

Symposium

Making Healthy Choices Possible: Enabling Environments for Adolescent Diet and Physical Activity

A hybrid symposium for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers

Date	Tuesday, 10 November 2026
Time	13:30–17:30 CET
Format	Hybrid – in person & online
Location	 Amsterdam UMC, location VU – MF building, room C076 & online
Registration	link
Contact	b.e.semagn@amsterdamumc.nl

The symposium is supported by a grant from the Amsterdam Public Health (APH) Global Health Program. The grant was awarded to Birhan Ewunu Semagn, a GROW Marie Skłodowska–Curie PhD Fellow at Amsterdam UMC (UvA location).

Symposium overview

Aim

This symposium brings together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss which enabling-environment interventions should be prioritized for adolescent diet and physical activity, and how they can be implemented effectively across different settings and contexts. We also hope to explore potential opportunities for future collaboration and funding in this area.

The symposium is open to anyone with an interest in this topic.

Why attend?

By the end of the afternoon, you will be able to:

- 1 Identify what to implement and how**
Four leading researchers will present evidence on enabling environments for adolescent diet and physical activity, covering food environments, retail, policy, and real-world implementation.
- 2 From evidence to action**
Learn about a co-created, global, action-oriented framework for adolescent nutrition, and apply the socioecological model in an expert-guided co-creation session.
- 3 Shape what comes next**
Connect with researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and help explore opportunities for future collaboration and funding.

Program

Time	Session / Presentation	Speakers
13:30–14:00	Walk-in & registration— coffee/tea	—
14:00–14:15	Welcome & Opening Overview: Systems that shape adolescent diet and physical activity: components of an enabling environment	Birhan Ewunu
14:15–15:30	Evidence Panel: What to implement and how?	
14:15–14:30	Food Environments: How do we make them disease-preventing and health-promoting?	Prof.Amos Laar
14:30–14:45	The supermarket of the future: 1000 tiny nudges or 1 big change?	Dr. Elke Godden
14:45–15:00	From Best Buys to Real-World Impact: Creating Enabling Environments for Adolescent Health in Kenya and Ghana (the Generation H project)	Dr. Erik Beune
15:00–15:15	Can Adolescents Make Healthy Choices in Unhealthy Food Environments? Evidence and Policy Priorities from Kenya	Dr. Caroline Karugu
15:15–15:30	Panel discussion	Moderated by Martha Nassali
15:30–15:45	Refreshment break	—
15:45–16:00	From evidence to action— A co-created, global action-oriented framework for adolescent nutrition	Dr Sara Estecha Querol
16:00–17:00	Interactive Co-Creation Session— identify and prioritize key determinants, relevant actors, and potential actions across interpersonal, organizational, community, and societal levels	Brandon Victor & Yannick Oldert
17:00–17:30	Closing & Next Steps— synthesis of the day, introduction of the working group (QR code), and opportunities for future collaboration and funding	Birhan Ewunu & all speakers



Prof. Amos Laar

Professor of Public Health Nutrition and Head, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health, University of Ghana

Amos Laar is Professor of Public Health Nutrition and Head of the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health at the University of Ghana. His research seeks to transform food environments into settings that prevent disease and promote health, while examining how social, commercial, and structural forces shape health outcomes. He has published over 200 scholarly works, including in *The Lancet*, *Nature Food*, *BMJ Global Health*, and *Food Policy*. A regional food policy expert, he led the Healthier Diets for Healthy Lives Project, which supported the Government of Ghana in developing a nutrient profiling system and four food-based policies covering unhealthy food marketing restrictions, front-of-pack nutrition labelling, public food procurement, and food-related fiscal measures. In 2023, he led a coalition of academics and civil society organizations in successful advocacy on food-related health taxes in Ghana. He served as President of the African Nutrition Society (2016–2020), currently convives the Food Environment Research Network (FERN), and is a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences.



Presentation: Food Environments: How do we make them disease-preventing and health-promoting?



Dr. Elke Godden

Research Associate, Department of Public and Occupational Health, Amsterdam UMC

Elke Godden is a research associate in the Department of Public and Occupational Health at Amsterdam UMC. With a background in biosystems engineering and a PhD in Applied Economic Sciences from the University of Antwerp, her work adopts a complex systems science perspective to study supermarkets as an important component of the food system. In collaboration with the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University of Amsterdam, she studies business models for the healthy supermarket of the future.



Presentation: The supermarket of the future: 1000 tiny nudges or 1 big change?



Dr. Erik Beune

Assistant Professor, Department of Public and Occupational Health, Amsterdam UMC

Erik Beune is an assistant professor in the Department of Public and Occupational Health at Amsterdam UMC. Trained in interdisciplinary social science and physiotherapy, his work centres on developing, implementing, and evaluating culturally sensitive interventions for cardiovascular disease risk factors, with a focus on disadvantaged populations and multicultural urban settings. He has extensive experience in international collaboration in Ghana, Kenya, and Europe, and has led several EU-funded projects, including RODAM and EuroDHYAN. He currently leads the Generation-H project.



Presentation: From Best Buys to Real-World Impact: Creating Enabling Environments for Adolescent Health in Kenya and Ghana (the Generation H project)

Speakers

02 / 03



Dr. Sara Estecha Querol

Public Health and Nutrition Researcher

Sara Estecha Querol is a public health and nutrition researcher with more than twelve years of international experience in nutrition, programme evaluation, and operational research across academic and humanitarian settings. She holds a PhD in Health Sciences from the University of Warwick, UK. She led the development of a global, action-oriented framework for adolescent nutrition, created together with researchers, practitioners, and young people.



Presentation: A co-created, global action-oriented framework for adolescent nutrition



Dr. Caroline Karugu

Statistician and Researcher, Chronic Diseases Management Unit, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi

Caroline Karugu is a statistician and researcher in the Chronic Diseases Management Unit, African Population and Health Research Center in Nairobi. She holds a PhD in Epidemiology and Public Health from Amsterdam UMC. Her research focuses on food environments and the prevention of noncommunicable diseases in Africa, generating evidence to inform food and nutrition policies. Her work has examined the availability and marketing of foods in school and retail environments, food marketing through mass media, and ultra-processed food consumption and its implications for cardiometabolic health.



Presentation: Can Adolescents Make Healthy Choices in Unhealthy Food Environments? Evidence and Policy Priorities from Kenya



Martha Nassali — Panel Moderator

PhD Candidate, Amsterdam UMC (Marie Skłodowska-Curie GROW COFUND programme)

Martha Nassali is a PhD candidate at Amsterdam UMC under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie GROW COFUND programme. A medical doctor from Uganda, her current research focuses on exploring noncommunicable disease risk among urban youth living in informal settlements in sub-Saharan Africa. She will moderate the panel discussion.



Role: Panel Moderator





Brandon Victor

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow and PhD Candidate, INDEEP Project

Brandon Victor is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow and PhD candidate within the INDEEP project. His research explores how researchers can best combine co-creation, theory, and evidence to create impactful and sustainable physical activities for interventions. He is also developing an INDEEP toolkit that integrates determinant knowledge and a systems perspective to guide European researchers and practitioners in intervention development. He will facilitate the interactive co-creation session.



Session: Interactive Co-Creation Session — Socioecological Model-Based



Birhan Ewunu Semagn — Organizer

PhD Candidate, Amsterdam UMC (Marie Skłodowska-Curie GROW COFUND programme)

Birhan Ewunu Semagn is a PhD candidate at Amsterdam UMC under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie GROW COFUND programme. His research focuses on promoting cardiometabolic health across the life course, combining life-course epidemiology, implementation science, and public health. Within the Generation-H project, he works on the implementation evaluation of enabling environment interventions for improving adolescents' dietary and physical activity behaviours, and he uses the RODAM cohort to study cardiometabolic health among adults of sub-Saharan African origin. He is the organizer of the symposium.



Role: Organizer



Speakers

Yannick Oldert

PhD Candidate, Amsterdam UMC

Yannick Oldert is a PhD candidate in the Public and Occupational Health department at Amsterdam UMC. In his research, he applies systems thinking to better understand the complexities of promoting physical activity in adolescents. His PhD is part of INDEEP (INtervention on the DEterminants of, and Expertise in, Physical activity behaviours), a European Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Network. The network trains ten early-stage researchers and develops an evidence-based toolbox for designing physical activity interventions that take the complexity of behavior into account.



Session: Interactive Co-Creation Session — Socioecological Model-Based



Registration & Practical Information



Registration

Registration is free of charge. Please register via the [link](#) and indicate whether you will attend in person or online:

Or scan the QR code:



**Please register by
3 November 2026.**



Attending online

- The symposium will be streamed live via Microsoft Teams.
- The joining link will be shared by email with everyone who has registered, one week before the symposium.
- No Teams account or software installation is required — you can join directly through your browser.
- We recommend joining 10 minutes early to test your audio and video.
- Questions can be submitted via the chat throughout the symposium; a colleague will relay them to the speakers and moderator.
- The interactive co-creation session includes online participation via [Mentimeter / Miro — link shared during the session].



Location & directions

Amsterdam UMC, location VU — MF building, room C076. De Boelelaan 1117, Amsterdam

The MF building is a short walk from Amsterdam Zuid station and the VU medical centre metro stop. From the main entrance, follow the signs to the MF building: room C076 is located on the ground floor.



Funding & Acknowledgements

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This booklet was authored and prepared by Birhan Ewunu Semagn. With sincere appreciation to all speakers, colleagues, and collaborators for their time, expertise, and contributions to the symposium.

Making healthy choices possible for adolescents
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

We look forward to welcoming you in person or online.