

A young boy in a school uniform is the central focus, sitting in a field of green leafy vegetables. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In the background, other children in similar uniforms are visible, some sitting on the ground. The scene is outdoors, likely in a school garden or farm, with bright sunlight. The text "Gaps and Priorities for Adolescent Food Environments in SSA" is overlaid on the image in white font.

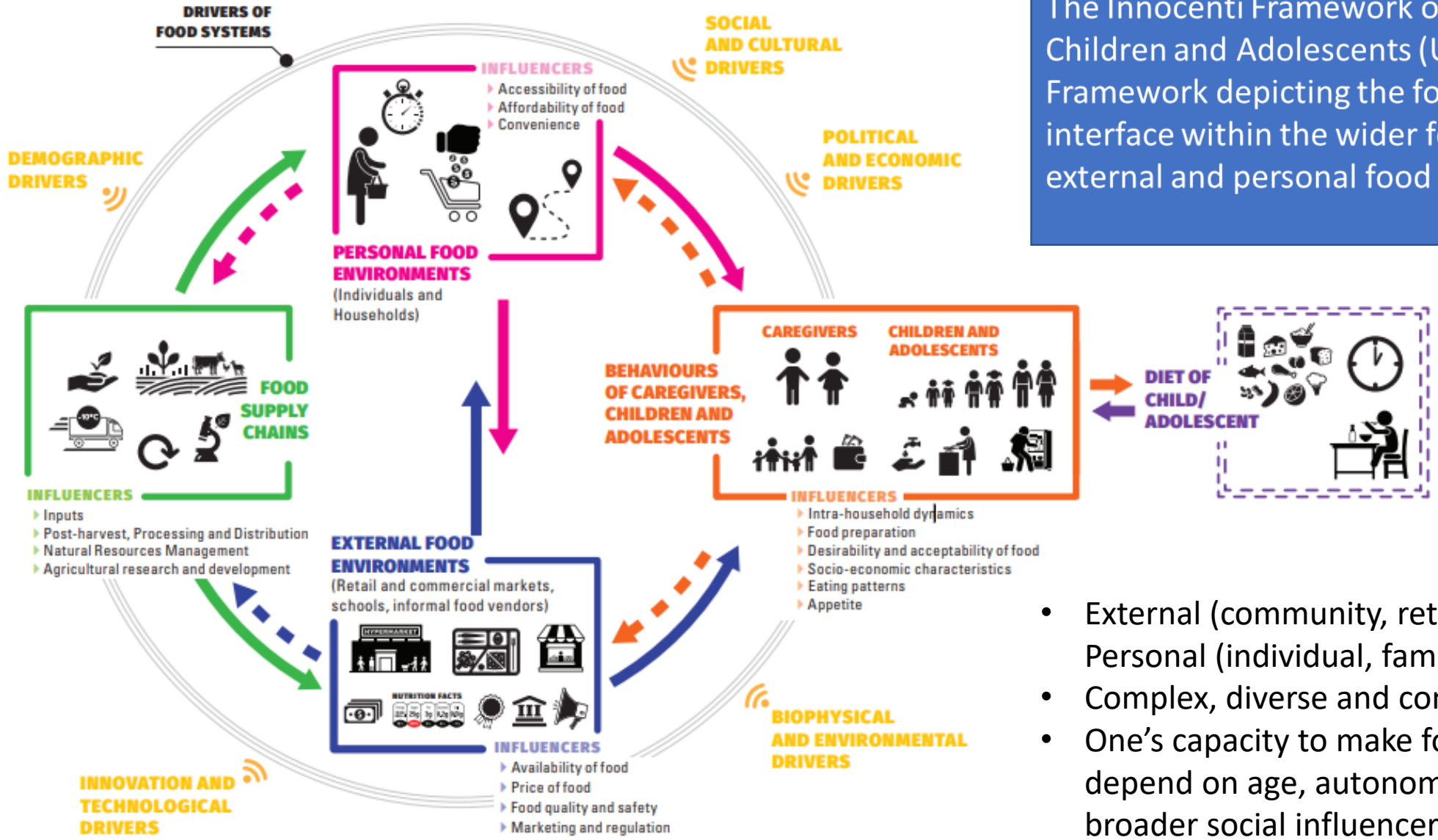
Gaps and Priorities for Adolescent Food Environments in SSA

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Adolescent Food Environments in SSA

- How can the food environment be defined and conceptualized in a way that captures food acquisition and consumption among adolescents in SSA?
- How can existing knowledge and evidence be leveraged to improve adolescents' food environment in SSA?
- What are the main gaps and priorities in doing so?

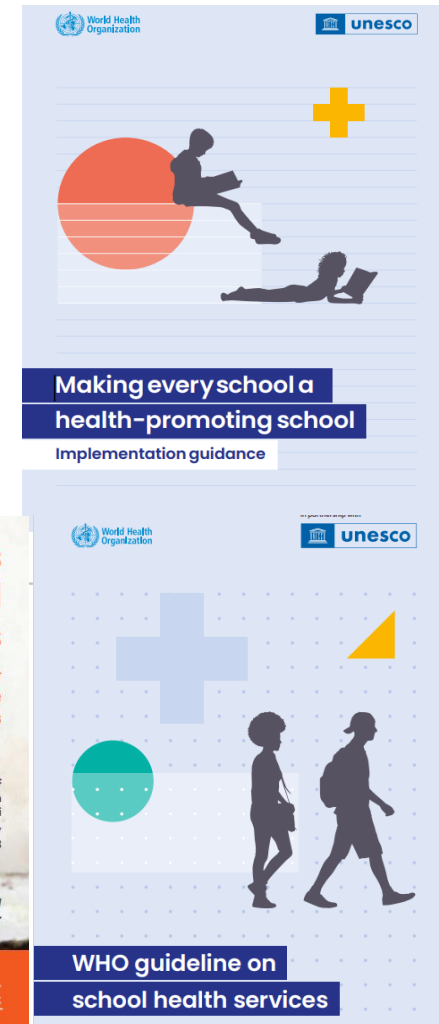
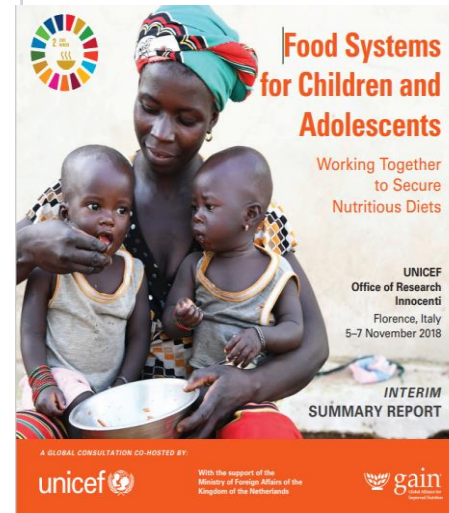
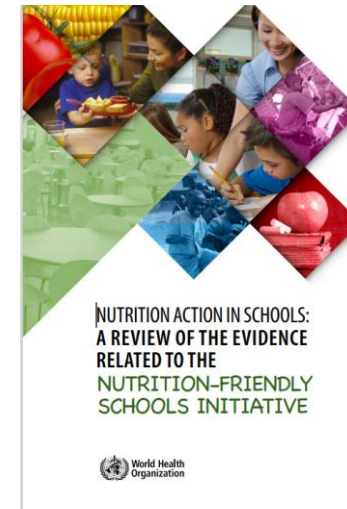
The Innocenti Framework on Food Systems for Children and Adolescents (UNICEF/GAIN 2019): Framework depicting the food environment as an interface within the wider food system and mapping external and personal food environment domains



- External (community, retail and schools) and Personal (individual, family and household)
- Complex, diverse and context specific
- One's capacity to make food choices, which may depend on age, autonomy and opportunities, and broader social influencers, such as power dynamics, gender norms, wealth gaps and governance structures

School health and nutrition environment: A multi-country survey in Five countries of Africa region: Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, South Africa, Sudan, and Tanzania

- Multi-country cross-sectional survey - health, nutrition, and food environments of public primary schools in five urban settings in Africa region
- Evaluated (1) policy environment, guidelines, and school curricula, (2) provision of health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services (3) the school food environments and eating habits of adolescents.
- 79 schools, 79 school administrators, 399 food vendors, and 4999 in-school adolescents.
- Gaps in policy, suboptimal facilities and services, inadequate / unregulated food environment / food vendors + Recommendations



Gaps & Priorities – Evidence to translate global frameworks

- Majority of food environment research has been conducted in high-income countries
- Limited number of intervention studies disaggregating data to isolate the effects of food environments on specific age groups
- Few studies from SSA focus on school environment - missing a substantial proportion of out of school adolescents
- Most research has focused on anthropometric outcomes such as body mass index and weight status in response to the rising burden of obesity and overweight, and diet-related NCDs in this population – missing other relevant outcomes (Education, WASH, SP, etc)
- How to institutionalize proven interventions – context / existing systems and platforms

Food environment interventions targeting children and adolescents: (Global food security 2020)

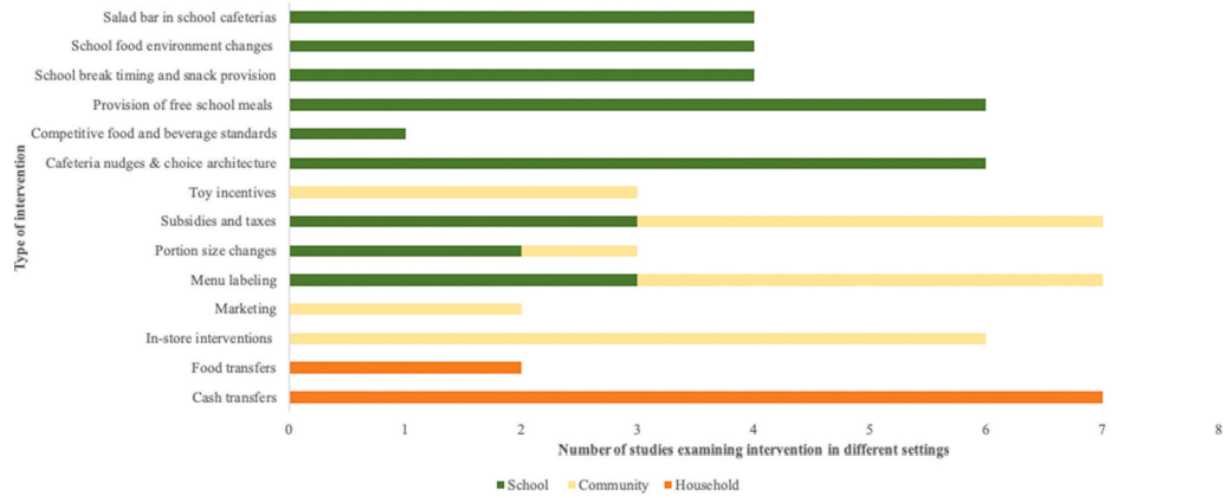


Fig. 3. An overview of the different interventions examined in school, community and household settings in the studies that were included in our review (not including systematic reviews used to cover content).

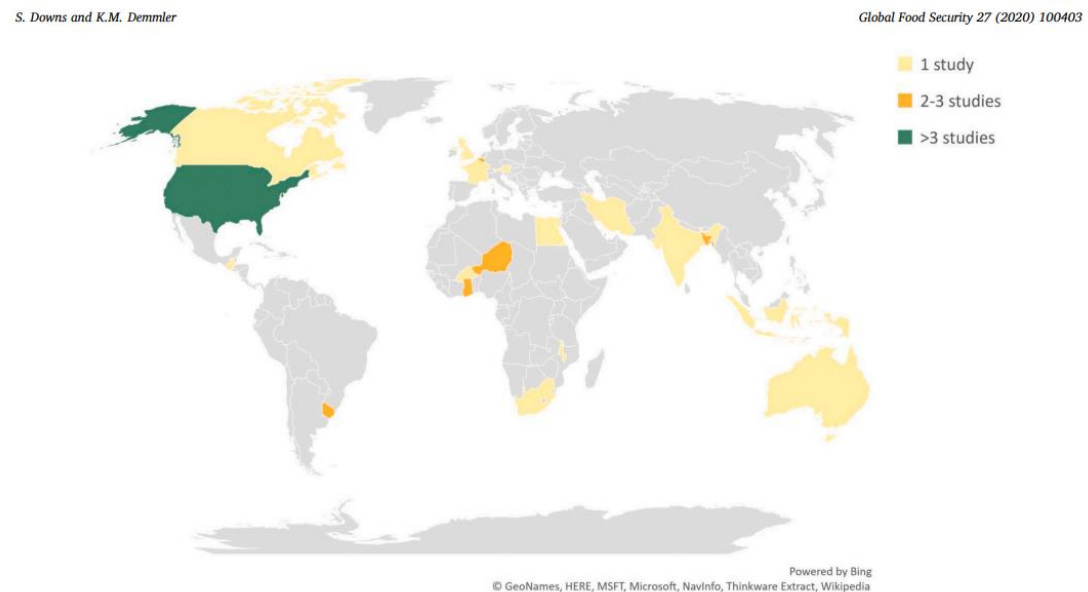


Fig. 2. Geographical distribution of the 64 studies reviewed in this article. Number of studies in the highlighted countries ranged from 1 to 39.

Gaps & Priorities – Investing in evidence/context - based research and policy actions

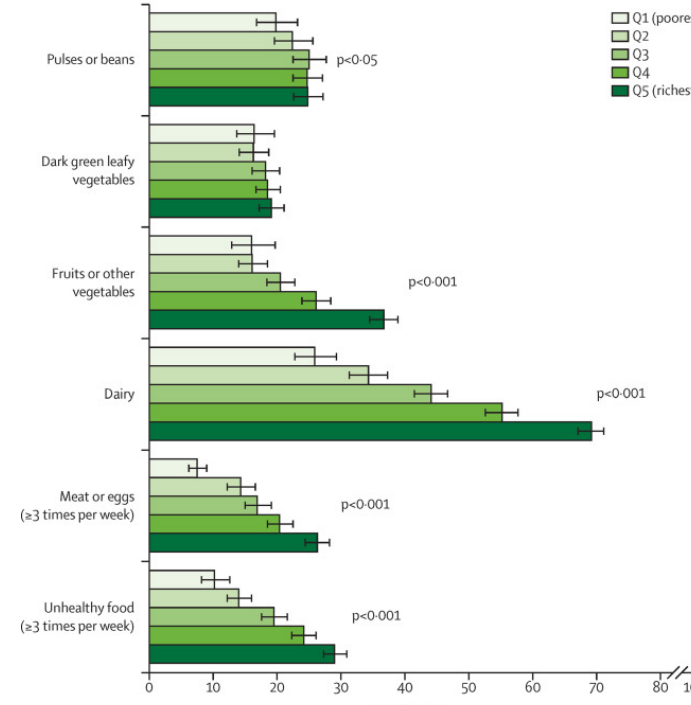
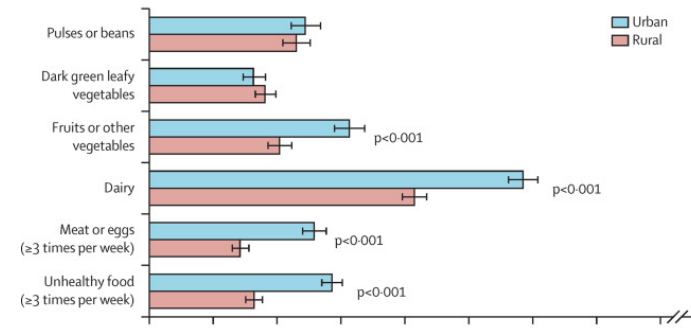
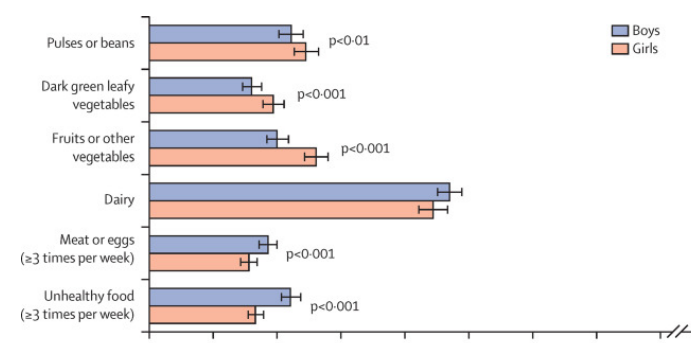
- Develop standardized metrics / measurements: Food environment measures and indicators relevant to adolescents in SSA should be;
 - (1) specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely
 - (2) applicable, valid and cross-context equivalent across diverse geographies to enable accurate comparisons across countries
 - (3) able to translate to drive policy action and implementation
- Generate context specific evidence / data & frameworks to inform programming to improve food environment for adolescents in SSA
- Societal inequities related to gender, socioeconomic status, urban /rural

Gaps & Priorities – Engaging key actors

- Engaging business and private sector / Other sectoral ministries - produce and market - healthier, safe and more sustainable food and beverage products, as well as to comply with international and national codes of conduct regarding production, packaging and labelling, and marketing and promotion to adolescents
- Driving investments in technological innovation and advancement in agriculture and food manufacturing. Example - reformulation efforts to reduce levels of sodium and sugars, eliminate trans-fats, strengthen large-scale food fortification
- Identify the incentives and disincentives that encourage actors across food supply chains and food environments to protect, promote and support healthy diets for adolescents;

Gaps & Priorities - Adolescent autonomy and the food environment

- Adolescents have a lot to say about why they eat what they eat, and the factors that might motivate them to change
- Food choice at the intersection of adolescent development, sociocultural context, and the food environment
- Explore influences on adolescent dietary intake and food choice



Prevalence of intake at least once per day (except as indicated) of different food groups among Indian adolescents (2016-18)

Food choice in transition: adolescent autonomy, agency, and the food environment, The Lancet 2022