



EAT Stockholm Food Forum 2018

Background Paper

Urban Food Environments: Making Healthy and Sustainable Societies the Default for Children

DISRUPTIVE DIALOGUE CO-ORGANIZED BY EAT, C40 & GEHL

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized, making it crucial to ensure that children who live in cities have easy access to healthy and sustainable food.

This session investigates how to shape the urban food environment to make sure healthy diets become the default for children. A diverse audience including city officials, urban planners, researchers, food retailers and international organizations will explore how to build healthier communities.

There are already examples of success, such as Mexico's tax on sugary drinks, Brazil's requirement that schools buy produce from smallholder farms and London's ban on fast-food outlets near schools. There are also ongoing efforts by cities such as Copenhagen to find effective means to influence their food environments, including through an increased focus on school kitchens.

Various approaches hold great potential to make the shift toward healthier societies for children, including:

- Promoting breastfeeding and providing safe public spaces for new mothers to breastfeed, particularly in the first six months as recommended by the World Health Organization and UNICEF
- Providing access for families with young children who due to a lack of time often struggle to get to places where they can buy or grow healthy and sustainable food
- Supporting community gardens and other small-scale, local urban farming opportunities that directly provide food, offer educational opportunities and promote culture change; taxes and subsidies can have a large impact here
- Using social media and campaigns on public transport and in food stores to help shift culture, norms and behavior to promote healthy recipes and easy, affordable ways to feed young children
- Restricting marketing of junk food and breast-milk substitute in the city, including advertising displays that target toddlers and children in local shops and banning sponsorship at children's events run by local authorities

Attention also needs to be paid to shaping the food environment for pregnant women and young children before the school years. A growing body of evidence shows that poor nutrition and weight gain during pregnancy as well as excessive infant and pre-schooler weight gain



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increases the risk of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) later in childhood and in life.

These measures often require efforts from several stakeholders, including in food service and retail as well as policymakers, civil society, community leaders and urban planners.

The discussion will share what has been effective, new approaches and levers and identify which stakeholders need to be involved, uncovering what works across sectors and regions to propel further in-depth efforts. The session will explore what an effective package of actions by different actors should look like and what will be required by local and national authorities to enable private actors (business and civil society) to increase access to better food options for children. We will also look at how to use social movements and media to stimulate change among parents and children.

The session builds on a December 2017 workshop held at the Gehl offices in Copenhagen and a side event integrating the childhood nutrition and cities agendas at the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur in February 2018. Approaches emerging from the session can feed into existing EAT initiatives, including the C40 Food Systems Network, Children Eating Well in collaboration with UNICEF, the EU CO-CREATE program empowering young people to take local obesity prevention actions, the FReSH business solutions program and the Global Chefs Network. There is also the potential to develop new collaborations on urban food environments at the regional level.

Potential outcomes include:

- Identify what local and national governments can do to provide the best policy environments
- Facilitate the emergence of new approaches to bring in new actors, such as urban planners, designers and social media influencers
- Set the stage for cities and private-sector engagement, particularly through retail and food services, focusing on children and the urban food environment
- Highlight synergies between programs and communities to build on the World Urban Forum side event “How can cities help provide healthy and sustainable foods to children”