PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (**http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf**) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Protocol for a scoping review of existing policies on the prevention and control of obesity across countries in Africa
AUTHORS	Adom, Theodosia; Puoane, Thandi; DeVilliers, Anniza; Kengne, Andre

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Stephen Leeder University of Sydney, Australia
REVIEW RETURNED	04-Aug-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	This paper is an expression of a worthy intention – to assay the policy responses of African nations to the growing problem of obesity and to critically appraise these against the WHO recommendations. While the intentions are honourable, the authors have yet to actually do anything and so there are no results to assess. I suggest that the paper be held over by the authors until such time as they have done what they say they intend to do as it will be much more interesting and important once they have results.

REVIEWER	Rosemary Geddes University of Edinburgh UK
REVIEW RETURNED	09-Sep-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	General comments: Overall it is very encouraging to see a protocol for a review of this type in Africa. The subject is an important one. Generally my view of the protocol is that on the one hand it is too ambitious, and on the other hand, it is not ambitious enough. It is too ambitious in geographical scope in that the proposal is to include all African countries. In the Inclusion criteria, it says: "Policy documents, reports and literature produced or published that aim at reducing the risk factors of NCDs, or that form part of larger chronic diseases prevention strategies, or to prevent and control obesity at the national, sub-national and school levels." This will be a vast undertaking since there are 54 countries in Africa, and in many of those countries there are usually between 5-12 (or more) provinces, all of which could have their own policy documents. And you are including not only everything published but everything produced – that requires you to obtain (possibly by post or email) everything actually written. I would definitely consider rather including, either a select number of countries, or a region (e.g. southern Africa) or otherwise limit to national level policy documents, or perhaps limit to a setting or age-group e.g. schools or workplace or

children/adolescents.

It is not ambitious enough in methodology. The scoping review seems fairly limited in that all that will be done is that these policies will be summarised and described, in terms of 'nature, extent and range'. I think that this will be of superficial and limited use to simply say "this is what exists". There is now so much information and evidence out there of what actually works. I believe this piece of work could be much more valuable if what is found is actually classified and described according to known evidence of effectiveness. What I mean is that the range of policy and regulatory approaches have certain strengths of evidence behind them. It would be great to go that step further and see how the policies are found measure up to these. Furthermore, rather than re-inventing the wheel, it would be good to use an existing framework to classify the policies, something like the ANGELO framework (Analysis Grid for Environments Linked to Obesity) is a well-respected tool for this. ANGELO comes from Swinburn et al. (who you have in your reference list) and has been used specifically to map broad portfolios of interventions in countries, most notably in Pacific island communities where rates of obesity in adults are among the highest in the world.

[references: Swinburn B, Egger G, Raza F: Dissecting obesogenic environments: the development and application of a framework for identifying and prioritizing environmental interventions for obesity. Prev Med 1999;29:563-570.

Schultz J, Utter J, Mathews L, Cama T, Mavoa H, Swinburn B: The Pacific OPIC Project (Obesity Prevention in Communities): action plans and interventions. Pac Health Dialog 2007;14:147-153.]

Also see this paper by some colleagues and myself for an example https://www.karger.com/Article/FullText/438500 We did a similar scoping of policy in one country (!) Scotland, and found 62 potential intervention policies. We used the ANGELO framework to classify and assess them.

Finally, with a bit of work, this could be an excellent protocol, so well done for proposing this.

Grammar, language:

This appears to be written rapidly with some grammatical errors. It also seems a little simplistic in approach. e.g. in Abstract and Intro line 4 – "Policy approach to obesity prevention is a form of public intervention........." (also repeated in line 13 of Introduction) This is poor English.

Say "A policy approach to......." or "Policy approaches to obesity prevention constitute a form of public health intervention.........
line 17 – "Full texts eligible policy documents......." again poor English

Abstract and Introduction:

I think the scale and burden of NCDs and their risk factors in LMICs is not emphasized enough. NCDs account for 63 % of mortality globally and the 80 % of NCD-related deaths that occur in low and middle income countries. Current projections indicate that by 2020, the largest increase in NCD-related deaths will occur in Africa and by 2030, NCD-related deaths will exceed (by 75 %) the combined deaths from communicable diseases, nutritional, maternal and neo-natal deaths.

The last paragraph of the Introduction is rather simplistic and repetitive. The statement "Some of these policy instruments are laws, regulations, taxes, subsidies and social marketing campaigns that are population-based affecting both children and adults and may

target different settings...." is quite obvious and sounds like it is written for school-aged children.
Objective
Here the problem as mentioned earlier is in the size and scope of this undertaking.

Methods:
Problem mentioned earlier is in Inclusion criteria (too broad), the limited methodology and recommendation to use existing frameworks (both issues addressed above in General comments).
Step 3: Study selection
Often useful to include a third party to resolve disagreements.
Stage 4: Charting the data
line 2 – should be "....extract the data from the included data." (not ...included research)
line 4 – should be "Two researchers will independently extract the data and it will be compared."
Stage 5: Collating....
This section is quite poor, repetitive and vague. I think it needs to be fleshed out a bit. This is where you could perhaps say that you plan to use a known framework (such as ANGELO or something similar) to classify and summarise the policies found. If the WHO strategy documents will guide it – how will this happen? Will a framework be developed from the WHO documents?
Also here would be a good place to say that the policies will be categorised in some way according to known effectiveness of intervention.

Conclusion:
2nd line – This will evaluate how these policies...... Rather use "This will assess how these policies..."
I would not use 'evaluate' as this has a very specific meaning, and you are not doing any sort of Evaluation project.

References:
May want to include a reference to the Foresight Report. I'm aware that it is high-income country orientated but it is a hugely important document in the Obesity research world, especially the famous diagram which is repeatedly shown.
[Foresight: Tackling Obesities: Future Choices, 2nd ed. London, Government Office for Science. 2009.]

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 2
It is too ambitious in geographical scope in that the proposal is to include all African countries
Our answer: We thank the reviewer for this comment. Co-authors on this manuscript have been extensively involved in reviews on non-communicable diseases in general, using an African perspective. The experience gained suggest that basic information on key aspect of NCDs are still lacking in various setting in Africa. We are therefore anticipating that in spite of the large geographical coverage, this scoping review on prevention and control policies for obesity in a region where the focus has been, and is still on conditions of undernutrition, will not uncover so many existing evidence. As per the suggestions however, the scope has been limited to national level policy documents. The manuscript has been revised accordingly.

The scoping review seems fairly limited in that all that will be done is that these policies will be summarised and described, in terms of 'nature, extent and range'. I think that this will be of superficial

and limited use to simply say "this is what exists". There is now so much information and evidence out there of what actually works. I believe this piece of work could be much more valuable if what is found is actually classified and described according to known evidence of effectiveness. Furthermore, rather than re-inventing the wheel, it would be good to use an existing framework to classify the policies.

Our answer: Thanks for this important suggestion. Policies will be categorised using the ANGELO Framework.

Grammar, language:
This appears to be written rapidly with some grammatical errors. It also seems a little simplistic in approach. e.g. in Abstract and Intro line 4 – "Policy approach to obesity prevention is a form of public intervention........." (also repeated in line 13 of Introduction) This is poor English.
Say "A policy approach to......." or "Policy approaches to obesity prevention constitute a form of public health intervention........

Our answer: This has been done

line 17 – "Full texts eligible policy documents......." again poor English

Our answer: Done as suggested

Abstract and Introduction:
I think the scale and burden of NCDs and their risk factors in LMICs is not emphasized enough. NCDs account for 63 % of mortality globally and the 80 % of NCD-related deaths that occur in low and middle income countries. Current projections indicate that by 2020, the largest increase in NCD-related deaths will occur in Africa and by 2030, NCD-related deaths will exceed (by 75 %) the combined deaths from communicable diseases, nutritional, maternal and neo-natal deaths.

Our answer: Section has been revised.

Objective
Here the problem as mentioned earlier is in the size and scope of this undertaking.

Our answer: As per the suggestions however, the scope has been limited to national level policy documents. This has been revised in manuscript.

Methods:
Problem mentioned earlier is in Inclusion criteria (too broad), the limited methodology and recommendation to use existing frameworks (both issues addressed above in General comments).

Our answer: Both issues have been attended to

Step 3: Study selection
Often useful to include a third party to resolve disagreements.

Our answer: This section has been revised to include a third party to resolve disagreements.

Stage 4: Charting the data
line 2 – should be "....extract the data from the included data." (not ...included research) line 4 – should be "Two researchers will independently extract the data and it will be compared."

Our answer: Revision done

Stage 5: Collating....

This section is quite poor, repetitive and vague. I think it needs to be fleshed out a bit. This is where you could perhaps say that you plan to use a known framework (such as ANGELO or something similar) to classify and summarise the policies found. If the WHO strategy documents will guide it – how will this happen? Will a framework be developed from the WHO documents?

Also here would be a good place to say that the policies will be categorised in some way according to known effectiveness of intervention.

Our answer: This section has been revised as: To guide the assessment of the role of these policies in creating less obesogenic environments, the ANGELO (Analysis Grid for Environments Linked to Obesity) Framework will be used to categorise policies into one of four environments: physical (what is available), economic (what are the costs), political (what are the rules) and sociocultural (what are the attitudes and beliefs); and two settings (macro- and micro-). The ANGELO Framework is a common framework for understanding the obesogenicity of the environment.

Conclusion:

2nd line – This will evaluate how these policies...... Rather use "This will assess how these policies..." I would not use 'evaluate' as this has a very specific meaning, and you are not doing any sort of Evaluation project.

Our answer: This has been revised.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Dr Rosemary Geddes Usher Institute of Population Health Science and Informatics University of Edinburgh Edinburgh Scotland UK
REVIEW RETURNED	05-Dec-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	I think this is greatly improved. Well done and hope this goes well.