

Terms of Reference

Sharing the Dutch local government experience combatting youth obesity

Specialist in nutrition / healthy policy and public private partnerships

Support to the Netherlands Working Group on International Nutrition (NWGN) in the collection, organisation and analysis of information and experiences on policy approaches of Dutch local (municipal) governments in combatting youth obesity from a whole-systems perspective

Duration: 30 days between 15 Sept 2020 and 15 February 2021

Location: The Netherlands

Background

Over half of the world's population live in cities. By 2050, it is expected that almost 7 out of 10 people will reside in urban areas, with 90% of this growth occurring in Africa and Asia. Urbanisation is linked to increasing rates of overweight and obesity, yet undernutrition is also prevalent in cities. These cities are confronted by an increasingly complex challenge to address malnutrition (over- and undernutrition) in all its forms.

Malnutrition and its related determinants are considered wicked health problems. Their drivers are multiple, diverse, complex and dynamic, ranging from biological factors and personal factors to aspects of the physical, economic, socio-cultural and political environments. Since there are no straightforward causal relationships to wicked problems such as obesity, we need to tackle them "through interactions of multiple levels within systems relevant to population health."¹ In search for successful overweight and obesity prevention, extensive research has shown that programs focused on individual behavior change or programs that aim to direct an intervention at multiple levels are not effective enough and other approaches that take into account the systems are needed.

The WHO Independent High-Level Commission on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) states that local government, i.e. cities, have an important role in taking a systematic approach to fostering people's health. In line with this report, in 2013 the city of Amsterdam launched an ambitious local program to eliminate childhood obesity in Amsterdam by 2033. The Amsterdam Healthy Weight Approach (AHWA) takes a whole-systems approach by addressing childhood obesity at all levels of council policies and implementation, and also works at the levels of professionals, communities and individuals. A decline in overweight and obesity in children aged 2-18 years in Amsterdam from 2017 may suggest that the AHWP was successful, although there is no direct correlation between the impact of the programme and the (local) health data. Currently, more research is being conducted to measure the impact.² Next to Amsterdam, about 145 other Dutch municipalities are applying an integral community-based approach to address youth obesity following the Jongeren Op Gezond

¹ Sniehotta et al. Complex systems and individual-level approaches to population health: a false dichotomy? The Lancet 2017. Rutter et al. The need for a complex systems model of evidence for public health. The Lancet 2017

² https://assets.amsterdam.nl/publish/library/93/factsheet_amsterdam_def_2019.pdf

Gewicht (JOGG) approach.³ To maintain the sense of urgency and jointly work on taking further action to prevent childhood overweight and obesity, Amsterdam and other Dutch municipalities, are working together with JOGG to share learnings and collaborate with each other, the national government, NGO's and the food industry.

During 2018/2019 the NWGN, the City of Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), GAIN and SUN discussed how the "urban nutrition" experiences of the Netherlands and SUN countries can be leveraged. In follow-up discussions it became clear that bringing a broad range of stakeholders together and sharing learnings from other countries with Dutch stakeholders and identifying lessons from the Netherlands would fill a gap in how to design, implement and evaluate complex systems approaches. Although local government, i.e. cities, have an important role in taking a systematic approach to fostering people's health, it seems there is a lack of exchange of approaches, experiences and lessons learned between Dutch municipalities but also between other countries.

Purpose of work

To collect, organise and analyse information and experiences on approaches of Dutch local (municipal) governments in combatting youth obesity from a whole-systems perspective and share the gathered learnings on effective approaches among (local) governments in other countries, in particular in LMICs.

Objectives

- Conduct a literature review to identify published evaluations of project experiences, including a compilation of reports, papers, cases and lessons learnt published in the grey literature, including a compilation of ongoing (but not published) process- and impact evaluations research.
- Organise stakeholder discussions (a.o. local (municipal) and national (Ministry of Health) policy makers, community works and others as deemed appropriate) to discuss experiences, bottlenecks and possible solutions.
- Analyse, organise and report upon the information obtained from previous activities in such a way that they form insightful learnings in an international context.
- Include a dissemination plan including:
 - Ideas on how to disseminate this work amongst governments in other countries, in particular LMICs
 - the options to publish this evaluation in a peer-reviewed journal

Scope

- Limit the focus on youth obesity.
- Include all factors (whole systems perspective) but with emphasis on food and nutrition.
- Include a dissemination plan focused on how to best disseminate amongst governments in other countries, in particular LMICs, and including the options to publish this evaluation in a peer-reviewed journal.

³ For more information see JOGG website <https://jongerenopgezondgewicht.nl/jogg-aanpak/gemeentenoverzicht>

- Outcomes of the evaluation will be made available to the international community at the N4G summit (Tokyo, Dec 2021) and can also inform the UN Global Food Systems Summit in 2021.

Constraints

- Time: the work needs to be conducted between 15 September 2020 and 15 February 2021 so that it can inform commitment making from cities for N4G as well as be presented at the Summit itself.
- Content: The project will limit itself to local government policies that are targeted to reduce overweight and obesity in children and adolescents in the Netherlands.
- Estimated workload for lead consultant max. 30 working days.
- The consultancy contract will be issued by UNICEF NL

Assumptions

- The consultant / learning organisation will lead the process but if useful we could ask NWGN knowledge institute partners (Wageningen UR, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), University of Groningen, Hogeschool Den Bosch) for students to contribute to this evaluation process
- Access to experts can be arranged via NWGN members or the network of Jongeren op Gezond Gewicht.

Risks

The applicant should include a risk analysis and mitigation plans including the following risks:

- Difficult to organise group discussions – covid-19
- Policy officers at municipalities might have to focus on adjusting to covid-19 and therefore might not be able to cooperate on this research

Deliverables and timings

- Deadline applications [31 Aug 2020]
- Selection, confirmation and contracting [15 Sept 2020]
- Detailed project proposal including detailed research methodology [30 Sep 2020]
- Workshops and information meetings [15 Dec 2020]
- Draft report [31 Jan 2021]
- Final report [15 Feb 2021]

Application requirements

E-mail your 1) motivation letter, 2) CV with relevant qualifications and evidence of experience with similar type of work and 3) Outline of work plan, time lines and budget to the NWGN (email info@the-NWGN.org), with “application Urban Learnings” in the subject.