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Assessment of school policies and environment in promoting physical activity and nutrition toward prevention of non-communicable diseases among school age children in Moshi municipality, Tanzania

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Non communicable diseases are emerging rapidly in developing countries, while at the same time communicable diseases are still a challenge. In this study, we assessed the school policies and environment on promoting physical activities and nutrition in schools. This was a cross sectional study conducted in Moshi municipality. School policies were assessed through interviews with head teachers; information collected was on school policy, physical education and nutrition. School environment: playgrounds, competitive foods and sport equipment were assessed using an observation checklist. Anthropometric measurements; height and weight were taken from 1,255 pupils aged 9 to 16 years. IOTF values were used to categorize school children as normal, overweight or obese. Prevalence of overweight/ obesity was determined. School environments were conducive to allow different types of games to take place. 88% of the schools had playgrounds and 80% of the pupils were participating in physical activities. 32% had designated area for parking bicycles. Competitive foods such as chips, fried cassavas, doughnuts and sugary beverages (juice and cola) were found either within or nearby school compounds; however there were no misleading or marketing adverts. The prevalence of overweight /obesity was higher in private schools 18.6% (95% CI 13.6 to 23.0), while both overweight/obesity (4.8% (95% CI 3.5-6.2)) and underweight (10.4% (CI 8.7 to 12.1)) were found to be prevalent in government schools. Tanzania is in early transitioning period, with a coexistence of both under nutrition and over nutrition. Public health strategies targeting school children and their physical environments are needed to prevent the emergence of NCDs and their risk factors including overweight and obesity.

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Biography

Mary V Mosha is a Tanzanian citizen, currently working as a lecturer in Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College Moshi, Tanzania. She has a wide experience in research for more than 10 years in the fields of malaria, childhood cataracts, reproductive health, nutrition and non-communicable diseases. She recently graduated from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine with Master of Science in Nutrition for Global Health. As a lecturer in the Community Health Department, she teach courses on community medicine and nutrition, mentor students in the MPH program and Medical College, and am involved in a range of research activities.

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