



Bundesministerium  
für Ernährung  
und Landwirtschaft

## FENV Food environments for improved nutrition

*NaviNut : Enhancing women's agency in navigating changing food environments to improve child nutrition in African drylands*

<b>country/countries</b>	Benin, Kenya
<b>funding agency</b>	Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture – BMEL
<b>project management</b>	Federal Office for Agriculture and Food – BLE
<b>project coordinator</b>	German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL)
<b>project partner(s)</b>	In Benin: University of Parakou (UP), University of Abomey–Calavi (UAC), In Kenya: Center for Research and Development in Drylands (CRDD) Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development (TICH) Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

	<p>In Germany:</p> <p>South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Agriculture (SWUAS)</p> <p>Prolinnova – PROMoting Local INNOVAtion in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management</p>
<b>project budget</b>	1.111.628 Euro
<b>project duration</b>	09/2020 – 10/2023
<b>key words</b>	Child–feeding practices, traditional food products, nudging, mixed–methods, action research, positive deviance, behavioural change communication
<b>background</b>	<p>Global change processes induce complex transformations in African dryland societies. This strongly affects the nutritional situation of dryland inhabitants and makes it difficult for them to acquire balanced and healthy diets, resulting particularly in high malnutrition rates for children under 5 years.</p> <p>In most dryland areas, nutritional interventions (governmental / nongovernmental) have not achieved the intended improvements, also because the nutritional recommendations are not adopted. We see two main reasons for this failure: a) a lack of understanding as to why nutritional recommendations (e.g. increase dietary diversity) are not taken up by mothers, and b) a lack of year–round supply of highly nutritious food products in drylands. Both reasons underline the necessity to increase our understanding of consumers’ “personal food environment” (i.e. food accessibility, affordability, convenience, desirability) and how this influences child–feeding practices.</p> <p>In order to contribute to improved family and child nutrition and to more regular consumption of safe, nutritious and healthy foods in African drylands, NaviNut explicitly targets women in their different roles as i) mothers responsible for child and family nutrition and health; ii) value–chain actors in–</p>

	<p>involved in production and processing of highly nutritious traditional food products (TFPs); and iii) citizens whose perspectives and contextual needs must be considered in governmental service provision.</p>
<p><b>objective</b></p>	<p>NaviNut aims at enhancing women's agency in their different food-, nutrition- and health-related roles and at supporting their capacity to navigate their changing food environments.</p> <p>NaviNut's main objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) understand the complexity and dynamics of women's nutritional decision-making in child-feeding practices, including their purchase and consumption criteria;</li> <li>b) contribute to designing healthy food environments by increasing accessibility, convenience and desirability of locally available, highly nutritious TFPs with emphasis on consumer communication in order to nudge healthier purchase and consumption decisions;</li> <li>c) mobilise this knowledge to build capacity of community health volunteers (CHVs) and improve promoted child-nutrition and healthcare packages to better respond to contextual conditions as well as mother's needs and capacities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>short description</b></p>	<p>NaviNut investigates food systems in rural and periurban areas in the drylands of northern Kenya and northern Benin.</p> <p>In a transdisciplinary research approach, scientists of different disciplines, women in the study areas (in different roles as mothers, consumers/citizens and processors of TFPs) and other value-chain actors (e.g. community health personnel, social workers, kindergartens/schools, food processing micro- and small-scale enterprises (MSEs)) engage in multi-actor co-innovation processes. NaviNut seeks to identify and build on "positive deviance": innovation by women who use locally available resources to feed their children better than do other women in the same area. Peer-to-peer learning, participatory experimentation and participatory innovation development using action funds (local innovation funds) are core to achieving the contextual knowledge gains and practical outputs. Technologi-</p>

cal innovations for small-scale processing and packaging will make it possible for women entrepreneurs and other actors to improve their livelihoods by producing and marketing healthy, safe, tasty and culturally acceptable convenience products based on highly nutritious traditional food products.

NaviNut aims to reveal customary child-feeding practices, their contextual reasons and physical and social cues (e.g. social/cultural norms, questions of identity, influence by peers). In order to understand nutritional behaviour, second-order observation is used to elicit the perceptions, emotions and knowledge of mothers that influence their child-feeding practices and dietary decisions.

NaviNut uses eye-tracking data to inform labelling and advertising strategies and templates for improved information sharing on nutritional value of its products. It will develop communication strategies and materials related to child food and nutrition that appeal to mothers' cognitive and emotional needs with the aim to nudge healthier purchase decisions. It will test an ITC tool to share visual and oral information on child nutrition derived from peer-to-peer exchanges.

NaviNut will identify gaps in the governmental support system for implementing sustainable and scalable child-nutrition interventions, including CHVs' training needs to effectively support nutritious child-feeding practices. Communication for Development (C4D) will be used to facilitate dialogue, participation and engagement of communities and networks for positive social and behaviour change. NaviNut will build CHVs' capacity to facilitate an appropriate and respectful community-dialogue model.

An interdisciplinary team collaborates with mothers and other societal actors to co-develop and test innovations in child nutrition and to improve their food environments and community health services in drylands. <sup>1</sup>



Photos by Brigitte Kaufmann (1,4), Diba Tari (2,5), Enock Zinho (3)