-Saharan Africa

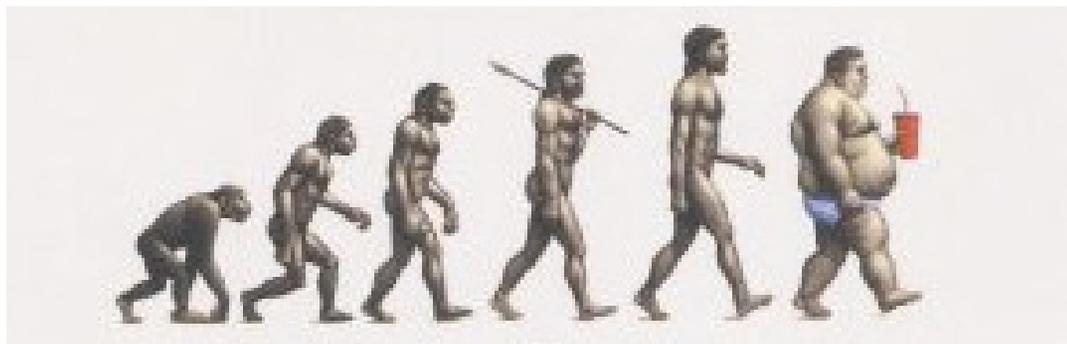
JC Fotso, Urban-rural differentials in child malnutrition: trends and socio-economic correlates in sub-Saharan Africa. Health & Place 13 (2007) 2005-223



1. Child undernutrition is lower in urban than in rural areas but the gap is narrowing in several countries.
2. Urban-rural gaps are abolished in almost all countries above when community and household SES and maternal education are controlled for.



# But there is another side to the problem ....



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- WHO's latest projections indicate that globally in 2005:
- approximately 1.6 billion adults (age 15+) were overweight;
- at least 400 million adults were obese.
- WHO further projects that by 2015, approximately 2.3 billion adults will be overweight and more than 700 million will be obese.
- at least 20 million children under the age of 5 years were overweight globally in 2005.

*Source: WHO BMI databank*



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# Rapid urbanization leads to important changes in food practices and lifestyles and further risks to nutrition

- Half of the world's population live in urban areas and about 2/3 will be living in towns and cities in twenty years from now.
- With the current rate of expansion of urban agglomeration various factors, specific to life in urban environments, impact the nutritional status of urban populations:
  - very high reliance on purchases and distribution systems;
  - changes in food production, processing and distribution technologies, reduce costs but especially of less healthy options;
  - promotional marketing encourages convergence of cultures of consumption.



# Is it a matter of individual choice?

- New employment patterns (women, outside home)
- Demand for “convenience”
- Higher exposure to aggressive marketing practices and desire for foods associated with high social status

Demand is critical, but the food supply is also crucial:

- it affects food availability, prices, marketing practices
- which in turn shape the environment within which people are making their demands for different foods

**The healthy choice should be the easy, affordable and safe choice, but is this the case today ?**



# Food consumption trends

- In the last 4 decades the relative availability of staple foods (cereals, pulses, and starchy roots) decreased almost everywhere.
- Staple foods were essentially replaced:
  - by vegetable oils and sugar in low and lower-middle income countries;
  - by vegetable oils, sugar, and meat in upper-middle income countries,
  - by vegetable oils and meat in higher income countries
- The relative availability of F&V was only slightly increased in most countries and it is still well below the recommendations in both the developed and the developing countries.



# Impact of urban food consumption patterns on nutritional parameters of the diet

- **Likely impact:**
  - Increased total fat content and decreased total carbohydrate content everywhere
  - Increased energy density everywhere
  - Decreased fibre content everywhere
  - Decreased protein content in less developed countries
- **Possible impact:**
  - Increase in saturated fats
  - Decrease in some vitamins and minerals
  - Increase in the glycaemic index
  - Decrease in bioactive compounds (flavonoids, etc)



# Just a few examples of policy options for addressing the double burden of malnutrition

Common solutions to both under and over nutrition are a concern for the life-course, which starts before birth. They should address from access and availability to direct determinants of choice. Examples:

1. Promoting breastfeeding and good complementary feeding
2. Promoting the urban production and consumption of nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables (with the added value of creating work opportunities in poverty affected areas),
3. Regulate processed foods standards and food marketing practices, specially for children
4. Linking up poverty alleviation programmes (either food or cash distribution) with these other nutrition promotion activities
5. Making schools nutrition friendly, including linking up school meals programmes to home gardening and urban agriculture



# How can urban planners help?

The urban planners are already burdened by the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment. But these can be linked to promoting better nutrition in towns and cities with measures such as:

1. Supporting the design of food distribution systems that ensure availability and reduce transportation costs for fruits and vegetables
2. Creating public urban spaces for small scale agriculture food markets
3. Creating public urban spaces and solutions to increase physical activity levels
4. Enforce food safety and other legislation (street foods, restaurants, sale of foods in schools, etc)



# How can urban planners help?

**Others ? ... Let us debate and list !**



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# Why should urban planners and local authorities bother ?

A major first step towards a healthier, more productive population is the realization that good nutrition is not only an outcome, but it is an crucial input for social and economic development.

If changes in income (MDG 1) occur in cities without substantial improvement on early nutritional status, quality of people's diets and physical activity levels, the health and nutrition situation will deteriorate further

**Food and nutritional security is everybody's problem, and everybody's responsibility**

