



**ATSAF Academy**  
Academy for International Agricultural Research for Development

# Junior Scientists Tandems

## Final Report

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**Start and end date of stay at IARC/ GRI: July 2023 – Dec 2023**

**Title: How food safety perception of consumers influences their dietary  
behaviors - Nairobi, Kenya**

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## Overview

In July of 2023 I embarked on a career exploration journey to Nairobi, Kenya with the financial support of ATSAF e.V. *Junior Scientists Tandems Program* to get to know and work at the international CGIAR++ center *Alliance Bioversity International and CIAT (ABC)*. Throughout my stay in Kenya, I had the opportunity to engage in a large on-going research project, gaining insights into the intricate preparation and organization processes that occur behind the scenes, including the application for ethical and governmental clearances, as well as budget planning and organisation. I actively participated in developing the tools, working in a team to perfect the questions for data collection, as well as training enumerators adequately and preparing them for data collection. During my stay I established connections with colleagues from diverse parts of the world and various professional domains.

### **Arriving in Nairobi and getting to know the ways of ABC**

My first few weeks in the office were quite exciting but also challenging. Meeting a lot of new people and learning a lot of new information in a short period of time can be quite overwhelming. Trying to understand the complexity of a big research project, that will be going on for several years took a bit of time, but luckily I had enough support from my colleagues at ABC who were happy to answer all my questions, included me and took me to lots of meetings, workshops and other events in preparation for the imminent data collection. After a couple of weeks I had managed to adjust to the Nairobi way and quickly felt at home and happy with the work I was doing.

As part of the reason for my stay was to figure out a potential master's thesis topic I spent my first few weeks working on my research proposal. I was working within the frame of a superior project and tried to figure out where I would find an interesting literature gap for further data collection within said project to form my master's thesis. Simultaneously I was supporting my supervisor on-site in the preparation for the upcoming data collection. We were reviewing the planned timetable, discussing the quantitative and qualitative data collections tools, making changes, adapting to budgets plan, organizing workshops and

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meetings to introduce ABC, its employees and also the planned project to beneficiaries and important governmental staff.



Figure 1: The Alliance Bioversity International and CIAT office on the ICIPE compound

### **Training for data collection**

Certainly, the highlight of my stay had to be those exciting weeks in October when we were busy training our team of 14 enumerators on how to use our data collection tools for the upcoming survey.

We were working with three different tools: a survey for mothers aged 14-49, another for adolescents aged 12-18, and a 24-hour recall tool. Since the initial phase of our project and data collection was set in an urban informal settlement just outside Nairobi, known as

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Viwandani, our daily meeting point was a health center close to the collection site. Training sessions spanned about 1.5 weeks before the official data collection began.

Our mornings started with a brief prayer, setting a positive tone for the day. We then delved into the specific tool we were focusing on that day. As a team, we meticulously went through the prepared questions, ensuring clarity for our enumerators and reviewing answer options. If anything was unclear, we openly discussed alternatives, made on-the-spot changes, and implemented new ideas that arose during the training.

Lunch breaks were a chance for the entire team to unwind together, enjoying some leisure time before getting back to work and wrapping up the day around 5-6 pm.

Building personal connections with the enumerators was a great part of the experience. Working closely with them, I had the opportunity to learn more about their backgrounds, particularly those born and raised in Viwandani, providing fascinating insights into the data collection site. On the final day of training, we all ventured into the field together to field-test the tools before the official data collection commenced. Working with a smartphone app called ODK Collect presented some challenges, requiring a bit of reprogramming. Fortunately, I had acquired the skills to make the necessary changes in Excel, adapting the tool seamlessly. The following day, we were all set and ready to kick off the official data collection.

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Figure 2: Training for Household Survey and 24h-Recall

### **Data collection**

The data collection I participated in extended over a period of approximately two months. Each day, we ventured into the field, accompanying the enumerators as they conducted interviews with respondents within households. This hands-on approach ensured that, especially in the initial stages, we could provide support to the enumerators and address any questions or uncertainties that arose during the data collection process.

A significant portion of my work during data collection occurred behind the scenes. This involved the meticulous organization of which households to interview next, brainstorming solutions for potential challenges, reprogramming and adapting the ODK collect tool and distributing a new plan for the day along with compensations (such as packets of milk) provided to each household at the conclusion of the interviews.

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Being part of the enumerators' team during data collection in the field was an incredibly enriching experience. It granted me the privilege to visit households, meet respondents, and listen to parts of their stories along with the challenges they might be facing. It was a unique opportunity to connect with people on a personal level and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences.



Figure 3: Data collection in the field in Viwandani

After approximately six months, my time in Nairobi and with ABC came to an end in December. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to embark on a few trips during my time in Kenya and also explore various other parts of the country. Many thanks to ATSAF e.V. and the Alliance Bioversity International and CIAT for making this enriching journey possible.

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