



AGRESSIVE PROMOTION AND HIGH CONSUMPTION OF COMMERCIALY PRODUCED SNACK FOODS IN DAKAR/SENEGAL

Research Findings and Recommendations

Malnutrition remains a critical challenge in Senegal where 19% of children under five are stunted and 60% are anemic. Less than one out of ten Senegalese children 6-23 months of age meet the minimum standard in terms of infant and young child feeding indicators, including adequate feeding frequency, minimum dietary diversity and consumption of breastmilk or other milks. During the critical complementary feeding period, a diet that meets these basic standards is required for optimal early child growth and development.

The aggressive promotion of commercially produced snack foods widely available in the market is of big concern. The consumption of such energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods that are high in sugar or salt, or trans fatty acids can negatively impact the nutritional status of young children. Early introduction of such foods can undermine optimal breastfeeding practices and also influence dietary preferences later in life, thereby increasing the risk of overweight/obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases into adulthood. Yet, information on the promotion and consumption of commercially produced snack foods in countries around the world is limited.

Helen Keller International, through the Assessment & Research on Child Feeding (ARCH) project, assessed the consumption of commercially produced foods, including snack foods amongst children 6-23 of age in Dakar Department/ Senegal and mothers' exposure to promotions for these products. This study was conducted to help inform the development of programs and policies around improved infant and young child feeding at both national and global level.

ARCH KEY FINDINGS¹

A wide range of commercially produced snack foods, including savory and sugary, are available in Dakar, Senegal:



Soft drink



Candy



Biscuit



Cake



Chips

¹ Feeley, A. B., Coly, A. N., SY, N. Y., Diop, E. I., Pries, A. M., Champeny, M., . . . Huffman, S. L. (2016). Promotion and consumption of commercially produced foods among children: situation analysis in an urban setting in Senegal. *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, 12, 64-76. doi:10.1111/mcn.12304

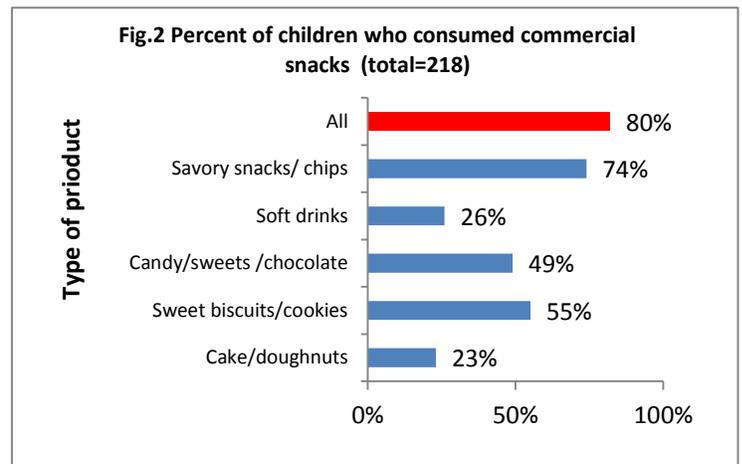
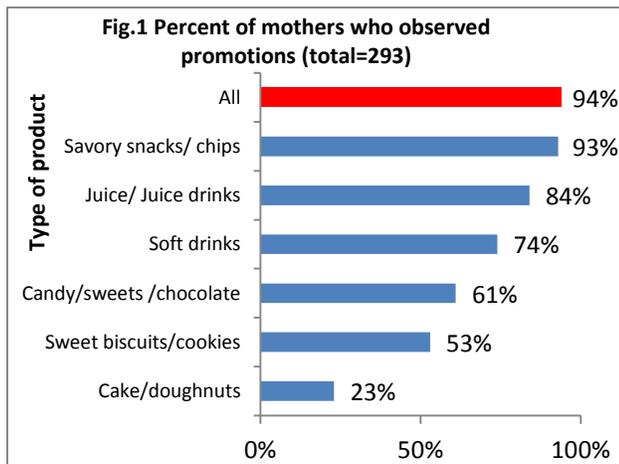


Only one-third of children in this study had a minimally acceptable diet (defined as consuming at least four food groups and the minimum number of meals depending on age and breastfeeding status). The promotion of commercially produced snack foods was common in Dakar (**fig.1**). Nearly all mothers in the study reported seeing promotions for commercially produced snack foods amongst which chips were the most commonly reported category (93%).

Consumption of these products by children aged 6-23 months was also prevalent (**fig.2**). In the previous week the majority (80%) had consumed a commercially produced snack food in which chips, previously reported most promoted, were also the most consumed (74%). A child's age was found to be significantly associated with commercial snack food consumption, with higher consumption among older children. The primary reason reported amongst mothers was because the "child likes it".

Nearly all mothers of children under two years of age reported having heard, seen or read a promotion for a commercially produced snack food

A high proportion of children 6-23 months of age consumed commercially produced snack foods on the week prior the interviews



POLICY IMPLICATION

ARCH findings showed high consumption of snack foods by children aged 6-23 months. The consumption of such high salt, sugar and trans fats foods during the critical complementary feeding period, can displace the consumption of more nutritious foods. Whilst the promotion of these foods has the potential to undermine progress towards improved child health and nutrition, Senegalese regulations don't specifically cover that. Based on these findings, the government may consider the following recommendations, amongst others, to ensure children receive the healthiest start to life:

- 1) Provide mothers with information on the health consequences of feeding young children commercial snack foods and on benefits of breastmilk and locally produced healthy complementary foods;
- 2) Fully implement the WHO set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and nonalcoholic beverages to children. A range of strategies should be implemented to limit the consumption by infants and young children of foods that are unsuitable for them;
- 3) Promote nutritious, convenient snack options during the complementary feeding period and discourage consumption of products high in sugar and salt, and low in nutrients;
- 4) Regulate marketing of these products to children and caregivers.