

PRESS BRIEFING: STATEMENT ON THE ACCRA URBAN ADOLESCENT NUTRITION STUDY

It has come to the attention of the University of Ghana that, there is uncertainty and misinformation regarding adolescent research (the Accra Urban Adolescent Nutrition Study) that is being implemented by the School of Public Health of the University of Ghana. We are, by this statement, seeking to provide information about the study to the public and to address any doubts that anyone may have about the study.

The University of Ghana in partnership with the International Food Policy Research Institute, are jointly implementing the Accra Urban Adolescent Nutrition Study. The study seeks to describe the nutritional status, dietary intake, physical activity patterns, and food environment of about 1,000 adolescents (ages 12-19 years) from low- and middle-class households in 10 selected neighbourhoods in the Greater Accra Region. The selected communities are Chorkor, Abelemkpe, South La, New Mamprobi, Achimota, Old Nungua, West Legon, Kokomlemle, New Town, and Nungua. The study has two main components:

1. A community-based component involving interviews with adolescents and their parents/guardians and will involve laboratory sample collection, and diet analysis. During this time, they will be given a belt fixed with a device (accelerometer and GPS) to collect data on their physical activity and movement trajectories over a seven-day period. During school days, they will be expected to wear the belt with the devices under their school uniform to school.
2. A School-based component involving interviews with school heads to understand the school food environment (food vending, food provisioning, school policy of food, food advertising and promotion on the school compound, etc).

The study has been approved and is supported by the Noguchi memorial Institute for Medical Research's Institutional Review Board, the Ghana Health Service, and the Ghana Education Service. In line with international best practices and ethics of human subjects research, every child who participates must have both the parent/caregiver and the child give written informed consent and assent (that is their permission) for the household to be eligible for the study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Further, children who participate, first provide information on their diet in the past 24-hours. They are then handed the accelerometer and GPS devices to wear over the course of a 7-day period, except when they are sleeping. During this 7-day period, the adolescents are invited to a central location in the community where trained biomedical scientists take a small amount of blood sample for laboratory assessment of their nutrient status.

As outlined above, the study does not recruit just anyone for inclusion. They have to meet clear inclusion criteria for age, location, and consent. Further, the devices and procedures are not intended to harm the children in any way. It is false that the devices given in the study are being used to track/monitor the children with ill-intent. On the contrary, the findings of the study will inform national policy and programmes on adolescent nutrition in Ghana.

The public is invited to contact **Professor Richmond Aryeetey (the Project Lead, Ghana), School of Public Health (via 0509301717)** with any questions they may have regarding this research.