



#FixMyFood Campaign in China

I Want Healthier Food

Summary Report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our heartfelt thanks go to all the young people who generously shared their views and insights with the campaign. UNICEF also wishes to acknowledge the time, energy and wisdom that our partners brought to the #FixMyFood campaign to empower young people to advocate for healthier food environments. The report is developed by Dr. Geffrey Nan Li.

Dr. Ali Shirazi and Dr. Suying Chang provided direction and vital inputs. We thank colleagues in UNICEF China, Mr. Andrew Brown, Ms. Yang Jingjie and Ms. Wang Shidi for their technical assistance in reviewing this report. Also thanks to Mr. Michael Denison for his editorial assistance.

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#FixMyFood

我要更健康的食物 青年咨商工作坊



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Introduction

Children's health is being impacted by a flood of readily available cheap, ultra-processed food including sugar-sweetened beverages that is marketed aggressively to children and young people in China. To improve children's health and well-being, UNICEF is working to close the floodgates with the Government and other partners to create a food environment that promotes nutritious, affordable, appealing and sustainable diets.

In February 2023, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) launched a multi-year, multi-country campaign called [#FixMyFood](#). The campaign aims to empower youth to advocate for healthier food environments and to drive demand for effective government policies. As part of this campaign, UNICEF China built on its previous [#KnowYourFood campaign](#), which aimed to improve nutrition literacy among children, adolescents and parents and empower them to make informed decisions among the available food options. The 'I Want Healthier Food' campaign was implemented in China from 2 September to 14 October 2023.

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Objectives

UNICEF is committed to amplifying the voices of children and adolescents and protecting their right to proper nutrition. That's why we launched the [#FixMyFood](#) campaign, a youth-led movement that calls for a healthy food environment. Through this campaign, we want to empower young people to share their creative ideas and solutions for improving food options and urge governments to implement policies that support a healthy food environment.



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3 Design

UNICEF China's #FixMyFood campaign involved the Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP), Nutrition, and Communications teams and had two elements:

- Two consultation workshops with local youth in Beijing and Chengdu from 2-10 September 2023.
- An online rapid survey to collect young people's opinions on creating a healthy food environment from 5-12 September, followed by a data workshop with young people for data analysis.

Young people came up with innovative and practical solutions to create a healthy food environment and prevent child obesity. They expressed their ideas in comic-style posters that captured the key findings and recommendations.



I feel that the food environment around me is unhealthy. Because if I want to buy a healthy meal, I have to search all around, and spend lots of time and energy to find it.



Zeng Xiheng, 18, Chengdu



A lot of the time when you're using mobile apps, there will be advertisements, often with celebrity endorsements, or endorsements from recognizable branding and merchandising. If I'm a fan of that particular brand, then I'll be enticed to buy that food product.



Si Jiamu, 16, Beijing





I hope that the food environment around us will at least provide a healthy direction for adolescents. It should educate us to reject foods that are high in salt and sugar.



Feng Wanruo, 15, Beijing



I've noticed that in recent years, more milk tea shops have been popping up around my area, and milk tea contains a ton of sugar.



Fu Kejing, 21, Chengdu



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4 Results

Rapid online survey

A total of 1,297 responses were collected through an online survey.



Results of the online survey show that

- 1. Schools and families offer healthier food than shopping malls, supermarkets, and restaurants.** Young people are exposed to food advertisements mainly through short videos, social media, and e-commerce.
- 2. Young respondents' food choices depend on flavour, price, and its nutritional value.** They often see ads for fast food, snacks, and sugary drinks, but rarely for fresh food (e.g., water, pure juice, vegetables).
- 3. Despite knowing the health risks of ultra-processed food, more than half of the adolescents choose it for its easy availability, low cost, good taste, and mood enhancement.** Gender does not affect this behaviour significantly, but age does: 63 per cent of the 15-24 group always or usually buy ultra-processed food, compared to 50 per cent of the under-14 group.

Additionally, we found that other factors influence adolescents' food choices, such as peer pressure, sensory stimuli, advertisement, marketing, and accessibility.



Some of the challenges that prevent young people from choosing healthy food are

1. Food advertising that manipulates young people by using celebrities and frequent exposure on social media and short video platforms to endorse unhealthy food.
2. Food companies that use big data to target adolescents and young people with personalized advertisements that cater to their tastes and habits, influencing their food choices.
3. Food companies that prioritize profit over health, producing low cost, unhealthy food that is high in demand, and marketing it as beneficial or appealing to consumers.
4. Merchants that use premium placement and attractive packaging to lure adolescents into buying unhealthy food, making them overlook the potential harm of such food.
5. The lack of time and motivation to cook at home, which makes many young people rely on food delivery services that are convenient but often lack nutrition and quality.



青年的声音 Young People's Voices 想要的支持 The support we need



Young people need support

1. Young people expect the government to subsidize food companies for marketing healthy food, while forbidding highly processed snacks in certain places and regulating advertising of unhealthy food.
2. Young people hope that youth organizations will provide platforms for speaking out and launch social awareness campaigns.
3. Young people call for more independent experts' advice, public advocacy, and research related to ultra-processed-food from academic institutions to ensure consumers' rights to healthy food.
4. Young people look forward to healthy stores opening in schools to increase access to healthy food. They are also eager to express their opinions through suggestion boxes.



青年的声音 Young People's Voices 建议 Recommendations



Young people have proposed some innovative solutions to improve their health and nutrition

1. They recommend using artificial intelligence (AI) to create personalized menus based on their preferences and dietary needs. They also suggest using smart glasses to scan and identify the nutritional value and calorie content of the food they eat. Moreover, they envision inventing an implant that collects bio data, such as blood pressure, heart rate, and glucose level, and connects with their cell phone, so that they can monitor their health status and receive alerts or advice.
2. However, these technological innovations are not enough to ensure a healthy food environment for everyone. Therefore, young people also expect practical multi-sectoral collaborations to be made by the government, food companies, and relevant stakeholders. For example, adolescents hope that the government can use a 'Golden Cudgel', a reference to a magical staff in the Chinese novel, 'Journey to the West', to penalize businesses that contribute to overweight and obesity by producing or promoting unhealthy food. This indicates a call for more active governmental action to regulate unfettered food marketing and protect consumers' rights. In addition, they hope that the government can provide subsidies for healthy food, making it more affordable and accessible for low-income families and communities.
3. What's more, they hold a strong belief that only by establishing a clean environment and securing the sustainability of forest and oceans can a healthy food environment be guaranteed in the long term. They advocate for reducing pollution, preserving biodiversity, and combating climate change.

Two young people had the opportunity to present their posters at the Health Food City Symposium: Co-creating Urban Food Solutions for the Future Residents in September 2023, which aimed to develop a comprehensive city plan for improving food environments.



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We hope the Government can take measures to make our food environment healthier, and let us know what kinds of foods are genuinely healthy.



Zeng Xiheng, 18, Chengdu

Social Media Coverage

UNICEF also disseminated the findings by the young people to the public, through a press release and [social media videos](#) featuring the youth participants. The campaign generated 24 posts across various social media platforms, including Sina Weibo, WeChat, Douyin, Kuaishou, and Bilibili. These posts attracted a total of 916,579 views and 3,718 interactions from the online audience. Additionally, the campaign received 33 mentions from mainstream media outlets.

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Next Steps

The youth of today will be the adults and parents of tomorrow. They have a vested interest in ensuring that food systems are able to provide enough accessible healthy food in the future. Giving them a voice in policy discussions not only allows them to share their everyday experience of the food systems, but also gives them an opportunity to propose innovative solutions which may not yet have been considered by adult policy developers. Three next steps:

1. Establishing youth networks comprising individuals with a keen interest in improving city food environments and exploring collaborations with similar youth networks in other parts of China as well as other nations.
2. Identifying and nurturing youth "champions" who possess a deep passion for improving food environments and can lead their peers in pioneering advocacy initiatives.
3. Identifying opportunities for young people to actively participate in policy discussions, leveraging their potential as influential advocates for healthier cities.



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