

How are adolescents participating in the transformation of healthy food environments? A scoping review of global policies, guidelines, and interventions.

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Background:

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF are advocating for adolescents to play a central role in transforming food environments. Adolescence (aged 10-19-years, defined by WHO) is a pivotal life stage that presents both risks and opportunities for optimal nutrition with lasting intergenerational impacts. Adolescents have a right to be involved in decisions impacting them and ensuring their wellbeing is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is unknown to what extent adolescents have participated in food environment policies, guidelines or interventions that impact them. We aimed to investigate the extent, impact and processes that enable adolescent participation in transforming healthy food environments.

Methods:

A scoping review of six databases (MEDLINE, Embase, Eric, Cinahl, Scopus, Web of Science) was undertaken on 6th May 2024. Included studies address how adolescents participated in improving food environments, mapped through the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index including: i) food composition and nutritional quality, ii) food labelling, iii) food promotion, iv) food pricing, v) food retail, and vi) food trade and investment. Youth advisors are informing each stage of this review.

Results:

9702 studies were retrieved for dual title and abstract screening. We will present the results of the extent of adolescent participation in improving healthy food environments. This will include a) analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of adolescents participating (e.g. age, ethnicity, socio-economic status), and b) methods used for participation (e.g. youth-led, collaborative, consultative), and c) impact of participation, which will be synthesised via narrative synthesis including any wellbeing outcomes (e.g. leadership, resilience, self-esteem). Additionally, we will present the barriers and enablers influencing meaningful adolescent participation.

Conclusions:

Historically, adolescents have not been meaningfully engaged in policies impacting them. The findings of this review will provide evidence of how adolescents are participating in transforming food environments, central to achieving the SDGs.

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