



# RADA

Reconciliation and Development Association



## **A Report On The Multistake Holder Discussion And Unhealthy Diets**

The Role of Front of Package (FoP) Labeling and Marketing Restrictions in Cancer Prevention held at CBC Resource Center, Mvan Yaounde, Cameroon.

**Date: 7th February 2025**

**Time: 8:30 AM (WAT)**



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# Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Public Health, Cameroon (MINSANTE) and the Cameroon Civil Society Non-Communicable Disease Alliance (CACNSA) for their collaboration and participation in this event.

The session was made possible thanks to the financial support from Resolve to Save Lives.

We wish to thank the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) for their technical support in this event.

Furthermore, we express our profound gratitude to RADA leadership for successfully ensuring the organization of the Multi-Stakeholder Panel Discussion on Cancer and Unhealthy Diets in close collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health. In the same spirit, appreciation goes to the staff of the Health Department for their resilience and hard work for the success of the program. Special thanks go to the President and CEO, Mr. Mbiydzényuy Ferdinand Sonyuy, for his leadership in this initiative.

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# Introduction

The Reconciliation and Development Association (RADA) collaborated with the Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance (CACNSA) and the Ministry of Public Health, to organize a one-day multi-stakeholder panel session on the theme; **Cancer and Unhealthy Diets: The Role of Front of Package (FoP) Labeling and Marketing Restriction in Cancer Prevention**. The session took place at the **CBC Resource Center, Mvan-Yaoundé, Cameroon**. The panel session sought to address the growing burden of diet and other risk factor-related cancers in Cameroon by fostering consensus amongst stakeholders in implementing effective responses including FoP labeling and marketing restrictions for harmful packaged food products. The session was held in commemoration of World Cancer Day 2025 and as an advocate for the adoption of FoP Labeling regulation in Cameroon. Moreover, the event brought together over 70 participants amongst which included; Head of the Parliamentary Health Caucus, representatives of Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Mines and Industries, Journalists from over 25 media houses and other individuals.

## Opening Session

The event commenced with an opening prayer by Miss Marlen Wango from the RADA Health Team, followed by the national anthem led by Miss Njerim Magdalene, Head of RADA's Health Department. Miss Merveille Njantio, the Master of Ceremony (MC), introduced the session in both English and French. The President and CEO of RADA, Mr. Mbiydzennyuy Ferdinand Sonyuy, delivered the opening remarks, welcoming everyone to the very important event, which would have a great impact on the lives of Cameroonians. He emphasized the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the urgent need for Front-of-Pack labeling in Cameroon's food regulatory policies as an intervention in cancer prevention and other NCDs. Subsequently, Mme Mfeque Catherine (Subdirector for Nutrition, DPS, MINSANTE) reaffirmed government efforts in nutrition and public health improvement while giving her opening remarks.



*The CEO OF RADA, Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy - Opening Remarks*

The Master of Ceremony (MC) took the stage with composure and energy, laying the groundwork for interesting and informative discussions. The MC formally opened the floor for presentations, kicking off insightful discussions on crucial health concerns.

**First Presentation:** *The Problem of Cancer and Other NCDs in Cameroon*



*Dr. Berthe Esson presenting on the problem of cancer and other NCDs in Cameroon*

Dr. Berthe Esson Mapoko, a Clinical oncologist and public health expert, gave the session's opening presentation. Dr. Mapoko investigated the rising prevalence of cancer and other non-communicable diseases in Cameroon, offering a detailed study of the present health landscape. She included the most common NCDs, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and digestive disorders.

She further identified the leading types of cancer in Cameroon which include breast, cervical, prostate, and colorectal cancers

while shedding light on the major risk factors that contribute to the growing burden of these diseases. These risk factors ranged from tobacco and alcohol consumption to poor dietary habits, obesity, infections, reproductive health issues, environmental pollution, genetic predispositions, and radiation exposure.

Dr. Mapoko supported her argument with alarming statistics, stating that NCDs account for 35% of deaths in Cameroon, with cancer alone responsible for 16%. She pointed out a 10% increase in disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) between 1990 and 2019, signaling a growing public health challenge. In response to these concerns, she emphasized the urgency of implementing Cameroon's National Cancer Control Strategic Plan (2020-2024). She called for increased funding, stronger awareness campaigns, and sustainable national strategies to combat NCDs and cancer effectively.



*Dr. Camille Mba presenting on Diet and Cancer*

Following this compelling presentation, Dr. Camille Mba, a renowned nutritional epidemiologist with extensive academic credentials (MD, MSc, PhD), took the floor to discuss the pivotal role of diet in cancer prevention. Dr. Mba underscored the need for food regulation policies that focus on both food sources and nutrients rather than analyzing individual nutrients in isolation. She emphasized the scientific evidence linking diet to cancer risks and highlighted key challenges in nutritional epidemiology, particularly the uncertainties in assessing dietary outcomes. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of stronger policies regarding food labeling and marketing, advocating for clearer guidelines that would promote healthier dietary choices and reduce the risk of cancer linked to poor nutrition.

The final presentation in this segment was delivered by Mr. Mbiydzényuy Ferdinand Sonyuy, the CEO of RADA, who provided a thought-provoking discussion on evidence-based strategies for Front-of-Package (FoP) labeling. Mr. Sonyuy elaborated on the significant impact that clear and informative FoP labeling has on guiding consumers toward healthier choices. He further addressed the necessity for stricter marketing regulations to prevent misleading food advertisements that contribute to unhealthy eating habits. His presentation also emphasized the role of policy advocacy and consumer awareness in mitigating cancer risks associated with poor diet, reinforcing the call for systemic changes in food labeling practices.



*Mr. Ferdinand Presenting on FoP labeling and Marketing Restrictions.*

In essence, each of these presentations contributed to a comprehensive understanding of cancer and NCDs, emphasizing the urgent need for multi-sectoral interventions. These presentations were well-informed and so held the audience spellbound as they followed all presentations keenly. As the floor remained open for discussions and questions, it became evident that the insights shared would play a crucial role in shaping future policies and actions aimed at reducing the burden of NCDs and cancer in Cameroon.

# Icebreaker



*MC Merveille coordinating the "Upside Down Challenge"*


An interactive icebreaker, led by Danielle, known as the "Upside Down Challenge," engaged participants and created an energetic atmosphere that encouraged active participation.

# Panel Discussion, Question & Answer

The session was moderated by Mr. Moki Edwin, who hosted four panelists. These panelists included all three presenters and a representative of the National Norms and Standard Agency (ANOR) Mr. Paul Claude Aime. The session commenced with a pivotal question directed at Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy, focusing on the impact of Front-of-Pack (FoP) labeling on consumer purchasing decisions and dietary habits over time. Mr. Sonyuy provided a comprehensive analysis, detailing the challenges encountered in advocating for FoP labeling in Cameroon. He further highlighted potential partnerships that could enhance advocacy efforts for more effective food labeling regulations.



*Panelists with Professor Blaise Nkegoum, Permanent Secretary, NCC*



Following Mr. Sonyuy's insights, the moderator posed a series of questions to the other panelists, delving deeper into the broader aspects of food regulatory policies. Further questions around nutrition and cancer were posed to the panelists and they responded based on their expertise, which gave birth to pertinent issues that need to be addressed by the government, which was represented by Mr. Aime. He was asked about the regulation and what they are doing about it which he said did not depend on them at the level of ANOR anymore, as it has been forwarded to the Ministry of Mines and Industries, who would later on forward it to the Prime Minister for the inter-ministerial decree to be signed. The discussion was interactive, with participants from the audience actively participating by directing questions to the panelists. Notably, a thought-provoking question was directed at Mr. Paul Claude Aime, the Sub-Director of ANOR. A member of the audience raised a pressing concern regarding the continued presence of sachet whiskey in the market despite its official ban. This inquiry sparked a critical dialogue on regulatory enforcement and the practical challenges faced by authorities in ensuring compliance with established food and beverage policies.

Furthermore, Honorable Njume Peter a member of parliament and the head of the Parliamentary Health Caucus, came into the panel session answering the call of the Moderator (Mr. Moki Edwin) and acknowledged the crucial role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the communities. He commended RADA's efforts, He said ***"CSOs serve as the eyes of the government and the mouth of the people,"*** bridging the gap between governance and grassroots communities. His remarks highlighted the significance of collaboration in driving social impact and fostering development.



*Honorable Peter Njume sitting and addressing the audience*



The discussion concluded with reflections on the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms, increased collaboration between public and private sectors, and heightened consumer awareness to drive the successful implementation of food regulatory policies in Cameroon. The moderator remarked at the end of the session that the populations have a lot of questions to ask the government so he recommended that more of these kinds of sessions be hosted where the population will be free to ask their questions for clarity.

## Dignitary Remarks, Closing Remarks & Networking session

Prof. Blaise Nkegoum the Permanent Secretary of the National Cancer Control Committee delivered the closing remarks, reaffirming the government's commitment to public health and cancer prevention. He also applauded this effort by RADA and encouraged more such activities to be carried out by CSOs. To officially end the session, Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy expressed gratitude to all participants he reiterated RADA's dedication to advocacy, policy change, and public health awareness and thanked everyone for their presence. A networking session followed, allowing for further discussions and potential collaborations.



*Prof. Blaise Nkegoum providing closing remarks*

# Outcomes

1. Awareness was raised to leaders of Ministry of Public Health and the entire audience and journalist on Front of Package labelling
2. Front of Package Labelling was clearly raised and Honourable Njume committed to ask the Minister of Health a question in the next Parliamentary session on Front of Package labelling and other food policies.
3. A massive number of Journalists took up to report on the event.

# Challenges encountered, Recommendations

## Challenges Encountered

1. Delayed Start: The event began later (9:40am) than scheduled (**8:30 AM**), affecting the flow of the program.
2. Absenteeism: Some high-level guests could not attend, reducing participant diversity.
3. Language barrier: Some presentations were not projected or presented in both languages for easy comprehension.
4. More attendees than expected came. The hall was full and seats were almost insufficient

## Recommendations

1. Strict Time Management: Future events should have a well-defined schedule with contingency plans to ensure a timely start.
2. Improved Venue Planning: Anticipating a higher turnout and arranging additional seating in advance will help accommodate all attendees comfortably especially when events are open to the public.
3. There's a need for translators/interpreters using translation devices in subsequent events.
4. There is a need for more open dialogue between the government and the population as this event indicates awareness and mutual understanding and collaboration gaps that can easily be filled with joint solutions.

## Conclusion

The panel session was a successful platform for addressing the link between unhealthy diets and cancer prevention in Cameroon. It provided valuable insights into food regulation, FoP labeling, and marketing restrictions, reinforcing the need for comprehensive policies and collaborative efforts to reduce diet-related cancer risks. Despite the challenges faced, RADA remains committed to advancing public health advocacy, education, and policy change in the fight against cancer and NCDs.

# Appendix

## Agenda for the Multistakeholder Panel Session on Cancer and Unhealthy Diets: The Role of FoP Labelling and Market Restrictions in Cancer Prevention.

**Date: Friday 07, February 2025.**

- Registration and Welcome – 08:30 - 08:50

### Program Agenda.

S/N	Activity	Time Allocated	Persons Responsible
1.	<b>Welcome Remarks</b>	08:50 - 09:05	-The President and CEO of RADA -Sub Director for NCDs, DLMEP -Sub Director for Nutrition, DPS -The Permanent Secretary, of the National Cancer Control Committee
2.	<b>Keynote Address</b>	09:05 - 09:20	- WHO Representative
3.	<b>Presentations:</b>	09:20 - 09:50	-Dr. Mapoko Berthe

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Problem of Cancer and Other NCDs in Cameroon</li> <li>• The Role of Diet in Cancer Prevention and Control</li> <li>• Evidence-Based FoP Labeling and Marketing Restrictions- a strong prevention strategy for public health and development</li> </ul>			<p>-Dr. Mba Camille</p> <p>-Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy</p>
4.	<b>Panel Discussion:</b> Food Regulatory Policy Development and Implementation in Cameroon	09:50 10:30	-	<p>-Dr. Mba Camille,</p> <p>- Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy,</p> <p>-Dr. Mapoko Berthe</p> <p>-ANOR representative</p> <p>-Moki Edwin Kindzeka (moderator)</p>
5.	<b>Q&amp;A Session</b>	10:30 10:50	-	Edwin Kindzeka (moderator)
6.	<b>Closing Remarks</b>	10:50 11:00	-	Director of Health Promotion MINSANTE
7.	<b>Networking Session and Refreshments</b>			

# Questions for Multi-Stakeholder Panel Session on Cancer and Unhealthy Diets

Title: **Food Regulatory Policy Development and Implementation in Cameroon.**

1. **Dr. Mbah Camille** (Nutritionist).

- I. What role does nutrition play in supporting cancer treatment outcomes and improving the quality of life for patients undergoing cancer therapy?
- II. How can specific dietary patterns contribute to reducing the risk of developing certain kinds of cancer and what role should public health policy and institutions play in promoting healthy dietary practices?

2. **Dr. Mapoko Berthe** (The problem of cancer in Cameroon)

- I. Given the limited availability of advanced diagnostic tools and oncology specialists in Cameroon, how do clinicians ensure accurate cancer staging and accurate treatment plans?
- II. What are some of the major challenges that you see cancer patients go through at the hospital care levels in Cameroon?

3. **ANOR's Representative:**

- I. What is the role of ANOR in food policy in Cameroon?
- II. How has ANOR been accompanying the government to support healthy food policy legislation such as warning labels?
- III. What has been done so far in the normalization of the front-of-package warning labeling in Cameroon?

4. **Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy:**

- I. How do FoP labels affect consumer purchasing decisions and dietary habits over time?
- II. What challenges have you encountered so far in advocating for FoP labels in Cameroon and what partnerships do you think can strengthen advocacy for FoP labeling?

