



## **Process of Developing Cameroon Context Front of Package Warning Labels**

*1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Focus Group Discussions, Expert Panel and Technical Validation*

*January 2023*

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1st and 2nd Focus Group Discussions, Expert Panel and Technical Validation

## ***Acknowledgements:***

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# Phase ONE: 1<sup>st</sup> Set of Focus Group Discussions

## Validating Design Elements to use in the Cameroon Front of Package Warning Label final design



26<sup>th</sup> January – 5<sup>th</sup> February 2022



## 1. Introduction

The Reconciliation and Development Association (RADA) conducted one (1) test and seven (7) Focus Group discussions as part of the process to develop a front of package warning label for Cameroon. The focus groups included participants from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds from and around the cities of Bamenda and Yaounde. These two cities and participants were selected based on their representation of the social, cultural, economic, political and commercial diversity of the country.

**Purpose of the FGD:** The main purpose of this first phase focus group discussions was to; Assess the purchasing habits of packaged foods in Cameroon and to evaluate proposed design elements to see what works best for Cameroon in terms of; Texts, Shapes and Icons. Specifically, to understand what has the ability to capture consumer's attention and alert them of the presence of undesirable levels of nutrients of concern, implicated in Cardiovascular and other chronic metabolic diseases when consumed beyond recommended quantities. This label design phase aimed at addressing the following questions;

1. Do Cameroonians buy and enjoy packaged food products?
2. From where do they buy these products? How easy is it to find these products? How often do they buy these products and do they buy these products with their family members?
3. What do they consider when buying these products?
4. What has been their observation overtime with respect package products?
5. What is a meaning of warning label to Cameroonian?
6. Which Texts, Shapes and Icons, are most appropriate for the context of Cameroon? Do they carry a negative/undesirable connotation when combined with the nutrients of interest (example: "high in sodium")? What signal word works best for the context?
7. If all design elements are put together to create the final label, does it appropriately communicate the presence of undesirable levels of nutrients of interest? (i.e., Does it communicate the unhealthiness of the food? E.g., sodium)?
8. Does the Label require an endorsement form a health agency or a government entity (example: MINSANTE)?

## **Methodology**

The following pages report on the methodology employed and the findings. The discussion guide for the focus group is included in the appendix.

### **2. Methodology & Participants Profile**

#### **1.1. Selection of Participants**

A purposive non-random sampling method was used to select the study participants. This was to ensure that participants come from various socio-economic backgrounds (low, middle and high socio-economic class) rural and urban as well as cultural backgrounds, that represent the diversity in Cameroon. The potential participants were identified and nominated through a participant recruitment form hosted both online and offline. The offline process was implemented by trained focal persons in the two selected regions. Eligible participants based on our predefined criteria were called for confirmation. The information on the purpose of the study, venue and time were also shared with potential recruits. The research team took their consent to call them later for the focus group discussions if they were eligible, at least, three days before the FGDs, selected participants for each day were called for reconfirmation of their participation.

#### **1.2. Study Sites**

The FGDs took place in two districts namely, Bamenda, in Bamenda City and the Biyemassi, in Yaounde City. The research team obtained permission for conducting the sessions in each district from the district medical Officers who also participated in the sessions as observers.

### **1.3. Focus Groups**

The sessions started with the test FGD on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2022 in Bamenda with the aim to validate data collection tools and make amendments prior to main FGDs. The rest of the sessions took place till the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.

Each FGDs, hosted 8-12 participants. Two groups were held per day, one in morning from 9-11 am and second group in the afternoon from 2:00 -4:00 pm. The developed guide (see annex A) was used together with sample printed Texts, Shapes and Icons for the discussions. The team first provided the information sheet, and consent forms for participants to review and sign. The participants were also informed that the session will be recorded for the purpose of analysis and they consented. The locations selected for this activity were noise free or had minimal noise. The participants at the end of the session were provided transportation fair.

### **1.4. Study tools**

We used a sound card digital recorder, a laptop, tripod, camera, rollups, and an enhancing sound system.

### **1.5. Data Management**

The FGDs audio-recordings were downloaded the same day to the designated data storage computer and labeled, and immediately removed from the portable device. Recordings were transcribed by the research assistant and stored electronically for analysis.

### **1.6. Situational Analysis**

After the recorded FGD were transcribed, coding was done for all the data sets using constant comparison with the transcribed text. The codes were then combined and themes developed. Tables were used to summarize the emerging text, shape and icons that works best for front of package warning label.

### 3. Demographic characteristics of the FGD participants

Excluding the 10 participants that participated in the Test FGD which was meant to validate the data collection tools, a total of 72 participants took part in the main FGDs. Of which 63.9% were female. The distribution of participants with respect to age group is shown on table 2 with the most represented age group being 31-50 years (58.3%) and the least participated were above 50 years of age (8.4%). Most participants in the study were married (54.2%). The educational profile of the participants showed that majority of them had attended a university level education (48.6%) and the least represented were those with primary education (11.1%). (Table 2)

**Table 2: FGD participants**

<b>Characteristics (N=72)</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Male	36.1%
	Female	63.9%
<b>Age groups</b>	(18-30)	33.3%
	(31-50)	58.3%
	(>50)	8.4%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	45,8%
	Married	54.2%
<b>Education</b>	Primary	11.1%
	Secondary	40.3%
	University	48.6%

Figure 10, below shows that participants had different professional backgrounds. Those with teaching as their profession were most represented in the study (12), followed by nurses and business men (women) with each, 9 participants. Other professional backgrounds included; students, public agents, secretaries, technicians, cleaners, drivers, tailor, midwives, researchers, managers, NCDs civil society, counsellor, security officer, a boxer, and housewife.

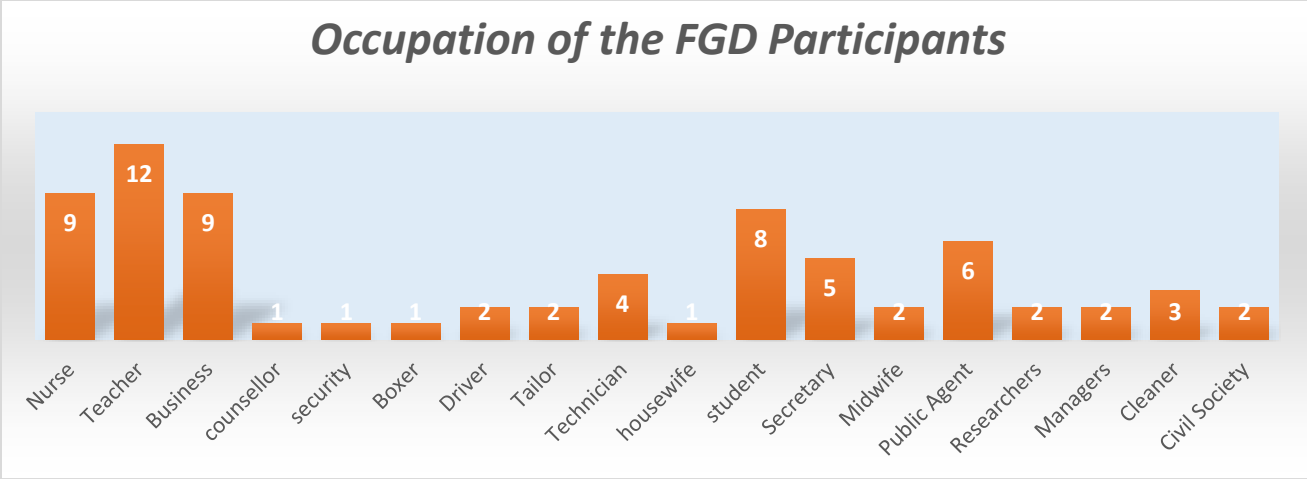


Fig 10. Occupation of the FGD participants

Figure 11 illustrates the residential distribution of the FGDs participants (fig 11a), preferred first national language (fig 11b), the monthly income level (fig 11c) and their religion distribution. Majority of the participants from Yaoundé and Bamenda were more than 80 and 90 percent French and English residents respectfully.

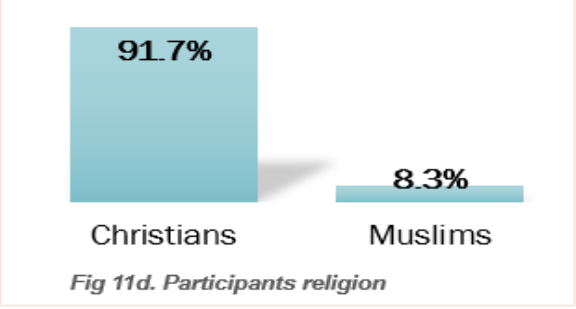
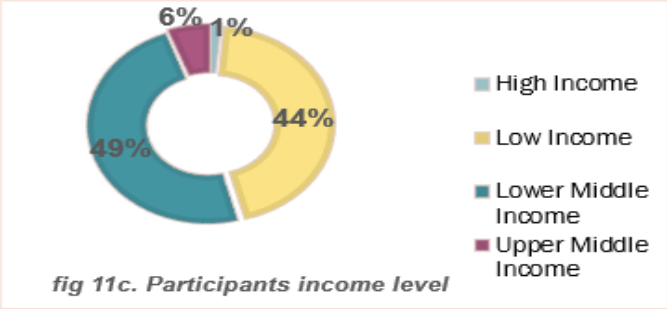
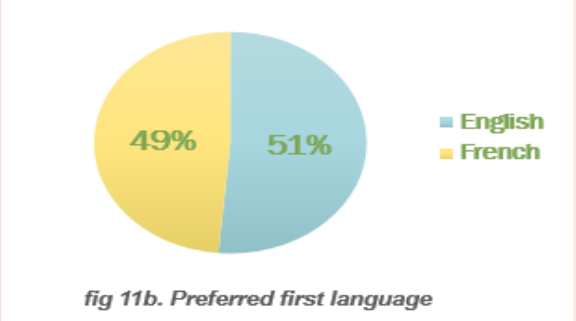
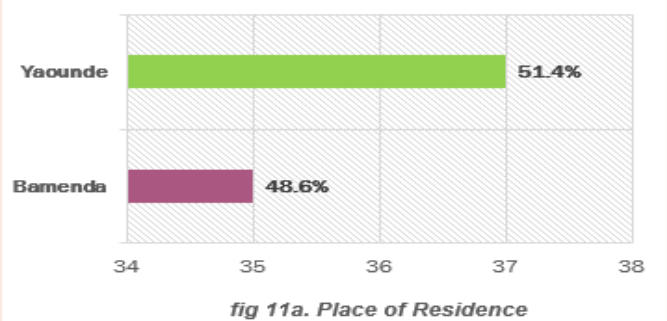


Fig 11. Illustration of the residential, language, income level and religion of participants



## 4. Discussion of Results

This section presents findings from the first set of focus group discussions in the form of a summary of what participants said in response to specific questions. The information in this section represents the researchers' interpretation based upon: (1) notes made during the focus group discussion, (2) a review of the audio recordings and (3) a content analysis of the typed transcripts from across the seven focus group discussions.

### 1.1. Assessing the habits of Cameroonians in purchasing packaged food products

Across the seven focus groups, the following were identified to be common among Cameroonians when it comes to packaged food products. The section tries to answer the key questions of where, why, how often, they buy packaged products as well as their observations over the time:

#### 1. *Where do they buy these products?*

Figure 12 summarizes where Cameroonians buy packaged products according to this study.



Fig 12. Locations where Cameroonians purchase packaged food products

- 2. Why do they buy from these specific locations?** Majority of the participants reported that they buy from the said locations because of the prices. A good number of participants indicate that products in some place turn to be more expensive than other places and they will prefer to go to places where products are cheaper. To others, price was not a challenge.

What they rather consider when buying from specific locations is how original is the product. As such, they go to big supermarkets because there they believe they can find original products.

*“They believe is more original, to me, in Cameroon, I believe people based their minds on the price and that is why you see people buy more from this small quartier shops because prices in the super market turns to be higher, but those that have money buy from the super market because they are sure it’s going to be the best quality products”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

### **3. How many times per week do people you know shop for packaged food?**

Most participants reported that the frequency with which people buy packaged foods depend on the type of product, family size, cost and location from their homes, which translates to the fact that shopping is done daily, weekly and monthly.

*“Pour moi, cela dépend du produit et de la consommation du produit- par exemple, pour moi qui ne suis pas encore marié, quand je prends un produit comme NIDO à l’écran, cela peut me prendre 2 à 3 semaines pour terminer peut-être pour quelqu’un qui a des enfants, il pourrait avoir besoin de l’acheter plus souvent »*

**FGD  
Yaoundé.**

### **4. Is there a habit of shopping together in your neighborhood (why)?**

Across the seven groups, majority of the participants reported that the habit of shopping in the neighbor is typically by family representatives and with some family members in rare occasions assisting. However, several participants indicated that children go and buy these products alone.

*“Yes, head of the family goes shopping alone or shop sometimes with family members if they need assistance in carrying things or making right choices”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

*“It depends if you are alone, you go shop alone some people with brothers and sisters go and buy with them”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

### **5. Do people where you live buy and enjoy package food?**

Majority of participants from across the seven groups reported that people buy and enjoy packaged food products. A minority reported that people buy because it is available and meet a specific need. Also, Majority of participants reported that people eat this packaged products reason being that they are easy to prepare and serve time while a minority are influenced by peer pressure where children need snacks for school and very often in the form of packaged products.

*“Oui, généralement les gens achètent et apprécient ces aliments”.* **FGD Yaoundé**

*“No you buy what is available to meet a specific need if you have no substitute”* **FGD Bamenda**

*“Oui, ils ont été simplifiés pour la consommation et faciles à préparer”.* **FGD Yaoundé**

#### **6. How easy are they to find (these packaged products)?**

Majority of participants across the focus group discussions reported that packaged products are easy to find as they are seen everywhere and a minority responded that availability is depended on purchasing power of people.

*“They are quite easy. In all the nooks and crannies, we have retail shops and, in the quarter, availability is assured”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

Majority of participants reported that people eat this packaged products reason being that they are easy to prepare and serve time while a minority are influenced by peer pressure where children need snacks for school and very often in the form of packaged products.

#### **7. Can you tell us what you have observed about consumption of package food over time?**

Most of the participants reported that there are many different types of packaged products that were not existing before. Another key observation was that there has equally been an increase in quantity and decrease in quality of several products

*“Yes, a lot has changed from the 80s, 90s and to present, the kind of persuasive advert we have today didn't exist for example the Champaign in the days was good and today*

*is taste as water mix with sugar. I don't know if is due to population growth, or the quest for high profit that quality has really dropped".*

**FGD Bamenda**

*"Too many products that I was not seeing, pikin for one year di big like fertilizer for seeker chop whey them dey outside now and these pikin them be very weak and all this sick now so no been dey".*

**FGD Bamenda**

### **8. Do you buy and eat these packaged products? Yes or No / justify the answe?**

Majority of participants across the 7 groups reported that they buy and consume packaged products and this is due to the fact that they are cheap, available everywhere and easy to prepare, saving them time as they are charged with other activities daily. Many pointed out that these things are available and they have no other choice or alternatives.

*"I buy because they are cheap and easy to prepare"*

**FGD Yaoundé**

### **9. Do you consider changing the number of products you buy?**

Majority of participants reported that they will consider changing the number of packaged products they buy if the product is indicated as not healthy for them while a minority reported that it will depend on the price. That is, they can buy more if products are cheaper and vice versa

*"The answer for me is yes because if were to see a product and it's indicated that it's not too healthy for me and I have been buying a lot of that product I will reduce", "It depends on the price".*

**FGD Yaoundé**

*"For me is cold drinks I take that a lot too, I know too much of it is not good even though I don't know but the fact that we are in hot season where there is a lot of heat one is tempted every time to consume a lot of cold drinks"*

**FGD Yaoundé**

### **10. What do you consider when buying these packaged products?**

Majority of participants reported that they check the expiration date when buying packaged products while a minority said they based their judgement on the price.

*“Look at date of expiration”. “Where the product is made for instance, I don’t appreciate products from Nigeria and very much go for Cameroon made products if the product from Nigeria cost 200frs and Cameroon product cost 1000frs I will go for the Cameroonian product”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

### **11. Who are the household members who buy and who are those that consume the packaged products?**

Majority of participants across the seven groups reported that the household members who buy and those that consume is solely dependent on the nature and size of the family as well as the type of products. For singles, they buy and consume the product. Meanwhile, in a large family, a family head or representatives buy and everyone in the household consumes. In conclusion it was clear that anybody can buy for all to consume, but children buy and consume, parents buy and children consume, parents buy and the whole household consumes and then single buy and consume.

*“This is different in each family for example we have families that go to the market or supermarket with their children and they buy, we have families that only the wife buys and everybody eats, there are also situation where the man buys for the family, we also have situation where you have children go and buy their biscuits or the parents send to buy, in the end we can observed that everybody buy and everybody eats”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

### **4.2 Evaluating sample design FoP warning label elements**

The purpose of front-of-package label is to alert consumers of the presence of sugar, saturated fat, or salt in an unacceptable level in the packaged food products. In other to ensure a unique warning label is designed for Cameroon, one which Cameroonians can

best understand, it was necessary to test individual elements that may go into the final design separately. This was to make sure that the final front of package warning label meets the standard characteristics of good warning label (simple, clear, eye-catching and stand out from the rest on the package). Texts, Shapes, Icons already tested in other countries and few innovative ones were prepared and used in this evaluation stage.

## 1. TEXT

Negative themes	Positive themes
Risky	Ok for consumption
Attention	I buy
curiosity	Not aggression
Danger	Just normal
Fear	Rich in calcium
Warning	Good for health
Exaggerate	Slightly above normal
Bad product	
Unhealthy	
Harmful	
Overdose	
Above limit	

The following texts; “High In”, “Excess In”, “Too Much”, “MINSANTE” were printed and showed to the participant one after the other. Participants were asked to write down and then share what immediately come into their mind, their feeling and perception of the text when they saw it for the first time. The following themes emerged from the

<i>Text</i>	<i>Frequency of Negative themes</i>	<i>Frequency of Positive theme</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
<b><i>Excess In</i></b>	20	0	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b><i>Too Much</i></b>	17	0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b><i>High In</i></b>	16	7	3 <sup>rd</sup>

participants across the 7 FGDs across in the two regions. The table 3 summarizes the frequency of these themes across the seven groups and the overall ranking of each of the text:

**Table 3: The Text frequency distribution of positive and negative themes.**

**Excess In:** Based on table 3 “Excess In” emerged on top of the list as the number one text with ability to alert consumer of the presence of sugar, fats, salt and calories in amounts. Majority of the participants could not think of anything positive when they saw the text “Excess In”. A few quotations below:

***Illustrative quotations from the focus groups.***

*“For me the high in did not ignite anything negative in me but excess in and too much really got my attention to think that I really need to reflect before buying the product”*

**FGD Yaounde.**

*“For me it’s not too aggressive, but when you said excess in and too much, for me its exaggerate the quantity in the product which to me is not health or good for health”.*

**FGD Bamenda**

***Too much:*** During the analysis it was observed that majority of participants look at “Too Much” as something in excess quantity which is not healthy, that is why quick responses during the discussion session were mostly that the two texts (“excess in” and “too much”) mean the same thing. Even though excess in was more health threatening than “too much”.

***High In:*** Although we had negative themes emerging from this text, this text failed to meet the intended alert text purpose because a significant number of participants across the seven focus groups could relate to something positive when they saw the text for the first time, and will rather buy the product, especially if the price of that product was within his/her reach. Which translates that what could stop them from buying could be price rather than the warning label. A good number of them also quickly relate to the high in text as high in calcium. Which is positive. **Illustrative quotations from the focus groups**

*“High in will not stop me from buying if I have the means, excess in will definitely do, too much was not really meaning anything to me”*

**FGD Yaoundé.**




Some participants suggested; “Forte tenoi en” (High content of) and “extremely high in” as the text they believe could work best in place “High In” or the others.

## 2. LABEL SHAPES


A total of four shapes were designed and printed for this exercise. The following themes emerged during the focus group discussion;

The following shows the emerging themes from the shapes FGD

<i>Negative themes</i>	<i>Positive themes</i>
Warning Danger Attention Stop Very bad Obstacle Void Destroy target	Love the shape Comfortable with Logo Neutral/nothing Spider web (Octagon)

<i>Shape</i>	<i>Image</i>	<i>Frequency of Negative themes</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
<i>Triangle</i>		21	1 <sup>st</sup>
<i>Circle</i>		7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<i>Octagon</i>		6	3 <sup>rd</sup>



<i>Double prism</i>		4	4 <sup>th</sup>
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**Table 4: summary of the findings from the shapes evaluation**

**Triangle shape:** Based on the table 3, majority of the participants could quickly relate to a triangle shape as the shape that **signifies danger**. The reaction observed when the participants saw the triangle and what they shared was remarkable thus the triangle emerging top on the list as the number one shape with the ability serve the purpose of the warning label. The reason why Cameroonians quickly saw triangle was because they observed this shape most of the time along the roads and each time one sees this shape either traveling or driving, one immediately thinks of danger ahead. We equality had contribution from the a few participants that adding red color to the triangle shape could make this shape even more explicit.

**Illustrative quotations from the focus groups**

*“The 1st image which octagon means nothing to me, it’s the second image that indicated something to me may be if they add red it will be more explicit because that is what we observe most at time when driving and it usually indicated danger, the rest means nothing to me”- translated.*

**FGD Yaoundé.**

*Even me the only image that captivated me is the triangle because each time you see a triangle you know that there is danger, for the circle if it is painted red for me it will also indicate danger*









**FGD Bamenda**

**3. ICONS**

**Table 5: Summary of nutrient and icon validation**

**Fats Icon:** majority of participants could quickly recognize the fat icon to be representing something unhealthy and not good for consumption as the following themes were observed across the seven-group discussion; obesity, malnutrition, abnormal, fat, overweight, bloated stomach. All the above themes pointed at one direction which was negative and as such serves the purpose of the research and that explain why the icon is validated to be use in the final design.

**Sugar Icon:** the sugar Icon did not meet the expectations for validation as majority of the participants saw it and interpreted it as cubes (Maggi, Savon) boxes of matches and “Lodo” game. Although a few of participants did see that as sugar, the representation of this set of participants were very low as such, the sugar icon failed to hit the target

NUTRIENT	ICON	VALIDATION
Fats		
Sugar		
Salt		
Calories		

objective and was not validated.

“La forme du sucre doit etre rectangle” (FGD Yeounde)

However, some participants made the following suggestions which to them could make the icon speak much better:

**Suggestions:** Make it rectangle, “Sugars are not square” draw the sugar white, or better still us the 3D picture of sugar.

**Salt Icon:** Salt was not a challenge validating as majority of the participant quickly recognized the icon to be for salt. A hand full participants looked at it to be a container of grounded spices, some said, “white pepper”, and made suggestions of the spoon with salt icon, or that the salt inside should be the same with the one outside in colour. The icon was generally understood across the seven focus groups and as such it was validated.

*For me there are two images that I have understood very well, the image in which someone has a fat stomach immediately tell me there is something not right about the product and also the salt icon. These are the images that are really clear. the two images make sense*

**FGD Yaounde.**

**Energy icon:** The following themes emerged when the participants saw the proposed calories icon: electric shock, charging system, lightening, trademark on pesticide. Despite these negative themes observed, the icon failed to achieve the intended objective, because majority of the participant across the seven focus groups discussion were neutral or simply said nothing about the icon representing calories The silence or the low reaction observed could mean that the icon was not making sense to the participants or it was poorly understood by most of them and as such the icon was not validated. It was clearly an unfamiliar icon to the population, despite the responses that related to the energy sign.

**Suggestion:** The participants suggested a man fisting the right hand, this suggestion rather point towards something positive and as such not helping in the set objective.





Although the icon could not make a lot of sense to a good number of participants, when the icon was combined, with shape and text, it's still failed to speak for itself, if illiterate

were to be taken into consideration. This can either be introduced as a new icon uniquely for the purpose, or a new one is redesigned.

#### 4. SAMPLED FINAL WARNING LABEL DESIGN

All across the seven focus groups the warning label with Text, Shape and Icon was affirmed by all the participants.

**Table 6: sample design validation**

<i>Sampled design with text and shape</i>	<i>Sampled design with text, shape and icon</i>
	
	

#### Illustrative quotations from the focus groups

*“The one with the icon speaks better than the one without. Because someone who cannot read but looks at the one with an icon will be able to know that it’s speaking something”*

**FGD Bamenda**

*“Ce qui pourra former un label; le label, le texte et l’image c’est bon pour moi”*

**FGD Yaounde**

*“Looking at the two, I will prefer the one with shape, text and icon because the best explain what is happening to all class of people”*

**FGD Bamenda**

## 5. MINSANTE ENDORSMENT TEXT

The question as to whether the Cameroon warning label should carry the endorsement text was very challenging to arrive at the conclusion. Although majority of the participants affirmed that MINSANTE text add value and emphasis on the need for the consumers to take the warning label serious, a good number of participants look at this text with a lot disinterest and they demonstrated limited confidence in having the endorsement text added to the final warning design.

*“Communique une garentie, une assurance quelque chose de serieux” (FGD Yaounde)*

*“My feeling about MINSANTE is yes, I trust the source of info but not 100%” (FGD, Bamenda)*

*“Message povenant du ministere de la sante, liable, confiance et sereus” (FGD Yaoundé)*

*“Sante public, non pas confidence, des information source ex: covid-19” (FGD Yaounde)*

## 5. Conclusion

The findings across the seven-focus group discussions show that Cameroonians buy and consume packaged food products on a daily basis. It is equally observed that over time, the perception is that the quantity and variety of packaged food have increased while the quality has dropped and consumers hold this trend with fear and unhappiness. Also, majority of participants reported that they always consider date of expiration before making purchases, meaning that they are becoming more observant on packaged food products that they buy. While a minority dwelled on price, majority did not refuse, hence majority consider price instead as a key determinant. The text “Excess In” emerges as the main text with the ability to alert consumers of the presence of nutrient in an unhealthy quantity in the products. Triangle equally served this purpose when it came to shapes even though a minority proposed having the color red on the triangle shape could speak even more better. Two icons (salt and fats) were validated across the seven FGDs while

amendment was recommended for sugar and calorie icons. As to whether the final warning label should have a MINSANTE endorsement text no concrete conclusion was reached. All participants ended with one voice that text, shape and icon remain the best as such label will easily be understood by those who cannot read and write.

## 6. Recommendations

1. Based on the challenges observed across the seven-focus group discussions in establishing the energy icon that carries a negative perspective, the icon was recommended for the research team to review.
2. The Icons validated were the **salt** and **fats** icons. The sugar icon has recommendations to be considered, particularly, to be rectangular in order to differentiate it from cubes (Maggi, Savon, carton boxes etc).
3. It was observed that participants don't know what a warning label is and thus should be educated on it when the time comes. Nonetheless the idea was appealing and the participants recommended to receive feedback on the process.

# Phase TWO: 2<sup>nd</sup> Set of Focus Group Discussions

## Process of Evaluating Sample Warning Label Designs On the Cameroonian Mockup Package Products.



February 23<sup>rd</sup> – February 27, 2022



## Introduction

The Reconciliation and Development Association (RADA) conducted another 4 Focus Group discussions as part of the process to develop a front of package warning label for Cameroon. The focus groups included Active participants recruited from the Phase One FGDs. The selection process took into consideration socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the participants from and around the cities of Bamenda and Yaounde. These two cities and participants were selected based on their representation of the social, cultural, economic, political and commercial diversity of the country.

**Purpose of the FGD:** The main purpose of this first phase of the focus group discussions was to;

Evaluate a sampled Cameroonian front of package warning label developed in Phase one on the mockup's products. the key idea was to test if the label is visible, simple, clear, eye catching and stands out from the rest of the items on the package product and has the ability to capture consumer's attention and alert them of the presence of undesirable levels of nutrients of concern, implicated in Cardiovascular and other chronic metabolic diseases when consumed beyond recommended quantities.

This warning label evaluation phase aimed at addressing the following questions;

1. Are participants able to understand the accurate meaning of the label?
2. Is the label believable? Relevant?
3. How an average consumer who sees a product with this label, react. Does it increase motivation to avoid purchase of unhealthy foods? Does it increase concern and perceptions of personal risk over consuming unhealthy foods?
4. Does the label require an endorsement from a health agency or a government entity (example: MINSANTE)?
5. Are there are other competing labels that could be of significant impact on the community than warning labels



## Methodology & Participant's Profile

### 1.1. Selection of Participants

A purposive non-random sampling method was used to select the study participants. This was to ensure that participants come from various socio-economic backgrounds (low, middle and high socio-economic class), rural and urban as well as cultural backgrounds that represent the diversity in Cameroon. The potential participants were identified and nominated based on their active participation in the Phase One of the FGDs. The offline process was run by our focal persons in the two selected regions. Eligible participants based on our predefined criteria were called for confirmation. The information on the purpose of the study, venue and time were also shared with potential recruits. We took their consent to call them later for the focus group discussion if they were eligible. At least, three days before the FGDs, selected participants for each day were called for reconfirmation of their participation.

### 1.2. Study Sites

The Focus Group Discussions that took place in two districts namely, Bamenda, in Bamenda City and Bastos, in Yaounde City. The research team obtained permission for conducting the sessions in each district from the district medical Officers who also participated in the sessions as observers.

### 1.3. Focus Groups

The sessions started on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2022 in Bamenda with two groups and the remaining sessions took place on Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 in Yaounde.

Each focus group discussion, hosted 11-12 participants. Two groups were held per day, one in morning from 9-11am and second group in the Afternoon from 2:00 -4:00 pm in the afternoon. The developed evaluation form (see annex) was used together with the sampled mockups products with the waning label displayed physically and also projected on the screen. The mockup product images were numbered from 1 to 10 and each image

was evaluated separately in its separate form by participants using a Likert scale measurement of 1 to 5 as shown below:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1	2	3	4	5

Before the start of the session this rating scale was well explained to the participant and ensured they understood. The participants were also informed that the session will be recorded for the purpose of analysis and they consented. The locations selected for this activity were noise free or had minimal noise. The participants at the end of the session were provided transportation fair.

#### **1.4. Study tools**

We used a Sound card digital recorder, a laptop, tripod, camera, rollups, and an enhancing sound system, physical mockup products and a projector.

#### **1.5. Data Management**

The FGDs participants Mockup's evaluation forms were collected immediately after session and filed for proper protection, audio-recordings were downloaded the same day to the designated data storage computer and labeled, and immediately removed from the portable device. Recordings were transcribed by the research assistant and stored electronically for analysis.

#### **1.6. Situational Analysis**

The participants responded to the evaluation statements using the a five-point Likert scale: 1) Strongly Disagree 2) Disagree 3) Neutral 4) Agree and 5) Strongly Agree (see table 1)

**Table 7: Qualitative interpretation of 5-point Likert Scale of Measurements**

<b>Likert Scale Description</b>	<b>Likert-Scale</b>	<b>Likert Scale Interval</b>
---------------------------------	---------------------	------------------------------

Strongly disagree	1	1.00 – 1.80
Disagree	2	1.81 – 2.60
Neutral	3	2.61 – 3.40
Agree	4	3.41 – 4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21 – 5.00

For the primary analysis to understand the performance of the warning labels on the mockup products, we calculated the descriptive statistics (frequency and mean) for the aggregated data base. The means were interpreted as follows: Strongly disagree in the point range of 1.00 – 1.80, Disagree 1.81 – 2.60, Neutral 2.61 – 3.40, Agree 3.41 – 4.20, strongly agree 4.21 – 5.00. Also recorded FGD were transcribed, coding was done for

all the data sets using constant comparison with the transcribed text. The codes were then combined and themes developed. Tables were used to summarize the emerging text, shape and icons that works best for front of package warning label.

## 7. Demographic characteristics of the FGD participants

The FGDs sample was (47.6%) men and (52.4%) female with Majority of the participants from aged group 18-30 (61.9%) and the least above 51 years of age. Most were married (59.5 %) and had attended secondary education (57.1%) (**Table 8**). Figure 13 summarizes the preferred national language (fig 13a), religion (fig 13b), Income level (fig 13c) and Place of residence (fig 13) of the participants.

**Table 8: FGD participants**

<i>Characteristics (N=42)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	
<b>Sex</b>	Male	47.6
	Female	52.4
<b>Age groups</b>	(18-30)	28.6
	(31-50)	61.9
	(>50)	9.5
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	40.5
	Married	59.5
<b>Education</b>	Primary	2.5
	Secondary	57.1

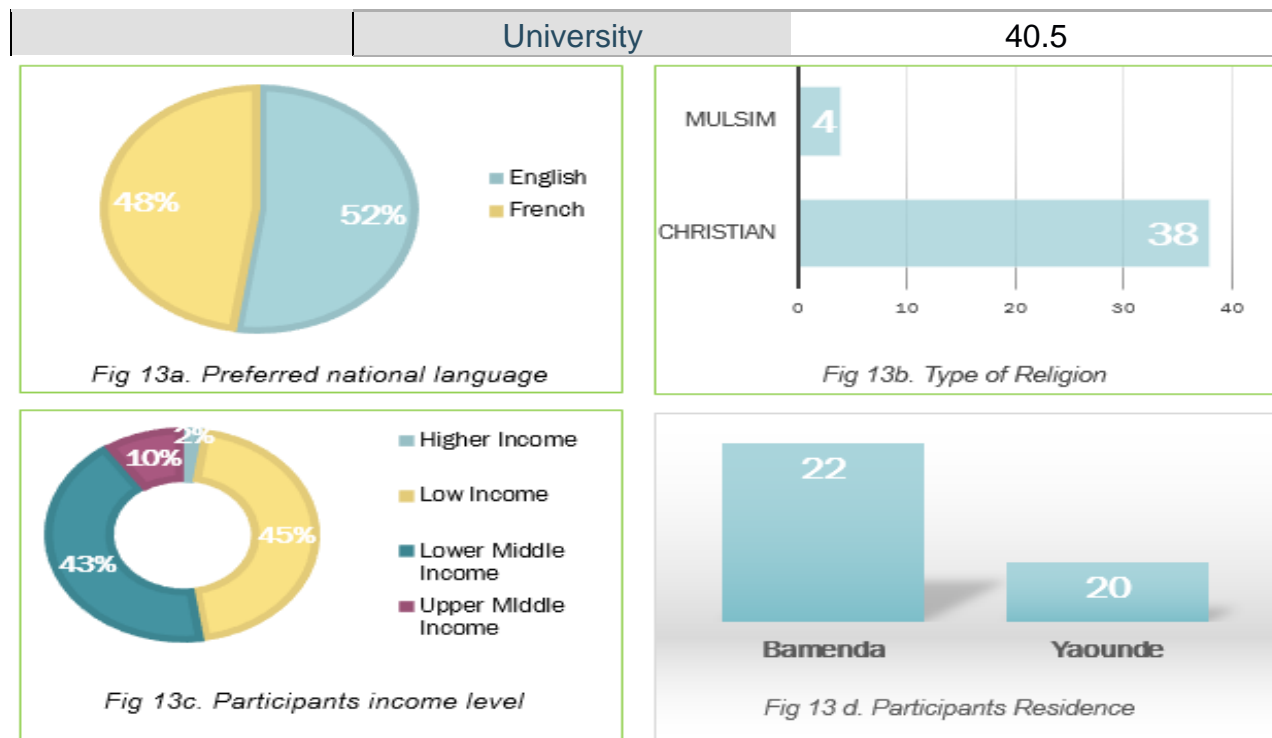


Figure 13: Distribution of income level, residence, religion and language of participants

Figure 14 shows that teachers and student represented 25.6% of the study participants, 16.3% Business men/women. House wife, Technician and public agent had a representative score of 4.7% while others like Boxer, Nurse, humanitarian, cleaner, pastor, secretary and counselor were each represented with a percentage score of 2.3%.

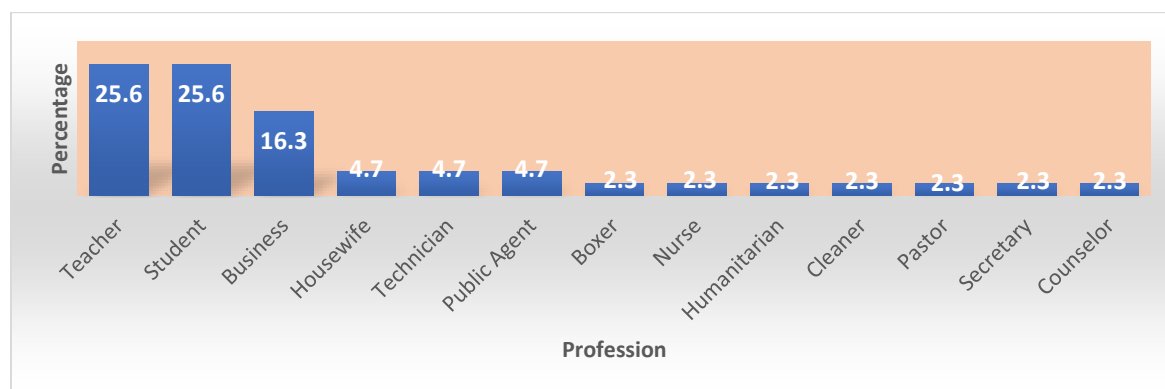


Figure 14: Distribution of participants by profession

## 8. Discussion Results

This section presents findings from the focus group discussions in the form of a summary of what participants said in response to specific questions. The information in this section represents the researchers' interpretation based upon: (1) analysis of the evaluation form, (2) notes made during the focus group discussion, (3) a review of the audio recordings and (4) a content analysis of the typed transcripts from across the seven focus group discussions.

### 1.1. Percentage performance and mean score of the warning label on the Cameroonian mockup products

Overall, participants perceptions of the warning label of the mockup product were positive with the mean ranging from 3.65 to 4.15 within the "Agree" Likert scale interval (See table 3). The strongest mean score was for this label makes me feel concerned about the effects of this product on my health (M=4.15) followed by this label would influence my decision to consume this product (M=4.03), you would talk to someone else about the message in this image (M=3.98), this label makes me stop and think(M=95), this label is relevant to me and this label grabs my attention (M=3.94), this label would influence my decision to purchase this product (M=3.86), this label is easy to see (is visible) (M=3.77), this label is believable (M=3.69), This label is easy to understand (M=3.65) (see table 3) this translate that the warning label on the mockup products were able to meet the basic requirement of eye catching, simple, clear, easy to understand and standout from the rest of the items in the front of package.

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Level</i>
<i>This label is easy to see (is visible)</i>	15.5	11.2	1.2	24.4	47.6	3.77	<i>Agree</i>
<i>this label grabs my attention</i>	11.0	11.9	3.0	20.5	53.6	3.94	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label is easy to understand</i>	13.7	15.5	3.3	27.1	40.5	3.65	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label makes me stop and think</i>	9.8	8.3	8.3	24.1	49.4	3.95	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label taught me something new</i>	10.7	11.0	6.5	18.2	53.6	3.93	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label is believable</i>	14.3	11.9	7.1	23.5	43.2	3.69	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label is relevant to me</i>	9.8	10.4	5.4	24.4	50.0	3.94	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label makes me feel concerned about the effects of this product on my health</i>	8.3	8.6	3.9	17.6	61.6	4.15	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label would influence my decision to consume this product</i>	9.8	8.6	6.3	19.3	56.0	4.03	<i>Agree</i>
<i>This label would influence my decision to purchase this product</i>	12.2	10.7	4.8	23.8	48.5	3.86	<i>Agree</i>
<i>You would talk to someone else about the message in this image</i>	10.4	11.3	4.2	17.9	56.3	3.98	<i>Agree</i>

**Table 9: Percentage and mean score performance of warning labels on mockup products.**

## **1.2. The effectiveness of warning labels on mockup products**

In measuring the overall effectiveness of the warning label on mockup products, most of the participants agreed that the warning label was effective on the mockup product 45.24%. However, 29.47% disagree with this fact while the remaining 25.30% of the participants were neutral or uncertain with their decision (see figure 15). This significant disagreement and uncertainty expressed by the participants could be explain by the fact that good number of the participants believe more work has to be done as to Size and Position of the warning label on the front of package product.

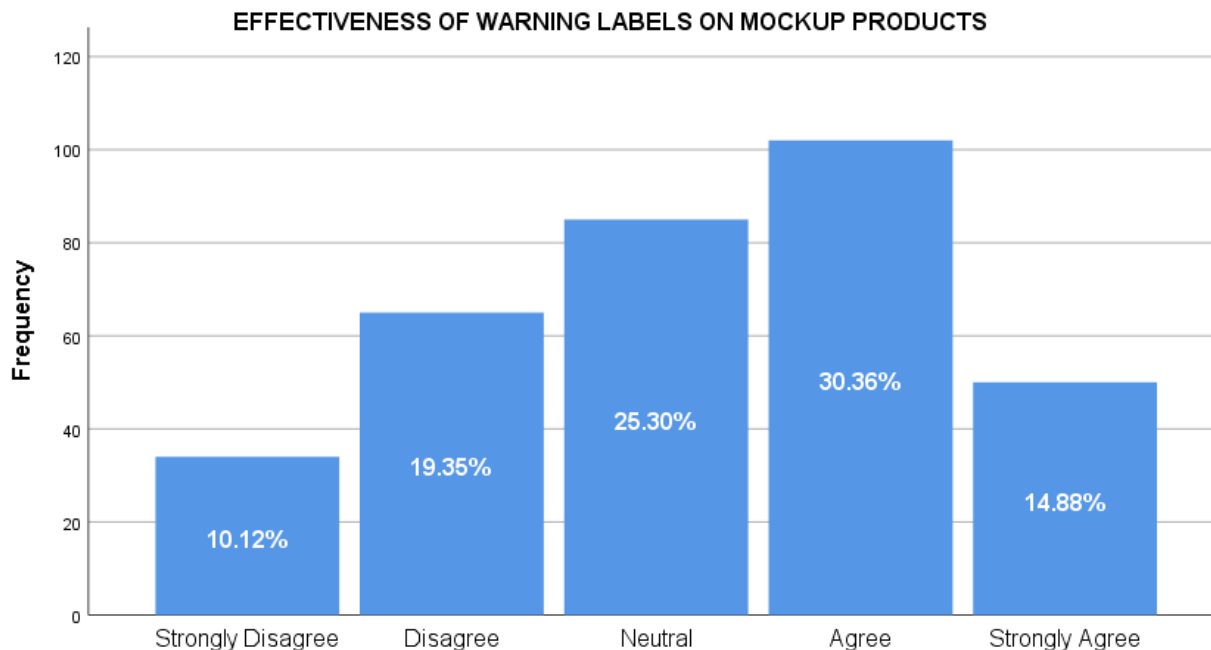


Fig 15. Effectiveness of warning labels on mockup products

### 1.3. Evaluation of Icons design element

Based on recommendations and experience from the first Focus group discussions, more icons were design and tested in this second FGD to finalize which icons speak well for itself when it comes to Cameroonian context. (Table 10)

Table 10: Summary of warning label and validation status

Nutrient	Warning label	Validation	
salt			

Fats			
Sugar			
Calories			

## I-Salt

The salt icon that was validated in the first focus group had an interesting competitor in the second phase of the FGD as a good number of participants believe that most at times salt in shaker containers are mostly found in the restaurants and a greater population of Cameroonians do not eat in the restaurant.

*“Salt in spoon overflowing is ok. Our old parents in the village and illiterate will understand and 7/10 might ask a question why is overflowing”*

**FGD Bamenda**

*“First one(shaker) this is good mostly used in restaurants and Second one we use spoon in households very common and speak well”- FGD Yaounde*

## II- Fats

This icon was validated in the first phase of the FGD when tested in the second phase with other options of fat icon, its still stood out across all the focus group discussion. This



means Cameroonians relate very much with this icon and the icon has the ability to speak for itself and as such meet the minimum requirement.

*“The first one to me is still the best it shows risk at a glance you can judge, the second (scale) looks more of a wine glass to me and you take time to make out other two I don’t know if it is cloud or what”*

**FGD Bamenda**

*“The kilo icon doesn’t speak alone but the fat person speaks more on its own” and I think it makes more sense to the community*

**FGD Yaounde**

### **III-Sugar**

The strong recommendation made in the first focus group that sugar cubes should be rectangular not square was respected in the second design of sugar icon and other options were also shared with the participants. All participants across the 4-focus group discussion agree that the sugar icon was now perfect and has the ability to communicate the intended message.

*“Sugar is very vivid. The warning strikes. You don’t need a soothsayer to understand and help you reconsider your consumption” (rectangular shape sugar icon)*

**FGD Bamenda**

*“The first icon is like a cube of magic or Savon the second icon is very ok according to me because that is the shape of a sugar cube”- FGD Yaoundé*

### **IV- Calories**

The calorie icons in the first phase failed and were not validated, with consultations and recommendations from the previous FGDs other calorie icon options were designed and shared with the participants in the second Phase. Most participants across the focus

group discussion went for the bomb explosion icon, making this icon to stand out from the rest.

*“When you chop something where ei no gree for your body na so ei go boom. The second speak well for me”.*





**FGD Bamenda**

*“First one (flash icon) has a problem because it’s also use on pesticides which shows that something poisonous” and the second is good mimic explosion”*

**FGD Yaounde**

## V- MINSANTE ENDORSMENT TEXT

In general, the MINSANTE endorsement text was validated in the first Phase of the focus group discussion but the voices of few participants were against the fact that this text should be added to the Cameroon warning label as they do not trust information from the source. As such the text was tested again in the second phase. All participants across the focus group validated the MINSANTE text endorsement as it will add more credibility to the warning label.

Endorsment	Warning Label	Validation
With MINSANTE		
Without MINSANTE		

*“With MINSANTE speak better because MINSANTE is in charge of our health so its makes it more believable.”*

**FGD Bamenda**

*“Clearly MINSANTE is very clear, its very effective ‘c’est extremenant efficace’ and very important for the warning label.”*

**FGD Yaounde**

## **Conclusions**

The findings across the four-focus group discussions show that Cameroonians could see and understand the warning label on the mockup package products. The warning label prove to meet up with the following characteristics like grabbing of attention, making someone stop and think before making a purchase, being able to teach someone something new. It was equally observed that, the warning label was believable, relevant and has the ability to influence the buying and consumption of the packaged food products, the urge to talk to someone else about the message on the product was also highly rated by the participants. The overall effectiveness of the warning label on mockup package products was good although with flows of Position and Size of the warning brought down the effectiveness score as to many more work has to be done to get the right spot on each package where it will be visible and clear to all Cameroonian. As to whether the final warning label should have a MINSANTE endorsement text it was unanimously agreed by all participants that the text will add credibility to the warning label. Three icons (fats, sugar and calories) were validated across the four FGDs leaving salt icon for further deliberation.

## **General Observations and Recommendations**

1. Include MINSANTE as it gives more confidence and credibility but position it together with the warning text.
2. Orient the warning label and put beside the product name not at the corner.
3. The MINSANTE text should be in red
4. Text within the shape should be more visible

5. For position of some warning label vertical and horizontal orientation should be played to see what fit for such products
6. Dairy products that expired within a short while the warning label should be placed next to the expiring date or directly below product name.

# EXPERT PANEL CONSULTATION MARCH 8, 2022.



## EXPERT PANEL CONSULTATIONS

Expert committee-Cameroon Front of Package Labelling Legislation

Expert Committee -Cameroon Front of Package Labelling Legislation




The expert panel meeting was held in Yaoundé in CONACO conference room and the meeting was presided over by Prof Jean Claude Mbanya. Below are the members and areas of expertise, or professional focus.

**Members Present:**

1. Prof. Jean Claude Mbanya	Public Health
2. Mr. Akoa Zang Noise	National Food and Quality Standards Agency (ANOR)
3. Mme. Akama Hermien	CONACO
4. Mr. Yusinyu Omer	Journalist
5. Dr. Crista Tabi	Nutritionist
6. Mr. Bilogueb Marie D.	Nurse
7. Mme. Tsope Anlette	Consumer Protection
8. Mr. Balaka Lylic Nahele	CONACO
9. Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy	Public Health
10. Mr. Bongkiynuy Nancy	Public Health
11. Mr. Moki Edwin Kindzeka	Media
12. Mr. Ateh Thompson Pepeah	Law
13. Mr. Robert N. Bongji	Public Health
14. Mr. Joel Fayuke	Designs
15. Dr. Mapa Claris	Public Health Policy
16. Mme Judith Noel	Tobacco risk reduction Advocacy
17. Mr. Clinton Yofenyui	Finance
18. Mme. Damaris Ntam	Communications

On March 8, 2022 RADA convened a process panel of expert from different works of life. The Team Lead, Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy took the floor and presented the project. In his presentation, he introduced the problem of non-communicable diseases in the country indicating a rise from 31% to 35% of annual deaths as well as the prevalence of hypertension at 29-30%. He then presented salt reduction as a major “best buy” of the WHO for reducing the prevalence of hypertension and cardiovascular disease deaths as modeled by Aminde et al [2] in their research paper which indicated that implementing salt reduction strategies in Cameroon will help



reduce mortality by 16.8% by 2030. This makes salt reduction a major domain of focus worthy of attention. He then proceeded to introduce different strategies for salt reduction including front of package labeling. He presented different types of package labeling and highlighted mandatory warning labels among the rest as the most impactful and choicest for maximum positive impact on community health. He then presented the objectives of the project as follows:

1. Conduct a food label/content analysis on most consumed products/condiments
2. Design a Cameroonian front of package warning label
3. Advocate for the adoption of a front of package labelling legislation

The second presentation was by Mme. Bongkiynuy Nancy. She presented results from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) where she showed the purchasing habits of packaged foods by Cameroonians and the process of validating Design Elements to use in the Cameroon Front of Package Warning Label.

The third presentation was by Mr. Ngamsha Robert and he presented on the process of evaluating sampled Cameroonian FOPL developed from phase one or first set of FGDs.

Presentations proceeded with several rounds of discussion. These rounds of discussions lead to the following key points raised by the experts and concluded as resolutions

## **KEY POINTS RAISED**

1. MINSANTE text should have been written both in English and French. However, the approved version of short form is in French.
2. The two (shaker and spoon overflowing) salt icons to be sent ahead for a final decision by the food standards agency.
3. Remove “Saturated” from the Fats Label and leave just fats.
4. A new calories Icon was proposed by the expert team and was accepted by all. The designer was tasked to design it.
5. The label must go along with narratives. A Guide should be created to inform also the implementation.
6. Project was very much aligned with the work of ANOR and we are obliged to submit our proposal ahead of their public consultations latest March 15, 2022 and subsequently, defend it if proposal is accepted of the project in April.
7. An important validation point made by the ANOR sub-Director was that if the cultural differences of the two English speaking regions and the French regions was catered for then this would be great. It was affirmative.
8. Finally, the Research team was mandated to prepare the documents that present the proposal of the front of package warning label to ANOR using the provided ANOR forms, in consultation with the Ministry of Public Health so that next steps can ensue in collaboration with ANOR.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

Prof Jean Claude Mbanya in his closing remarks reiterated on the project's importance, applauded RADA team for the work done so far and praised the experts for their inputs to ameliorate the draft designed warning label for Cameroon. Finally, he emphasized the need for the proposal to be worked and submitted to the team for review and ahead of submission to ANOR within the required timeline.





## **Updates to Ministry of Health Technical Committee March 10<sup>th</sup> 2022**

Technical Committee -Cameroon Front of Package Labelling Legislation



Meeting was held in Yaoundé in CONACO conference room and the meeting was presided over by Prof Jean Claude Mbanya and Dr. Mapa Clarisse.

**Members Present:**

1. Prof. Jean Claude Mbanya
2. Dr. Abah Abah Stephane`
3. Dr. Haoua Farida
4. Dr. Mapa Clarisse
5. Mme. Essono Ada Justine
6. Mme. Nname Alexandra
7. Mme. Ngaba Charlene
8. Mme. Tsope Anette
9. Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy
10. Mme. Bongkiynuy Nancy
11. Mme. Akama Hermine
12. Mr. Kangue Koum Henry
13. Mr. Ngamsha Robert
14. Mr. Joel Fayuke
15. Mr. Backbuin Larry
16. Mr. Clinton Yofenyui
17. Mme. Damaris Ntam



The meeting was chaired by Prof Mbanya Jean Claude in the place of Dr. Abah Abah, the Sub Director of NCDs in Cameroon. He welcomed the participants of the meeting and stated the meeting was an update from the last technical meeting while giving a summary of what happened in the last technical meeting. He briefed the participants again on the importance of Front of Package Labelling and the importance of the ministry in playing a vital role.

The President of RADA, **Mr. Ferdinand M. Sonyuy** took the floor and applauded MINSANTE for the support this far and the Chair of Cameroon Civil Society Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance (CACNSA) **Prof. Mbanya Jean Claude** for his constant support and supervision and everyone and special thanks to the sub director of NCD at the Ministry of Health **Dr. Abah Abah Stephane** and **Dr. Haoua Farida** for supporting the project this far. He continued by highlighting results of first sets of FGDs, results from the second sets of FGDs and resolutions from the expert meeting. He proceeded by showcasing next steps from the technical meeting using a road map and the role we all need to play.

The second presentation was by Mr. **Backbuin Larry**. He presented results from the lab analysis focusing on the content and label analysis of salt. He elaborated the objectives and methodology highlighting the fact that we did a store audit to know the most consumed products prior analysis using the AFRO Nutrition Profile Model. He proceeded by showing the various food categories we analyzed and their content and label results. He continued with a presentation on the nutrition profile models emphasizing what it is, its importance and the need for it to be adopted in Cameroon.

Presentations proceeded with several rounds of discussion. These rounds of discussions lead to the following key point raised by the Technical Committee and concluded as resolutions.

## **Key Points Raised**

1. RADA should work closely with MINSANTE to set a draft Nutrition Profile Model for Cameroon between now and March 30, 2022. Technical team proposed/agreed for the AFRO model to be adopted
2. The project team to work on another icon to represent Fats.
3. The need for trans-fats be incorporated in RADA project for elimination once and for all.
4. The need for lab results to showcase the statistics on imported most consumable products that do not have labels and those with wrong labels.
5. MINSANTE need to define the thresholds for which the text will be used by ANOR
6. The need for a standard national Laboratory
7. An important point made by a representative from DPS in the Ministry of Health made mention that they are already working on a text and equally made us know that ANOR is finance by the industry and therefore came the question if RADA is ready to finance ANOR in their public consultation or community testing?
8. Finally, the Research team was mandated to prepare the documents that present the proposal of the front of package warning label and the Nutrition Profile Model together with the Ministry of Health to ANOR using the provided ANOR forms, in consultation with the Ministry of Public Health so that next steps can ensue in collaboration with ANOR.

## **Closing Remarks:**







Prof. Jean Claude Mbanya in his closing remarks reiterated on the project's importance, applauded RADA team for the work done so far and the technical team for their commendable inputs. He urged the Ministry to know their priorities, look for grants to support the system and applauded MINSANTE for supporting the project. Finally, he emphasized the need for the Nutrition Profile be drafted ahead of submission to ANOR within the required timeline.

# PROPOSED FINAL FRONT OF PACKAGEWARNING LABELS

The following final designs have therefore been drafted through a rigorous scientific process together with the consultations from the experts and technical meetings. The labels are by this report, recommended for use by the Ministry of Health to achieve the WHO desired legislation of the Front of Package Warning Labelling legislation.

The Reconciliation and Development Association (RADA), the Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance and the Global Supporting Partner, Resolve Inc, as well as allied partners and organizations collectively support this legislation for Cameroon.



Nutrient	Warning Label	Label Orientation on packaged product.
Salt		<p data-bbox="589 661 706 693" style="color: green;">Vertical</p> 
Sugar		
Fats		
Calories		 <p data-bbox="816 1690 976 1722" style="color: green;">Horizontal</p>

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2. Aminde, L.N., Cobiac, L.J., Veerman, J.L., 2019. Potential impact of a modest reduction in salt intake on blood pressure, cardiovascular disease burden and premature mortality: a modelling study. *Open Heart* 6, e000943. <https://doi.org/10.1136/openhrt-2018-000943>
3. Reyes, M., Garmendia, M.L., Olivares, S., Aqueveque, C., Zacarías, I., Corvalán, C., 2019. Development of the Chilean front-of-package food warning label. *BMC Public Health* 19, 906. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7118-1>
4. Harris JM, Shiptsova R. Consumer demand for convenience foods: Demographics and expenditures. *JFood Distrib Res.* 2007;38(3):22
5. Monteiro CA, Levy RB, Claro RM, de Castro IR, Cannon G. Increasing consumption of ultra-processed foods and likely impact on human health: evidence from Brazil. *Public Health Nutr.* 2011;14(1):5-13.

## Other Resource materials

1. Front of package labeling by Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
2. Front of package food labelling: Empowering consumers to make Healthy choices by Global Food Research Program; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
3. Experiences in the design and Implementation of front of Pack nutrition warning labels in Latin America and the Caribbean.
4. Nutrient Profile Model for the WHO African Region
5. What's in Our Food? A guide to introducing effective front of package nutrient labels; *by Global Food Research Program; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

# *“Promoting Health together”*

Thank you.



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