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Aim

The aim of food4smiles is to promote a healthy growth and development of children in the first 1000 days of their lives, together with parents and other stakeholders. The study area of food4smiles is Amsterdam Nieuw-West in Amsterdam. A multi-ethnic neighbourhood in the Netherlands.

Background & scope

The first 1000 days of life, from conception until 2 years old, are a crucial period in which the foundations for health, growth, and development across the lifespan are established. A healthy lifestyle including a healthy diet, sleep, physical activity and relaxation are especially important in this period of a child's life. We still do not understand why some children experience more health problems **during the first 1000 days** than others, and how these health disparities can be dissolved.

Top-down programmes and interventions do not seem to be very effective and a participatory bottom-up approach is needed to attune to the experiences and needs of parents.

Therefore food4smiles aims to work together with parents and stakeholders to find ways to give every child the best possible start in life. We use **participatory action research**, **system science** and **art** as methods.

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Participatory Action Research

Food4smiles uses the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) to work together with parents and other stakeholders on promoting a healthy start for children in the first 1000 days. PAR combines research with the development and evaluation of actions, and has a strong focus on the participation of the target group through co-creation. This bottom-up process values the experiential knowledge, perspectives and needs of the participants. Food4smiles is evaluated through a process evaluation using qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups and participant observations.

Preliminary results

