



Contact: Navisha Bechan-Sewkuran  
+27 71 462 3295  
[Navisha.BechanSewkuran@mdlz.com](mailto:Navisha.BechanSewkuran@mdlz.com)

## Childhood Obesity - Finding Solutions That Work

- **Unhealthy lifestyles identified as major contributor to obesity in SA**
- **INMED and Mondelez 'Health-in-Action' program spearheads multi-dimensional approach to instil healthy habits in children from young age**
- **R37 million program to benefit over 75 000 learners in 116 primary schools in SA**

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - July xx, 2016 - Eating healthily and exercising regularly: these are the solutions to South Africa's obesity pandemic; yet our poor lifestyle habits, lack of education on good nutrition and lack of access to healthy food are major obstacles. Worse, the problem begins at an early age, with childhood obesity on the rise. Exploring the causes of obesity in children and finding ways to overcome it, was the theme of a roundtable discussion hosted by Mondelez South Africa recently.

Registered dietician Ria Catsicas painted the bleak overall picture in statistics, which show that non-communicable diseases (NCD) caused primarily by poor diet, lack of physical activity, drinking excess alcohol and smoking tobacco - account for 28% of the entire burden of disease in South Africa. Particularly problematic is the rising tide of childhood obesity which, studies conclusively demonstrate, leads to adult obesity. According to a 2013 South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 14% of South African children between ages six and 14 are obese - double what it was in 1990. Girls are more prone to obesity than boys, particularly when they reach adolescence (25% of adolescent girls are obese, compared to 7% of boys). The figure rises dramatically in adulthood, with 65% women and 30% of men fitting the category of obese.

"People like to call it 'baby fat', but it is not baby fat. Studies show that by the age of nine, there are already metabolic abnormalities. Abdominal fat cells affect the body negatively, producing more insulin (which regulates glucose in the blood), so the pancreas is already under stress. The body makes more platelets, which is one of the causes of heart disease, and Vitamin A becomes deficient," said Catsicas.

The causes of childhood obesity are various, but poverty is a huge factor, with a recent survey showing that 30% of our school-going children go hungry as there is no food available at home. Ignorance about what constitutes a healthy diet is also to blame.

“Urbanization also means that food trends have changed. As people migrate to the cities, there’s an increase of junk food intake - a major factor in our obesity problem - along with a lack of physical activity. Also, healthy food is not easily accessible, not least because it is more expensive than unhealthy food,” said Catsicas.

Education, above all, is key to addressing these problems, she said. “Children need to know, from an early age, what happens to their bodies if they eat certain foods, and what healthy foods are,” she said.

INMED Partnerships for Children which is an international humanitarian organisation, is leading the way in this respect, with its primary school-based intervention whose focus is on nutrition education, healthy lifestyles, active play and physical education program as well as improving access to fresh foods for at-risk communities.

The program, called “Health-in-Action”, is made possible by the Mondelez International Foundation through a R37 million investment over a four-year period, and is being rolled out in 116 primary schools. Speaking at the roundtable discussion, INMED Director for the “Health in Action” program Unathi Sihlahla said the target locations in Gauteng will focus on Soweto, Orange Farm and Diepsloot; and in the Eastern Cape, with KwaZakhele, Motherwell and the Northern Areas.

“Aside from nutrition and physical education lessons, we provide education and advocacy for parents, teachers and other community members. We also strengthen adherence to the tuckshop policy which has recently been introduced by Department of Basic Education, and we also host workshops for school-based food vendors with the aim of ensuring that they offer healthy options in what they are selling,” said Sihlahla.

The INMED school gardens, meanwhile, use intensive gardening techniques and recycled materials. Rainwater harvesting systems are being installed, as well as aquaponics for intensive vegetable and fish production to supplement school meals at one site in each province. “We want easy solutions, but solutions that work and easy to replicate,” said Sihlahla.

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### **About Mondelēz International**

Mondelēz International, Inc. (NASDAQ: MDLZ) is a global snacking powerhouse, with 2015 net revenues of approximately \$30 billion. Creating delicious moments of joy in 165 countries, Mondelēz International is a world leader in biscuits, chocolate, gum, candy and powdered

beverages, with billion-dollar brands such as *Oreo*, *LU* and *Nabisco* biscuits; *Cadbury*, *Cadbury Dairy Milk* and *Milka* chocolate; *Trident* gum and *Tang* powdered beverages. Mondelez International is a proud member of the Standard and Poor's 500, NASDAQ 100 and Dow Jones Sustainability Index. Visit [www.mondelezinternational.com](http://www.mondelezinternational.com) or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/MDLZ](https://www.twitter.com/MDLZ).

### **About Mondelez South Africa**

Mondelez South Africa is the largest confectionery business in South Africa, enjoying market leadership in the chocolate, chewing gum and bubble-gum categories. The company's portfolio includes some of the largest snacking brands in the world, such as *Cadbury Dairy Milk*, *Halls*, *Oreo* and *Stimorol* gum. In addition, Mondelez SA is the custodian of iconic and well-loved local brands such as *Chappies* bubble gum, *Chomp*, *Lunch Bar* and *Dentyne* chewing gum. The company has a presence in a number of countries in Southern, Central and Eastern Africa where it invests in growing these markets.

### **About Inmed Partnerships for Children**

INMED Partnerships for Children is an international humanitarian organization working to rescue children from the immediate and irreversible harm of disease, hunger, abuse, neglect, violence or instability, and to prepare them to shape a brighter future for themselves and the next generation. INMED has improved health, lives and opportunities in more than 100 countries since 1986, and has worked as an international NGO in South Africa since 2006. INMED's in-country operational group, INMED South Africa, is incorporated under Section 21 and is a registered non-profit organization (NPC/PBO) recognized by the Department of Social Development.