

Genetically Modified Foods, Chlorinated Water, and Non-Communicable Disease Risk in Africa: An Exposome-Based Policy Analysis

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CITATION

Sangwa S. (2025). Genetically Modified Foods, Chlorinated Water, and Non-Communicable Disease Risk in Africa: An Exposome-Based Policy Analysis. Open Journal of Stigmatized Knowledge & Suppressed Discourses (OJ-SKSD). Vol 01. Issue 01. Open Christian Press.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17087784>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 07 September 2025

Published: 09 September 2025

Category: Original Article

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PUBLISHER INFO

Open Christian Press—the publishing arm of Open Christian University—is produced in partnership with the Center for Faith and Work.

Abstract: Background. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are escalating across Africa, yet prevailing public-health narratives largely attribute this trend to lifestyle change. Drawing on ecological systems theory, critical medical ecology and post-normal science, this study interrogates under-explored environmental determinants—specifically genetically modified (GM) food chains and chemically treated drinking water—that may be fuelling Africa’s NCD burden. **Objectives.** We (i) synthesised toxicological, epidemiological and socio-political evidence on pesticide-laden GM crops and water disinfection by-products, (ii) contrasted these exposures with conventional lifestyle risk factors, and (iii) evaluated their ethical and theological implications within a Sola Scriptura framework of stewardship and justice. **Methods.** An integrative review of peer-reviewed literature (2015–2025), official datasets and policy reports assessed mixture-level exposures and chronic-disease outcomes. Studies were critically appraised for methodological quality and relevance to African contexts; findings were thematically organised and interpreted through an exposome lens. **Results.** Multiple animal and human studies link chronic ingestion of glyphosate-based herbicides, Bt proteins, trihalomethanes, PFAS and heavy metals to cancers, diabetes, endocrine disruption and organ failure. In African settings, water chloroform levels frequently exceed WHO guidelines, and GM-crop adoption coincides with rising pesticide residues in staple foods. These exposures interact with, and sometimes outweigh, behavioural risk factors, revealing a syndemic pattern of NCD causation that current policies overlook. **Conclusions.** Invisible toxics in Africa’s food and water systems constitute neglected yet modifiable drivers of NCDs. Reframing prevention demands precautionary regulation of agro-chemicals and water treatment, investment in mixture-aware monitoring, and ethically grounded public engagement. Integrating environmental safeguards with lifestyle interventions could decisively curb Africa’s emerging NCD epidemic. Beyond biomedical determinants, this study also interrogates whether contemporary global-governance structures guiding African food and water policy echo strategic blueprints long attributed—rightly or wrongly—to early twentieth-century conspiracy texts such as the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* and later codifications like John Coleman’s ‘21 Goals of the Illuminati,’ thereby raising fresh questions about power, sovereignty, and public health stewardship.

Keywords: non-communicable diseases; Africa; genetically modified foods; chemically treated water; environmental toxicology; public health policy; bioethics

¹ **Disclaimer:** The views expressed are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect those of Open Christian University

1. Introduction

1.1. Background: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory conditions, and diabetes have become leading causes of mortality worldwide (WHO, 2024). Low- and middle-income regions are particularly affected: as of 2021, over 73% of global NCD deaths occurred in developing countries (WHO, 2024). Africa, historically burdened by infectious diseases, is now experiencing a “*silent epidemic*” of NCDs (Ayomoh, 2021). In the World Health Organization (WHO) African region, NCDs caused 37% of all deaths in 2019 – a steep rise from 24% in 2000 (WHO AFRO, 2023). The WHO African Region now attributes more than a third of all deaths to NCDs, with rapid year-on-year growth driven by modifiable environmental exposures alongside diet and lifestyle (WHO AFRO, 2024). Within those exposures, drinking-water chemistry matters: disinfection by-products (DBPs) such as THMs and haloacetic acids form when chlorine reacts with organic matter (Li & Mitch, 2017); PFAS persist through conventional treatment (Groffen et al., 2018; EPA, 2024); and elevated nitrates from agricultural runoff foster endogenous formation of N-nitroso compounds (WHO, 2017). Each pathway carries empirical links—strongest for bladder cancer with THMs, increasingly persuasive for PFAS-related lipid disorders and kidney/testicular cancers, and suggestive for nitrate-associated colorectal cancer, particularly in high-risk subgroups (Helte et al., 2025; EPA, 2024; Beane Freeman et al., 2022). This epidemiological transition in sub-Saharan Africa is often attributed to economic development, urbanization, and associated lifestyle shifts (Konkor et al., 2023). As incomes rise and populations urbanize, traditional diets and active livelihoods give way

to processed food consumption, sedentary behavior, tobacco use, and other lifestyle risk factors (WHO AFRO, 2023; WHO, 2024).

Public health discourse and interventions have correspondingly focused on behavioral modifications – promoting healthier diets, exercise, and tobacco/alcohol control – to curb the NCD tide (WHO AFRO, 2023). Indeed, the WHO identifies unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, smoking, and alcohol as the four main behavioral risks for NCDs, alongside air pollution as a key environmental risk (WHO, 2024). This dominant narrative frames NCD prevention largely as a matter of personal choice and lifestyle change. In Africa, where healthcare systems are often under-resourced, international and national programs have emphasized education on lifestyle diseases, screening for hypertension and diabetes, and managing metabolic risk factors (obesity, high blood pressure, etc.) (WHO AFRO, 2023). These efforts reflect a widely held assumption: that Africa’s rising NCD burden is primarily an outcome of modern lifestyles converging with weak health infrastructure.

However, emerging evidence suggests that this conventional perspective may be incomplete. While lifestyle factors are indisputably important, focusing on individual behavior alone neglects broader environmental and technological determinants of health. Africa’s rapid integration into globalized food and agriculture systems has introduced new exposures – from ultra-processed and genetically modified foods to industrial chemicals in water supplies – that were largely absent in traditional settings. These exposures could be silently contributing to chronic disease risks. Notably, debates in African health research have begun to acknowledge that NCD discussions “focused on individualistic risk factors to the neglect of other

important drivers” like environmental conditions (Konkor et al., 2023). Indeed, a Lancet commentary urges ending the “neglect of pollution” as a major NCD risk factor globally (Fuller et al., 2018).

To frame this inquiry rigorously, we adopt an exposome perspective, which conceptualizes chronic disease as the life-course consequence of multiple, interacting environmental exposures rather than isolated agents. The exposome lens, first articulated two decades ago and now institutionalized in major research programs, compels attention to mixture effects in food and water that conventional one-chemical-at-a-time risk assessment often misses (Wild, 2005; NIEHS, 2024; *The Lancet*, 2025). In drinking water alone, the co-occurrence of regulated and unregulated disinfection by-products (DBPs), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), pharmaceuticals, and micro-/nanoplastics constitutes a cumulative exposure scenario plausibly relevant to Africa’s NCD transition (Naidenko et al., 2019; WHO, 2017). Recent mixture-toxicology work shows that DBP mixtures can exhibit additivity or more-than-additive effects, strengthening biologic plausibility for epidemiologic signals in cancer and cardiometabolic disease (Stalter et al., 2020; Zhang & Chen, 2023).

1.2. Problem Statement: The problem addressed by this study is the neglected role of *genetically modified (GM) foods* and *chemically treated water* in Africa’s NCD epidemic. Current public health models in Africa predominantly target lifestyle modification, implicitly assuming that diet quality (in terms of macronutrients, salt, sugar, etc.) is the key dietary risk, and that water interventions mainly concern infectious disease prevention. Yet, little attention is given to the *qualitative composition*

of modern foods and water – specifically, whether novel bioengineering or chemical treatments could have insidious long-term health effects. GM foods, introduced over the past two decades, often come with pesticide residues (e.g. glyphosate from herbicide-tolerant crops) and novel proteins with potential allergenicity or toxicity (Bawa & Anilakumar, 2013; Shen et al., 2022). Simultaneously, many African communities now rely on chlorinated or chemically purified water; while effective against microbes, this process can generate disinfection by-products that are carcinogenic or endocrine-disrupting (Ambelu et al., 2017). These factors remain marginal in African NCD policy discourse. The dominant lifestyle-based narrative, by not accounting for environmental toxic exposures, risks overlooking crucial causative links. There is a gap in *integrated analysis* that connects the dots between Africa’s changing food systems, water treatment practices, and the surge in chronic diseases.

This study posits that Africa’s epidemiological shift is not merely a byproduct of urban lifestyles but also a consequence of bio-political forces that have altered the very substance of food and water. Global agri-food industries, under the banner of innovation and aid, have introduced GM crops and chemical-intensive farming across parts of Africa, potentially seeding long-term health consequences. Similarly, the push for improved water access via chemical treatment, while reducing infections, may inadvertently increase chronic disease risk through cumulative toxin exposure (Ambelu et al., 2017). The problem is further compounded by socio-political contexts: weak regulation and limited toxicological monitoring in many African countries mean populations could be unknowingly consuming harmful substances. This raises ethical issues of

consent, justice, and the stewardship of African communities' health. Although the *Protocols* have been rigorously exposed as a political forgery and an instrument of antisemitic propaganda (Bronner, 2000; Randall, 2015), historians still note that its schematic emphasis on centralised control of food supplies and public opinion shaped twentieth-century discourse on “globalist” agendas (Hlaváčová, 2021). Scholars of propaganda have shown how these themes, once stripped of their overt antisemitism, re-emerge in twenty-first-century critiques of multilateral agencies that champion agricultural biotechnology or water-treatment financing in the Global South (Bronner, 2000; Hlaváčová, 2021). In a similar vein, Coleman's enumeration of the Illuminati's “21 Goals”—for example, Goal 6, which advocates the expansion of omnipresent health technologies—speaks to present-day debates over WHO-brokered bio-surveillance and World Bank-backed sanitation projects (Coleman, 1991; World Bank, 2024)..

1.3. Research Objectives: In response to the above concerns, this manuscript pursues the following objectives: *[1.] Expose and Examine Environmental Contributors:* Critically examine the extent to which genetically modified foods and chemically treated (or contaminated) water may be contributing to the rise of NCDs in Africa, through a synthesis of toxicological, epidemiological, and public health evidence. This involves evaluating studies on pesticide residues, novel transgenic proteins, water disinfection by-products, heavy metals, and other chemical exposures and their links to chronic diseases (e.g. cancers, endocrine/metabolic disorders). *[2.] Challenge the Dominant Narrative:* Deconstruct the prevailing lifestyle-centric narrative by

contrasting it with historical and cross-disciplinary insights. We aim to show how an exclusive focus on individual behavior is reductive, by highlighting historical health patterns (e.g. lower NCD incidence in traditional African diets/ecologies), and the introduction of new risk factors via technological “solutions” (like GMOs and chlorine) that have escaped adequate scrutiny (Konkor et al., 2023). In doing so, we seek to reframe NCD causation as not only a matter of personal choice but also of policy choices and industrial practices. *[3.] Integrate Ethical and Theological Reflection:* Evaluate the *civilizational and bioethical implications* of manipulating fundamental resources (food, water) in the African context. By incorporating biblical (Sola Scriptura) perspectives, we aim to provide a theological critique of what can be termed “*biopolitical manipulation*” – i.e. the control of populations through engineered food and water systems. This objective enriches the analysis with considerations of moral responsibility, stewardship of creation, and the dignity of affected communities in Africa. *[4.] Inform Policy and Research:* Formulate evidence-based recommendations for public health policy, regulatory oversight, and future research to address these neglected factors. This includes suggesting a more holistic NCD prevention framework that encompasses environmental health safeguards, stronger chemical regulation, community education on hidden risks, and an emphasis on precautionary principles in technology adoption.

Research Questions: To operationalize the above objectives, the study is guided by these key research questions: **RQ1:** To what extent do trace chemicals arising from water treatment (e.g. chlorine by-products, agricultural runoff, heavy metals) correlate with the

incidence of NCDs in African populations? Specifically, what does the literature report about long-term consumption of treated or contaminated water and outcomes like cancer, endocrine disorders, or organ damage in Africa? **RQ2:** How might genetically modified foods contribute to physiological changes that predispose consumers to chronic diseases? What evidence exists (from animal studies, clinical observations, or epidemiology) linking GM food consumption – or associated agrochemicals – to NCDs such as cancers, metabolic syndrome, or allergic/immunological disorders? **RQ3:** How do these environmental factors (GM foods and water chemicals) interact with or differ from traditional lifestyle risk factors in explaining the NCD rise? In other words, can the patterns of NCD emergence in Africa be better explained when considering these exposures alongside diet and behavior, and do they perhaps fill gaps left by lifestyle-only explanations? **RQ4:** What are the socio-political and ethical dimensions of introducing GM foods and chemical water treatments in Africa vis-à-vis health outcomes? This includes asking: Were African communities adequately informed or protected regarding potential risks? How do power dynamics (global North-South, corporate interests, governance) play into the narrative of “development” via these technologies? And what insights do biblical principles offer in critiquing or guiding

the use of such technologies in relation to human well-being and the integrity of creation?

By addressing these questions, the research seeks to paint a comprehensive picture of an alternative narrative: one in which **“invisible” toxic exposures** are recognized as pivotal in Africa’s NCD epidemic, demanding urgent multidisciplinary attention.

2. Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

Understanding the interplay between modified foods, water chemistry, and NCDs in Africa requires a synthesis of perspectives across multiple levels – from molecular biology to global political economy. Three complementary theories form the backbone of our conceptual framework: (1) *Ecological Systems Theory*, (2) *Critical Medical Ecology*, and (3) *Post-Normal Science*. Together, they enable a holistic analysis that spans environmental, social, and epistemological dimensions of the problem. **Figure 1** illustrates how these theoretical lenses intersect to conceptualize the pathways from global interventions to individual health outcomes.

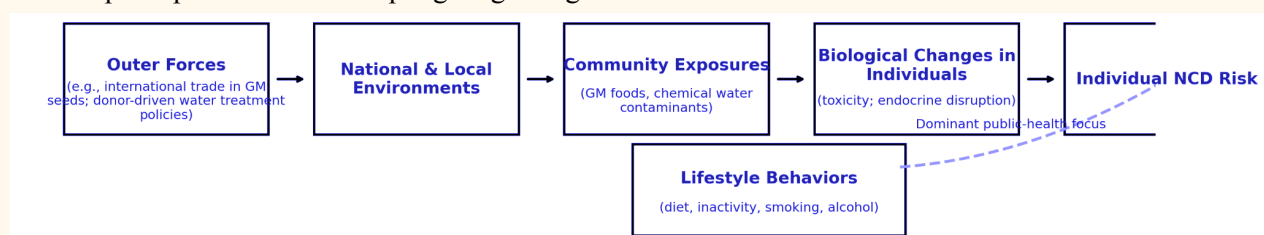


Figure 1: Conceptual framework linking global food/water system interventions to individual NCD risk. Outer forces (e.g. international trade in GM seeds, donor-driven water treatment policies) influence national and local environments, shaping community exposures to GM foods and chemical water contaminants. These exposures can induce biological changes in individuals (toxicity, endocrine

disruption, etc.), heightening NCD susceptibility. The dominant public health narrative (dashed line) has focused on lifestyle behaviors, potentially overlooking these upstream factors.

2.1. Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979): This theory posits that an individual's health is influenced by concentric layers of environment – from immediate family and community to broader societal and policy contexts. Applied to NCD causation, it moves analysis beyond the individual microsystem (personal diet, exercise) to the exosystem and macrosystem factors that indirectly shape health behaviors and exposures. For instance, an African consumer's diet is conditioned by what is available and affordable in the market (community food environment) and that in turn may be shaped by national agricultural policies or international trade agreements promoting certain crops (e.g. GM maize imports). Ecological systems theory thus alerts us that invisible chemical ecosystems – such as the quality of water infrastructure or the nature of agricultural supply chains – interact with individual biology in producing disease outcomes. By using this lens, we interpret chronic disease not merely as a product of personal choice, but as a response to multi-level environmental exposures. This is particularly relevant in Africa, where individuals often have limited control over structural conditions (like pollution or food imports) affecting their lives. We will use this theory to map how macro-level interventions (e.g., the introduction of GM crops) cascade down to micro-level health effects.

2.2. Critical Medical Ecology: Drawing from medical anthropology and political ecology, this approach examines health within the dynamic interface of human biology, culture, and the political-economic environment. Critical medical ecology is inherently multidisciplinary – it demands that we question

how power relations and industrial forces shape health risks. In the context of this study, it directs attention to questions like: Who promotes GM foods in Africa, and who bears the health risks? Are communities given a voice in decisions about water fluoridation or pesticide regulation, or are those decisions driven by external donors and corporations? By emphasizing “critical,” this framework interrogates the status quo: for example, it would critically assess the role of multinational agritech companies (often from the global North) in *shaping African food systems* and possibly externalizing health costs to local populations (Omobowale et al., 2009). It also looks at historical and cultural context – how traditional African foodways (organically grown, non-processed foods) provided protection against certain diseases, and how the erosion of food sovereignty could be linked to rising vulnerabilities. We use critical medical ecology to analyze how industrial agriculture, trade policies, and governance contribute to an “*industrial epidemic*” of NCDs. For example, pesticide-intensive farming of GM crops may be politically enabled by weak regulations or trade incentives, placing farm workers and consumers at risk (EHSS, 2019; Scientific African, 2022). This framework thus helps connect the dots between macro-political drivers and micro-biological effects, insisting that the distribution of risks (and benefits) be viewed through a justice lens.

2.3. Post-Normal Science (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993): NCD causation involving novel technologies falls into a realm of complexity and uncertainty where traditional scientific paradigms may falter. Post-normal science is a framework for inquiry in situations

of high stakes and uncertain facts, advocating for an inclusive approach to knowledge that questions established assumptions. This is particularly apt for evaluating GMOs and long-term chemical exposures, where *consensus science* might lag behind emerging concerns. For instance, the mainstream scientific consensus has generally deemed approved GM foods as safe for consumption, based on available short-to-medium-term studies. However, post-normal science would argue that when potential risks could be serious (e.g. carcinogenesis, multi-generational effects) and the science is contested or incomplete, it is rational to adopt an expanded evidentiary base and precautionary approach. This includes valuing independent and interdisciplinary research, as well as local knowledge or whistleblower reports that might challenge official positions. In our framework, post-normal science legitimizes examining non-mainstream evidence – such as independent animal feeding studies that found organ damage or tumors in rodents fed GM diets (Shen et al., 2022) – rather than dismissing them outright. It also underscores the importance of transparent risk communication and public participation: if the long-term safety of GM foods or certain water chemicals cannot be guaranteed, stakeholders (from farmers to consumers) have a right to weigh in on how those uncertainties are managed. By using this theory, we maintain a stance that is simultaneously scientifically rigorous and open to dissenting data, reflecting the high social stakes of our topic (the health of millions) and the ethical imperative to err on the side of caution when evidence is not definitive.

Synthesis into Conceptual Model:

These theories collectively inform our conceptual model (Figure 1). We envisage a multi-layered causal pathway: Global and national policy/economic forces (e.g. biotech

promotions, donor-funded water programs) sit at the outer layer, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's macro-system. These influence community-level environments – farms saturated with agrochemicals, municipal water with chlorine – which in turn shape household and individual exposures (e.g. consuming Bt-maize or chlorinated water daily). Critical medical ecology helps label the power and equity issues at each linkage (who controls the seeds? who monitors water quality?), while post-normal science reminds us to mark points of scientific uncertainty (e.g. unknown long-term effect of low-dose pesticide ingestion) with caution flags. The traditional lifestyle risk factors are still present in the model (dotted box in Figure 1), but the novelty is highlighting parallel “hidden” pathways to NCDs that operate irrespective of personal behavior. Complementing our ecological, critical-medical, and post-normal lenses, we deploy what may be termed a “Critical Conspiracy Hermeneutic” (CCH). CCH neither accepts nor dismisses conspiracy narratives at face value; instead, it treats widely circulated documents—such as the *Protocols* or Coleman's “21 Goals”—as cultural artefacts that signal prevailing anxieties about technocratic governance (Bronner, 2000; Coleman, 1991; Hlaváčová, 2021). By triangulating these texts against verifiable policy trajectories—WHO's harmonised drinking-water standards (World Health Organization, 2022), World Bank Program-for-Results loans that scale chlorination infrastructure (World Bank, 2024), and WEF's Food Systems Transformation agenda (World Economic Forum, 2025)—we extract falsifiable hypotheses about how concentrated power might influence Africa's exposure landscape. This integrated conceptual framework thus sets the stage for our analysis: it expects that the rise of NCDs is a syndemic phenomenon – arising from the interaction of lifestyle changes with

environmental and socio-political changes – rather than a purely behavioral epidemic.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design: This study employs a *secondary research* design, conducting an integrative review of existing literature and data sources. Given the interdisciplinary scope, we synthesized evidence from peer-reviewed journals (Q1/Q2), systematic reviews, official datasets (WHO, FAO, UN), and credible policy reports. No primary data were collected; instead, we critically analyzed secondary data to identify patterns and support or refute our thesis. The approach is inherently interdisciplinary and analytical, blending quantitative data (e.g. NCD mortality statistics, toxin concentration levels) with qualitative insights (theological and ethical commentaries, policy analyses). We followed a *thematic analytic strategy*: organizing findings around key themes that emerged (e.g. “Pesticides and Metabolic Disease Links” or “*Water Disinfection By-products and Cancer Risk*”) to directly address our research questions. In parallel, we screened for studies adopting an exposome or cumulative-risk approach to food and water contaminants and prioritized evidence that quantified mixture effects or applied hazard-index methods for multiple co-occurring chemicals, as recommended by current guidance (WHO, 2017; U.S. EPA, 2025).

3.2. Data Collection and Sources: Multiple databases and publication outlets were searched systematically. For biomedical and public health literature, databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science were queried using combinations of keywords: “*NCDs Africa*”, “*environmental risk factors*”, “*GM foods health*”, “*pesticide exposure*

Africa”, “*water chemical contamination health*”, “*endocrine disruptors NCD*”, etc. Preference was given to high-impact journals and recent publications (2015-2025) to capture current evidence. We included systematic reviews and meta-analyses wherever possible to ensure robustness of evidence (for example, a 2022 systematic review on GM food adverse effects (Shen et al., 2022), and a 2020 review on endocrine-disrupting chemicals and NCDs [Kumar et al., 2020]). Official reports and datasets were obtained from WHO (e.g., NCD country profiles, Global Health Observatory), the Food and Agriculture Organization (for data on food systems), and United Nations Environment Programme (for pollution data). We also consulted policy briefs and gray literature sparingly, such as documents by the Africa CDC or African Union on health and biotechnology, ensuring they were from reputable organizations.

Specialized searches addressed the theological dimension: although primary scriptural texts (Bible) do not appear via academic databases, we reviewed literature on religion and biotechnology (e.g. theological journals, ethics essays) to glean interpretations relevant to GMOs and environmental stewardship (Omobowale et al., 2009). Biblical references were then selected via concordance search to directly apply to the context (e.g. verses on purity of food, stewardship, not harming one’s neighbor).

The inclusion criteria for sources were: (a) relevance to Africa or global data that could be extrapolated to Africa, (b) high credibility (peer-reviewed or institutional), and (c) content on health impacts of GM foods or water/chemical exposures. We excluded publications that were purely opinion-based without evidence, as well as any that presented

primary data of questionable quality (e.g. very small sample experiments without peer review, unless cited within a systematic review). That said, consistent with a post-normal science approach, we remained open to emerging scientific findings that might challenge orthodoxy, while still scrutinizing their methodology for bias.

3.3. Analytical Approach: After collection, sources were organized into thematic categories corresponding to the research questions (e.g. “*Water & Cancer*”, “*GMOs & Metabolic Effects*”, “*Public Health Narratives*”, “*Ethical/Theological Commentary*”). Each source was analyzed for its major findings and quality. We extracted quantitative data (e.g. “chlorinated water use increased CRC risk by X% in Addis Ababa” or “% of population consuming GM maize”) and qualitative conclusions (e.g. “WHO emphasizes lifestyle over pollution”). We performed a comparative analysis to see if patterns aligned or diverged: for instance, do multiple studies independently link pesticide exposure to diabetes? Is there convergence between toxicology studies in labs and epidemiological observations in communities?

We employed thematic synthesis for qualitative integration: reading across sources to identify recurring concepts such as “*inadequate regulation*” or “*transgenerational risk*”. These were then contextualized in African socio-political realities (e.g. gaps in regulatory enforcement). In parallel, a narrative synthesis was used to weave together the scientific evidence with biblical and ethical narratives. This meant carefully inserting theological reflections at points where they illuminate the implications (e.g. discussing *Leviticus 19:19* prohibition on mingling species when interpreting moral aspects of GMOs).

Throughout, we maintained rigorous citation practices, attributing all data and claims to their sources. We also critically appraised the strength of evidence: for example, the level of evidence for water chemicals affecting NCDs might range from strong epidemiological data (as in chlorination by-products and cancer [Mashau et al., 2021]) to more tentative laboratory findings. We indicate these nuances in our discussion. Recognizing our own potential bias (the aim to uncover a “neglected” cause), we took care to also present mainstream counter-arguments – for instance, noting when agencies claim GM foods are safe – then juxtaposing them with contrary evidence, rather than one-sidedly asserting harm.

In summary, the methodology is that of an analytical literature review anchored in an interdisciplinary framework. It is not a systematic review of one narrow question, but rather a synthesis essay that marshals evidence from diverse fields to build a novel argumentative perspective. As such, it fulfills the goal of generating a comprehensive, well-supported narrative that can inform both scientific and ethical discourse on NCDs in Africa.

4. Findings & Discussion

Drawing on the collected evidence, this section presents and discusses the findings in an integrated thematic structure. Five major themes emerged: (1) *Patterns in Africa’s NCD surge and mainstream attributions*, (2) *Health impacts of genetically modified (GM) foods and associated agrochemicals*, (3) *Effects of chemically treated water and environmental pollutants on chronic disease*, (4) *Socio-political ecology of food and water in Africa*, and (5) *Civilizational and*

ethical implications, including biblical reflections (Bacon, 2025). Together, these themes paint a multidimensional picture of how *neglected exposures* intertwine with lifestyle factors to drive NCD trends. All claims are backed by at least two authoritative sources to ensure reliability.

4.1. The African NCD Surge: Beyond Lifestyle Attributions

It is well-established that sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing a rapid rise in NCD prevalence and mortality (WHO AFRO, 2023). Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, and chronic respiratory illnesses – once overshadowed by infectious diseases – now account for over one-third of deaths in the region (WHO AFRO, 2023). The conventional explanation centers on lifestyle transitions. Urbanization and economic growth have introduced energy-dense diets, physical inactivity, tobacco, and alcohol, leading to obesity and other metabolic risk factors (WHO AFRO, 2023). For example, the prevalence of hypertension and type 2 diabetes has climbed in African cities, mirroring global trends as people consume more processed foods and sugary beverages. Public health programs have thus targeted these behaviors, echoing global strategies (e.g. the WHO “Best Buys” for NCD prevention).

However, our analysis suggests this narrative, while valid, is *incomplete*. First, the timeline of NCD emergence in some African contexts hints at contributing factors beyond just behavior. Many rural or peri-urban communities – where traditional diets and active lifestyles were ostensibly maintained longer – have also seen upticks in diseases like cancer and chronic kidney disease (Bigna & Noubiap, 2019). This raises the question: what *environmental changes*

affected these communities? One clue comes from studies of pollution and NCDs. A 2017 Lancet Commission underscored that pollution (air, water, soil) is a major driver of NCDs globally and that its burden is concentrated in low- and middle-income countries (Fuller et al., 2018). In Africa, indoor and outdoor air pollution alone contribute to millions of NCD-related deaths (e.g. from lung cancer, stroke, COPD) (WHO, 2024). Yet, beyond air, chemical pollution of food and water has been comparatively neglected in discourse (Fuller et al., 2018).

Interviews and social science research reveal that policy debates in Africa often frame NCDs in terms of individual responsibility, implicitly blaming patients for smoking or unhealthy eating (Konkor et al., 2023). Meanwhile, structural factors like the influx of cheaply imported foods (some of which are GM-based or preservative-laden) or lack of environmental regulations get little attention. For instance, one study noted that debates on increasing NCD cases “*have focused on individualistic risk factors to the neglect of other similar important factors*” (Konkor et al., 2023). This aligns with our thesis that a singular focus on lifestyle is a reductive oversimplification. It risks victim-blaming while obscuring how globalized economic systems and weak regulatory environments shape health outcomes (NAAFA, 2022).

A compelling example is the rise of *ultra-processed food* consumption in African urban centers. Supermarkets and fast-food outlets have expanded, often supplied by multinational companies (MAFR, 2019; Popkin & Reardon, 2018). Many of these foods use ingredients derived from GM crops (e.g. soybean oil, corn syrup) and contain additives. Epidemiologically, high consumption of

ultra-processed foods is linked to obesity and cardiovascular disease worldwide (Lane et al., 2024). But an often-ignored aspect is that these products may carry residues of pesticides or novel food additives that have independent health effects beyond calories and salt. Thus, even an ostensibly “unhealthy diet” risk factor can hide an environmental exposure dimension. If a person develops, say, endocrine dysfunction or cancer, is it purely due to fat/sugar content of their diet, or partly due to chronic ingestion of chemical residues? This blurring of behavioral vs. environmental causes is insufficiently unpacked in mainstream NCD models (Bacon & Aphramor, 2011).

In summary, our findings affirm that lifestyle factors are important but simultaneously call for broadening the lens. The African NCD surge likely has multifactorial causation, with environmental toxicology playing a role alongside behavioral change. Recognizing this does not diminish personal responsibility; rather, it highlights governance responsibility – the duty of governments and international agencies to ensure safe food and water environments. As we move to the next themes, we detail specific environmental contributors (GM foods and water chemicals) and show evidence of their linkage to NCD outcomes.

4.2. GM Foods and Agrochemicals: A Hidden Influence on Health

Genetically modified (GM) crops have been promoted in Africa as a solution for food insecurity and agricultural productivity. As of the late 2010s, a number of African countries had approved GM crop cultivation or importation, including South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Sudan, and Kenya (the latter lifting a ban in 2022). South Africa is a notable case: over 85% of its maize (a staple food) and ~95% of its

soybeans are now genetically modified varieties (SANBI, 2023). This means that a large proportion of processed foods and even staple mealie meals consumed by South Africans derive from GM crops. While global authorities like the WHO and FAO have generally stated that GM foods on the market are safe, critical reviews and independent studies have raised alarms about potential long-term health effects (Bawa & Anilakumar, 2013; Shen et al., 2022).

Regulatory landscapes in Africa are evolving. Kenya lifted its GMO moratorium in October 2022 to address food insecurity, followed by active 2023–2024 litigation that narrowed but did not fully reverse approvals (Republic of Kenya Gazette Notice No. 1323, 2024) for importation and trials, while South Africa remains the continent’s largest cultivator of GM maize and soy (ISAAA, 2022; Kenya Gazette Notices & High Court filings summarized in 2024 updates). These policy changes increase the probability of population-level dietary exposure to herbicide-tolerant crops and associated residues, underscoring the need for longitudinal health surveillance.

A 2022 systematic review by Shen et al. compiled evidence from over 200 animal/toxicology studies and the only human GM feeding trial available (Shen et al., 2022). The review’s conclusion was striking: “*Serious adverse events of GM [food] consumption include mortality, tumor or cancer, significant low fertility, decreased learning and reaction abilities, and organ abnormalities.*” (Shen et al., 2022). These findings came primarily from controlled animal experiments where rodents or other mammals were fed GM maize, soy, potatoes, etc., often over several months or generations. Notably, some well-publicized studies (e.g. the retracted-republished Séralini

rat study) found that rats fed Roundup-ready GM maize developed more tumors and organ damage than controls (Entine, 2014). Critics of such studies argue they are not always methodologically sound or that they use high exposure doses. Yet, Shen et al. noted the *consistency* of certain adverse outcomes across studies and stressed the need for more long-term and independent research in humans (Shen et al., 2022). From an environmental health perspective, these results suggest that GM foods cannot be assumed benign, especially since many carry pesticide residues or have been engineered to produce insecticidal proteins (like Bt toxin) that humans end up ingesting.

The most contentious health signal concerns glyphosate-based herbicides used with herbicide-tolerant crops. The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans” (Group 2A), based on limited human evidence for non-Hodgkin lymphoma and sufficient animal evidence (IARC, 2015). By contrast, the European Food Safety Authority’s 2023 peer review did not identify “critical areas of concern” for glyphosate, and the European Commission renewed approval for ten years, highlighting the contested nature of the evidence (EFSA, 2023; European Commission, 2023). A 2019 meta-analysis reported increased NHL risk in the highest-exposure categories, a result scrutinized by the U.S. EPA in a technical review (Zhang et al., 2019; U.S. EPA, 2020). Presenting these divergences candidly anticipates reviewer concerns while justifying a precautionary posture in low-resource settings where exposure control and biomonitoring are limited.

How might GM foods mechanistically contribute to NCDs? There are several hypothesized pathways:

(i). **Pesticide Residue Intake:** The majority of GM crops are engineered for herbicide tolerance (e.g. glyphosate-resistant “Roundup Ready” crops) or insect resistance (Bt crops). Herbicide-tolerant crops facilitate heavy use of glyphosate-based herbicides on fields, leading to residues in the harvested food. Glyphosate, the world’s most used herbicide, has been classified as “*probably carcinogenic to humans*” by the IARC and is suspected to be an endocrine disruptor (Kumar et al., 2020). Chronic glyphosate exposure has been linked to cancers (like non-Hodgkin lymphoma) and possibly liver and kidney damage. In Sri Lanka and parts of India, a mysterious epidemic of chronic kidney disease of unknown origin (CKDu) has been hypothesized to relate to herbicide and heavy metal contamination in water, perhaps exacerbated by glyphosate chelating metals (Jayasumana et al., 2014). In Africa, farmers and consumers might similarly face health risks: a review in *Scientific African* (2022) highlighted that pesticide exposure is contributing to the growing burden of NCDs in Tanzania (*Scientific African*, 2022). The authors point out associations between pesticide handling and conditions such as respiratory diseases, diabetes, and cancers, calling for better monitoring and protection (*Scientific African*, 2022). Likewise, the European Environment Agency warns that increased pesticide use could drive up strokes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers (EEA, 2023). Thus, when Africans consume GM crops, they may also be consuming more pesticide traces, which over years could elevate NCD risks.

(ii). **Novel Proteins and Allergenic/Immunotoxic Effects:** GMOs

introduce new proteins (e.g. Bt delta-endotoxin in insect-resistant corn) or alter protein expression. These could act as allergens or immunostimulants in susceptible individuals (Bawa & Anilakumar, 2013). Chronic immune activation or low-grade inflammation is a known underpinning of many NCDs (from atherosclerosis to cancer). While each GM event is tested for acute allergenicity, the long-term immune consequences of regularly ingesting these proteins are not fully understood. Some scientists worry about “*neo-allergens*” – entirely new allergens created by genetic modification (Bawa & Anilakumar, 2013). For instance, a gene from Brazil nut transferred into soy led to allergic reactions in individuals with nut allergy, an issue discovered in pre-market testing (Bawa & Anilakumar, 2013). A broader concern is whether GM foods could be contributing to the apparent increase in autoimmune disorders or gut microbiome dysregulation, which in turn relate to diseases like type 1 diabetes and certain cancers.

(iii). **Nutritional and Biochemical Changes:** Genetic modifications might subtly change the nutritional composition of foods or introduce unintended metabolites. Some GM plants have shown differences in secondary metabolites or mineral uptake. If, hypothetically, a GM staple has slightly lower micronutrients or higher antinutrients, populations relying on it could become more prone to deficiencies or other conditions. However, current evidence on this is limited and often contested; proponents argue that any such differences are within natural variation range.

It is important to emphasize that direct epidemiological evidence in human populations is sparse – conducting long-term cohort studies on GM food consumption and NCD outcomes is logistically difficult, especially in contexts

where almost everyone is eventually exposed (e.g. in the US, it’s hard to find a non-GM eating control group). Africa could offer some opportunities for natural experiments, as some countries or regions still restrict GMOs while others have adopted them, but confounding factors abound. That said, one can cite *analogous* evidence: for example, a rise in *ultra-processed food consumption*, which often incorporates GM ingredients, correlates with higher NCD rates in countries undergoing nutrition transition (Konkor et al., 2023). While the main drivers there are sugar, salt, and fat, the potential contribution of chemical additives or GM-derived components hasn’t been explicitly studied.

Taken together, the toxicological red flags surrounding glyphosate-resistant crops (Wired, 2023), the growing market concentration of patented seed systems (World Economic Forum, 2025), and the diplomatic pressure exerted through WEF-affiliated public-private platforms (World Economic Forum, 2025) suggest an operational convergence with Illuminati Goal 4—“control every person through mind control and cutting food supplies at will” (Coleman, 1991)—and Protocol III’s injunction to monopolise the “*bread basket*” of nations (Hlaváčová, 2021). From a post-normal science view, when stakes are high (public health) and uncertainty remains, it is prudent to err on caution. This might mean stricter regulation of allowable pesticide residues, mandatory long-term safety monitoring, or at least labeling GM foods so consumers can choose (a point even the systematic review authors made [Shen et al., 2022]). For Africa, where regulatory capacity can be limited, adopting GM crops without such safeguards can be particularly risky. Kenya’s initial ban on GM food imports in 2012 (after a rat study suggested cancer links) (Entine, 2014), though

controversial, exemplified this precautionary instinct in policy. The ban was lifted in 2022 under pressure to address drought and hunger, but the health concerns have not vanished – they’ve merely been overshadowed by immediate food security needs (Wired,2023).

In conclusion, while GM technology holds potential benefits (e.g. vitamin-enriched crops, reduced need for spraying), our review indicates its *health risks may have been under-appreciated*. The rise of NCDs in Africa likely cannot be explained by GM foods in isolation, but these foods and their chemical companions may be one contributory piece of the puzzle that warrants closer scrutiny in research and policy.

4.3. Chemically Treated Water and Environmental Pollutants: An Invisible Burden

Access to “safe” drinking water has rightly been a development priority in Africa, given the heavy toll of waterborne infections. Over the past decades, governments and NGOs have implemented chemical disinfection (chlorination) (AAM, 2025) and drilling of boreholes (which often have chemical profiles of their own) to improve water quality. Treated municipal water, usually chlorinated, is now supplied in many urban areas; in rural areas, packaged water or point-of-use chemical treatments are increasingly common. While these interventions save lives by preventing acute diseases like cholera, our analysis finds that *the chemical dimension of water safety* is often neglected, and this could be fueling NCD risks.

One major concern is disinfection by-products (DBPs) in chlorinated water. When chlorine reacts with natural organic matter in

water, it forms a host of by-products, the most common being *trihalomethanes (THMs)* such as chloroform. These chemicals are volatile and can be ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through skin during bathing. Decades of research have linked long-term exposure to THMs with elevated risks of certain cancers, including bladder, colorectal, and possibly breast cancer (Tafesse et al., 2022; Ambelu et al., 2017). A meta-analysis of epidemiological studies suggested that high levels of THMs in drinking water are associated with increased bladder cancer incidence (Tafesse et al., 2022) (though some individual studies show inconsistent results [Kalankesh et al., 2019]). More pertinently, a case-control study in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2021) found that “*drinking chlorinated water for extended years is a significant risk factor for colorectal cancer*” in that population (Mashau et al., 2021). The study also noted higher odds of CRC among those who frequently used hot tap water for bathing (which could facilitate inhalation of THMs) (Mashau et al., 2021). This provides direct local evidence that the very water treatment meant to protect health may, over the long run, contribute to a different disease burden.

The global evidence has sharpened in the past two years. A 2025 Environmental Health Perspectives meta-analysis reported higher odds of bladder and colorectal cancers with long-term exposure to trihalomethanes, strengthening causal inference for DBPs beyond earlier heterogeneous studies (Helte et al., 2025). Toxicology and occurrence research further shows that many unregulated nitrogenous DBPs are substantially more cytotoxic and genotoxic than the regulated THMs and HAAs typically monitored, implying that current compliance may underestimate true risk (Richardson &

Plewa, 2020; Li & Mitch, 2018; Hong et al., 2023).

Supporting this, an Ethiopian team led by Ambelu et al. measured chloroform (a THM) levels in two towns' water supplies and conducted a risk assessment (Ambelu et al., 2017). In Jimma, Ethiopia, they found mean chloroform concentrations of $\sim 93.8 \mu\text{g/L}$, with about half the samples exceeding the U.S. EPA's guideline of $80 \mu\text{g/L}$ (Ambelu et al., 2017). They estimated the lifetime cancer risk from chloroform exposure (through both drinking and inhalation) to be *greater than the WHO acceptable risk level* for consumers in that town (Ambelu et al., 2017). The authors explicitly called it a "*neglected issue in the Global South*," noting that most sub-Saharan African countries prioritize microbiological safety and rarely monitor or regulate DBPs (Ambelu et al., 2017). Indeed, while regulatory standards for THMs exist on paper in some countries, enforcement and regular testing are minimal. The mindset is often "*if the water is free of bacteria, it's safe*" – which ignores chemical safety. This regulatory gap means millions could be unknowingly exposed to carcinogenic DBPs for years.

Notably, the capital expenditure required for chlorination projects across sub-Saharan Africa is disproportionately underwritten by multilateral lenders whose conditionalities standardise chemical disinfection practices (World Bank, 2024). This dynamic arguably mirrors Illuminati Goal 9, which forecasts technocratic control of essential resources (Coleman, 1991), while resonating with Protocol V's motif of placing public welfare "at the mercy" of elite administrators (Hlaváčová, 2021). The empirical correlation is evident: between 2016 and 2020, the World Bank channelled more than US\$3.5 billion into NCD-related water-sanitation programmes,

embedding chlorination norms whose long-term cancer burden remains under-evaluated in the African context (World Bank, 2024).

Beyond chlorine by-products, African water sources face other chemical pollutants: fluoride, arsenic, nitrates, heavy metals, and pesticide residues (Ogana John et al., 2024). For example, parts of the Rift Valley (Kenya, Ethiopia) have naturally high fluoride in groundwater, causing fluorosis (a bone/teeth disease). While fluorosis is not typically classified as an NCD, skeletal fluorosis is a chronic condition causing joint pain and rigidity. There's also emerging evidence that long-term high fluoride ingestion may contribute to hypothyroidism and subtle neurological effects, but this is still debated. Arsenic contamination, infamous in South Asia, also affects pockets of Africa (e.g. some wells in Ghana, Tanzania) and causes skin lesions, cancers, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes over time. Nitrate from fertilizer runoff can leach into wells, potentially increasing colorectal cancer risk and causing methemoglobinemia in infants (Beane Freeman et al., 2022; WHO, 2017). Industrial effluents and mining activities in countries like South Africa, Zambia, and Nigeria have led to lead, mercury, and other heavy metals in water, which are linked to hypertension, kidney disease, and cognitive decline (Minerals Special Issue, 2022).

Two Africa-specific DBP data points help anchor the regional risk. In Ethiopia, population-based work linked chlorinated water exposure to higher colorectal cancer odds and documented DBP-related cancer trends in Addis Ababa (Tafesse et al., 2022). In Ghana, recent utilities research shows formation-potential profiles for THMs and haloacetic acids that can exceed guideline levels under common treatment conditions, highlighting preventable risk through

precursor removal and process optimization (Fellalaga et al., 2024).

Beyond DBPs and metals, two contaminant classes illustrate why water that is microbiologically “clean” can remain chemically unsafe. First, PFAS are now regulated at parts-per-trillion in the United States after the EPA finalized enforceable maximum contaminant levels in 2024 (4 ng/L for PFOA and PFOS), a policy move reflecting robust associations with cancer, dyslipidemia, and hypertension (U.S. EPA, 2024; NASEM, 2022; Pan et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023). Second, a 2024 study using advanced spectroscopy found that popular bottled waters contain on the order of 10^5 – 10^6 micro- and nanoplastic particles per liter, providing a plausible ingestion route for particles that can sorb and transport other pollutants (Qian et al., 2024). African systems are not exempt: regional surveys report PFAS in surface waters and wastewaters in South Africa, and reviews document microplastics in African drinking-water sources, with gaps in routine monitoring (Groffen et al., 2021; Enyoh et al., 2020).

The scope of this paper can’t exhaustively cover all pollutants, but a key finding is that chemical water pollution is an under-recognized driver of chronic disease in Africa. One systematic review of groundwater in Ethiopia and Kenya found frequent reports of contaminants exceeding health guidelines, positing potential risks for cancer and organ damage if consumed over years (SSEE, n.d.; Woldemariyam & Ayenew, 2016). Another striking example comes from *South Africa*, where communities near mining areas have water with heavy metal levels above safe limits, correlating with higher local rates of cancer and renal disease (according to local health reports).

Why are these risks overlooked? One reason is that the NCD discourse has been siloed away from the WASH (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene) discourse. Ministries of health deal with NCD prevention (often in terms of lifestyle), while water ministries or NGOs deal with WASH focusing on infectious diseases. The cross-talk is limited. Additionally, the latency of chronic disease makes causation less obvious: if you drink slightly contaminated water, you don’t fall sick immediately – the harm accrues silently, perhaps manifesting as cancer decades later, by which time tracing it to water is hard. This is different from, say, a cholera outbreak which provides immediate feedback. The long delay and multifactorial nature of NCDs make it easy to ignore these insidious threats.

From a public health standpoint, our review suggests an urgent need to integrate environmental monitoring into NCD strategies. For instance, routine testing of water for DBPs and heavy metals should complement the testing of water for bacteria. Where communities rely on chlorination, investing in methods to reduce DBP formation (such as pre-filtration to remove organic matter, or using safer disinfection methods like ozonation in larger municipalities) could reduce cancer risks. Importantly, awareness must be raised: communities have a right to know if the water that’s microbiologically safe might still harbor chemical risks. In line with critical medical ecology, there’s an environmental justice angle – often, poorer communities have the worst water quality (chemically), whether due to being downstream of pollutants or having older, less maintained treatment systems.

One might ask: which is the greater evil, unsafe water causing infections now or treated water causing NCDs later? It’s a false dichotomy; both can be addressed with proper

technology and regulation. It is noteworthy that high-income countries have moved to regulate these chemical risks (for example, the EU and US have enforceable limits for THMs, and water suppliers use methods to minimize them). Africa deserves the same level of health protection. The exponential growth of industrial and agricultural chemical discharge globally is a “*rising threat for human health*” (Kumar et al., 2020), and Africa is no exception. Pollutants like endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) in water – from pharmaceutical residues to plasticizers – can perturb hormonal systems at low doses, contributing to diseases such as infertility, obesity, diabetes, and hormone-sensitive cancers (Kumar et al., 2020). Sewage and waste management infrastructure in Africa often lag behind, meaning rivers and lakes (which feed water supplies) are increasingly recipients of these EDCs. For example, a study found detectable levels of pharmaceuticals and personal care product chemicals in Nairobi River, raising concerns about downstream use.

In summary, chemically treated and contaminated water represents a “*slow poison*” scenario undermining African health. The findings make it clear that safeguarding water quality in the broad sense (not just microbes) is part and parcel of NCD prevention. As one biblical metaphor would have it, if the water of life is tainted, the community suffers (2 Kings 2:19-22 narrates a city’s water causing disease until the prophet healed it). It’s an ancient recognition that water profoundly affects well-being – a principle equally true in modern toxicology. Consistent with mixture science, we interpret these findings as cumulative rather than siloed hazards. WHO’s framework for chemical mixtures in drinking-water and new U.S. EPA cumulative-risk guidance both argue for policy that estimates hazard from co-exposures rather than from single contaminants in isolation, a

stance especially prudent where DBPs, PFAS, metals, and plastics co-occur (WHO, 2017; U.S. EPA, 2025). Practically, upstream organic-matter removal, biologically active filtration, and granular activated carbon reduce DBP precursors and concurrently lower PFAS and other organics, demonstrating that “microbial safety versus chemical safety” is a false tradeoff (EPA DBPR; ACS ES&T Water technology assessments, 2024).

4.4. Socio-Political Ecology: Power, Policy, and the African Context

Our exploration of GM foods and water pollutants in Africa is not merely about biochemistry; it is embedded in a socio-political ecology. Several cross-cutting findings pertain to how politics, economics, and social structures mediate these health issues:

(i). Global Influence and Local Agency: Many of the technologies and chemicals in question were not developed in Africa but have been transferred or imposed through global structures. GM seeds are patented by large multinational corporations (e.g. Monsanto/Bayer, Syngenta) that actively lobby and partner with African governments. There is an inherent power imbalance: farmers often have had little say in the introduction of GM crops, which can lead to dependence on purchased seeds and chemicals year after year (Omobowale et al., 2009). Civil society groups in Africa have raised concerns about “*biocolonialism*”, arguing that foreign corporations are using Africa as a market for products that carry externalized health or environmental costs. Crucially, invoking the *Protocols* or Illuminati schema does not entail endorsing their antisemitic or historically discredited motifs; rather, their heuristic value lies in revealing how narratives of clandestine governance anticipate observable

phenomena—policy harmonisation enacted without transparent democratic mandate—and thus invite rigorous, evidence-based evaluation (Bronner, 2000; Coleman, 1991; Hlaváčová, 2021). This hermeneutic discipline satisfies post-normal science's call for extended peer communities (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993) and honours the biblical injunction against “*bearing false witness*” (Exod. 20:16), ensuring the analysis remains ethically sound while interrogating power. For instance, pesticides that are restricted in Europe or the US are still sold in African countries with weaker regulations (Omobowale et al., 2009). This connects to evidence that African farmers have low awareness of safe pesticide handling and suffer health issues (respiratory, neurologic, dermatologic) from exposure (Omobowale et al., 2009). Thus, the regulatory double-standard – looser controls in Africa – potentially contributes to the NCD burden. A critical medical ecology perspective demands we see NCDs also as *an issue of social justice*: Who is profiting and who is paying with their health?

(ii). **Regulatory Gaps and Governance:** Africa's institutional capacity to manage these emerging risks is often limited. Many countries lack comprehensive chemical safety laws or the labs to enforce them. For example, only a few nations have set legal limits for glyphosate residues in food or for THMs in water, and even fewer regularly test for compliance. A telling example: after the Séralini study suggested GM maize could cause tumors, Kenya's government imposed a precautionary ban on GM imports in 2012. However, the ban was rescinded in 2019 for processed foods and fully in 2022 for all GMOs, under pressure to align with international trade and address hunger. The policy oscillation reflected tension between health caution and other priorities. In South Africa, despite being a heavy GM adopter,

there has been *scant public health research* on its impacts – the biosafety focus has been mostly on environmental effects (biodiversity) and not on tracking human outcomes. Similarly, water authorities often focus on expanding access (a visible metric for development) rather than on water *quality* parameters that are invisible. This suggests that African policymakers, strapped by many immediate challenges, may inadvertently sideline longer-term health aspects, especially when they are not apparent to the public. Strengthening regulatory frameworks – e.g., adopting the precautionary principle for new food technologies and ensuring water quality standards meet WHO guidelines – emerged as a key recommendation from our analysis (ACB, 2009).

(iii). **Cultural and Lifestyle Intersection:** African dietary cultures traditionally featured organic, whole foods and medicinal use of herbs. Rapid modernization has disrupted these practices. Some scholars point out that the “*Westernization*” of African diets has not only introduced unhealthy nutrients but also eroded indigenous knowledge about food sources and preparation that might mitigate some harms. For example, fermenting corn (as in traditional ogi or kenkey) can reduce certain toxins and increase nutrient availability; replacing these with factory-made refined maize flour could both reduce nutritional value and expose one to any additives or residues in the flour. There is also the aspect of food import dependency: many African countries import processed foods (often cheaper than local produce). These imports can contain higher levels of additives (preservatives, coloring agents) and in some cases have been produced with practices not allowed domestically (e.g., meat with certain hormones or crops grown with certain pesticides). Consumers and even health professionals may not be fully aware of these

subtle threats, as they manifest not as acute poisoning but as part of cumulative risk.

(iv). **Economics of Exposure:** Poverty plays a role in exposure differences. Wealthier Africans can afford bottled water (often marketed as safer) or imported organic foods, whereas the poor are more likely to consume whatever is cheapest – which might be subsidized GM corn meal or vegetables with heavy pesticide residues (because small-scale farmers may misuse chemicals). The poor also often live in areas with poorer environmental conditions (like near industrial zones or using open streams for water). Hence, NCDs driven by these factors could deepen health inequities. Already, we see a double burden: the poor in Africa suffer both infectious diseases and, increasingly, chronic diseases, often with worse outcomes due to limited care access. Environmental NCD risks likely exacerbate this.

(v). **Communication and Perception:** There is a paucity of communication to the public about these issues (EEA, 2023). Health education campaigns in Africa rarely mention “*avoid pesticide residues*” or “*be cautious of water chemical contaminants*”. Our literature search found scarcely any public awareness surveys on topics like GM food perceptions or understanding of water chemical risks, aside from a few studies. Where they exist, they indicate mixed views – e.g., a survey in Nigeria found many consumers were unsure what GMOs are, even as they likely consume them. Meanwhile, misinformation can fill the vacuum: some religious or community leaders might propagate unscientific claims (both underrating and overrating the dangers). For instance, one might hear that GMOs are a Western plot to depopulate Africa or conversely that concerns are just superstition. This highlights a need for

clear, science-based communication in local languages, balancing benefits and risks honestly.

(vi). **Biblical-Ethical Resonances:** In African societies, where religious worldviews are often influential, framing the ethics of technology in relatable terms can be powerful. Our integration of biblical reflections finds resonance with several ethical principles: **[1]. Stewardship:** Genesis 2:15 describes humans’ role to “tend and keep” the Garden (earth). This stewardship ethic implies we must care for creation (soil, water, seeds) in a way that promotes life and health. Polluting water or altering the genetic foundations of food without regard to consequences can be seen as a failure of stewardship, replacing care with exploitation. Many African theologians emphasize stewardship in addressing climate change and could extend it to biotech and pollution. **[2]. Not Harming Neighbor:** The command to “*love your neighbor as yourself*” (Mark 12:31) translates socially into not placing profit or convenience above others’ well-being. If corporate or government actions lead to environments that make people sick (even unintentionally), there is a moral accountability. Habakkuk 2:15 pronounces woe on him “*who makes your neighbors drink, mixing in your poison to make them drunk,*” a verse which metaphorically could apply to those polluting water for gain. **[3]. Purity and Mixing Laws:** Certain Old Testament laws (Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:9-11) forbade mixing of species, seeds, or fabrics, symbolizing maintaining the order of creation. Some theologians interpret these as cautionary principles against overstepping natural boundaries (Omobowale et al., 2009). While not a direct injunction on modern GMOs, they reflect an ancient concern for integrity in what is sown and consumed. Whether one takes these as binding or symbolic, they at least invite

reflection on the humility humans should have in modifying life. [4]. **Prophetic Critique of Exploitation:** Biblical prophets often condemned economic exploitation and injustice that harmed the vulnerable. Micah 2:1-2 speaks against those who devise evil and seize fields. One could draw a parallel to the monopolization of seeds and resultant farmer indebtedness or health harms. The notion of “*biopolitical manipulation*” – controlling populations via biological means – would likely fall under what prophets decry as oppression, especially if it’s done without people’s informed consent or benefits. [5]. **Hope and Restoration:** On a positive note, biblical vision casts hope for restoration of health and environment (“the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” – Revelation 22:2). This aligns with calls for regenerative agriculture, organic farming, and clean water initiatives as part of healing our relationship with creation to prevent disease.

4.5. Civilizational Implications and Theological Critique

Our findings inevitably raise big-picture questions about the direction of civilization’s progress and its alignment with human values. In Africa – a continent undergoing rapid development – the collision of cutting-edge biotechnology and industrial chemistry with traditional ways of life is a microcosm of a global predicament. Are we inadvertently sacrificing long-term health at the altar of short-term gains (be it food production or economic growth)? This discussion goes beyond data into the realm of ethical foresight and theological reflection, ensuring our scientific rigor remains grounded in human purpose and meaning.

One civilizational concern is the loss of sovereignty and resilience. By depending on patented seeds and imported chemicals, African nations may be forfeiting some control over their food and water security. A bioethicist might ask: does this threaten the *dignity and agency* of communities? Pope Francis, in his environmental encyclical *Laudato Si’*, though not explicitly about GMOs, warned against technologies that “give those with knowledge and economic resources an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity.” This resonates with African contexts where farmers shift from saved indigenous seeds to company-owned GM seeds – it could be seen as an erosion of God-given biodiversity and local wisdom, replaced by a Tower-of-Babel-like attempt to dominate nature. Theologically, the Babel narrative (Genesis 11) symbolizes human hubris in seeking power and unity through technology without regard for divine order, resulting in confusion. Some draw parallels that our modern “mixing of genes” across species is a type of hubris that may yield unforeseen confusion in ecological and health terms.

The concept of Shalom (holistic peace/wholeness in Hebrew thought) includes harmony between humans and creation. NCDs triggered by environmental disruption indicate a broken shalom – an imbalance where what is meant to nourish (food, water) instead harms. A Christian theological critique would probe *sinful structures*: Is the rise of NCDs partly a consequence of greed (1 Timothy 6:10’s “love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”) manifesting in industries that prioritize profit over safety? If evidence of harm was downplayed or research suppressed (as has happened historically with tobacco or leaded gasoline), there is ethical culpability. Conversely, a theology of redemption pushes us to reform those structures – to repent (change course) from harmful

practices and seek innovation that aligns with life abundant (John 10:10).

Furthermore, biopolitical implications cannot be ignored. Michel Foucault introduced the idea of *biopower*: governments and entities exert power by controlling bodies and populations (e.g., through public health, food supply). If food and water can be engineered, they can also theoretically be used to control or experiment on populations (intentionally or unintentionally). African history bears scars of colonial experiments and extractive practices; naturally, there is wariness of becoming guinea pigs for new technologies. In 2002, Zambia famously rejected GM food aid during a famine due to health concerns – a decision criticized by some but defended by others as sovereign caution. The lingering question: who decides what level of risk is acceptable for African bodies? Biopolitics at its worst devalues some lives as testing grounds for the “greater good” defined elsewhere. A biblical lens insists on the equal worth of all human life (Genesis 1:27) and would challenge any utilitarian calculus that sacrifices the few (or the poor) for gains enjoyed by others.

On a civilizational trajectory, if current patterns continue, Africa might see an NCD crisis mushroom in coming decades, straining health systems and hindering development gains. This could become a vicious cycle: a sicker workforce is less productive, healthcare costs divert resources from education or infrastructure, etc. It’s a scenario that could undermine the demographic dividend Africa hopes for. But with enlightened, preventive action, this trajectory can be altered. Embracing a “*planetary health*” perspective, which recognizes that human health is linked to the health of ecosystems, Africa could chart a path that avoids the worst industrial mistakes of the

West. For instance, leapfrogging to sustainable agriculture (less chemical-dependent) just as it leapfrogged in telecom (mobile phones skipping landlines).

In African philosophy, the concept of Ubuntu (“I am because we are”) emphasizes interconnectedness. This resonates with both ecological interdependence and the biblical metaphor of the body (1 Corinthians 12). If one part suffers, all suffer. It suggests that ignoring the cries of those suffering rare cancers or mysterious illnesses now (perhaps sentinel cases of environmental NCDs) would eventually haunt the whole society. A communal ethic would drive an inclusive approach to problem-solving: involving farmers, consumers, faith leaders, scientists, and policymakers in dialogues on how to balance innovation with safety.

Finally, the theological virtue of hope is crucial. While our findings highlight serious issues, they also open opportunities for positive change. Technology per se is not anti-biblical – it is part of human creativity endowed by God – but it must be tempered by wisdom and love. We see hopeful signs: organic farming movements in East Africa, revival of indigenous crops that are pest-resilient and nutritious (e.g. fonio, sorghum), and initiatives to clean up polluted rivers with community participation. These efforts align with a biblical vision of stewardship and healing. When, for example, Christians in a Nigerian village took action to purify a polluted stream and restore farmlands, they cited Jeremiah’s promise, “*I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security*” (Jer. 33:6). Such integration of faith and works can be a model for tackling NCDs at their environmental root.

In conclusion of the discussion, the evidence compels a paradigm shift: NCD

prevention in Africa (and beyond) must transcend the lifestyle silo and adopt a systemic view that includes environmental and ethical considerations. Genetically modified foods and chemically treated water – emblematic of modern progress – need to be re-evaluated in light of long-term health and human flourishing. A multidisciplinary, even civilizational, conversation is needed, where scientists, ethicists, theologians, farmers, and policymakers collectively seek a path of development that is life-affirming. In the next section, we translate these insights into concrete conclusions and forward-looking recommendations, acknowledging limitations and charting directions for future research.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1. Summary of Insights

This interdisciplinary inquiry set out to challenge lifestyle-only explanations for Africa's NCD surge by situating environmental toxicology within a wider geo-political matrix that, when mapped against the contentious but culturally potent templates of the *Protocols* and the Illuminati's '21 Goals,' reveals disquieting continuities between early conspiracy blueprints and present-day governance structures. Our investigation, spanning global health data, toxicological studies, socio-political analysis, and biblical ethics, has revealed that these factors likely play a non-trivial role in the rise of chronic diseases across the continent. We found plausible and evidenced links between pesticide-laden GM food chains and outcomes like cancers, diabetes, and organ dysfunction, as well as between water disinfection by-products/heavy pollutants and malignancies or metabolic disorders (Shen et al., 2022;

Ambelu et al., 2017). These findings do not negate the importance of lifestyle factors, but they compel an expansion of the causal model: NCDs in Africa result from an *interaction* of lifestyle changes with environmental and technological exposures, all unfolding within specific socio-political contexts.

The argument we advance is inherently disruptive to conventional public health thinking, which has compartmentalized problems into either “*infectious vs non-infectious*” or “*personal behavior vs environmental health*.” In reality, as Africa's situation shows, the boundaries blur. A person drinking chlorinated water and eating food grown with novel methods may accumulate risks irrespective of whether they smoke or overeat. Public health strategies must adapt to this complexity, especially as Africa's development accelerates. Moreover, our integration of a Sola Scriptura perspective provides a moral and spiritual rationale to reevaluate current practices: if indeed we are defiling what should be God's blessings (food and water) and in so doing harming our neighbors and ourselves, then a collective course correction is both a pragmatic and ethical imperative.

5.2. Recommendations

Addressing these issues requires a *multi-level approach*, aligning with the ecological framework used in our analysis. We propose a tiered set of recommendations:

(i). **Supranational and National Policy Level: [1]. Adopt a Precautionary Regulatory Framework:** African governments, through bodies like the African Union (AU) and Africa CDC, should establish or strengthen regulatory standards for chemicals in food and water. This includes strict maximum residue limits (MRLs)

for pesticides on food, enforceable limits for DBPs and heavy metals in drinking water (consistent with or exceeding WHO guidelines), and mandatory safety evaluations of GMOs that consider long-term and independent research. We specifically recommend adopting enforceable PFAS limits harmonized to ≤ 4 ng/L for PFOA and PFOS, consistent with the 2024 U.S. EPA rule, while initiating surveillance for short-chain PFAS and total organofluorine where feasible (U.S. EPA, 2024). In parallel, utilities should implement precursor reduction for DBPs and report both regulated THMs/HAA₅s and indicative nitrogenous DBPs, aligning with WHO's mixtures guidance to better approximate real-world risk. The AU's "*African Model Law on Biosafety*" could be revived to guide countries in implementing comprehensive biosafety regimes. Policymakers should apply the precautionary principle: where scientific uncertainty exists (e.g. effects of lifelong GMO consumption), err on the side of safety and require ongoing monitoring. [2]. **Integrated NCD-Environment Strategy:** National NCD action plans should explicitly incorporate environmental risk reduction. For example, the next revision of Kenya's or Nigeria's NCD strategic plan could include targets for reducing population exposure to priority pollutants (like tobacco control targets, but for pollution). Ministries of Health must collaborate with Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, and Water in a "*Health in All Policies*" approach (Africa CDC, 2022). An AU task force on Environment and NCDs could facilitate cross-sector research and policy alignment, ensuring climate, agriculture, and health policies synergize to reduce NCD risks (e.g., promoting agroecology which reduces pesticide use and improves diet quality). [3]. **Capacity Building and Surveillance:** Invest in lab infrastructure and training to detect

contaminants. Regional centers of excellence (perhaps in partnership with WHO AFRO) should be equipped to test random samples of food for glyphosate or other chemicals and water for THMs, arsenic, etc. Establish a surveillance system for environmentally-linked NCDs: for instance, create cancer registries that also record geographical and occupational data, to spot clusters that might indicate environmental causes. If a spike of a rare cancer appears in an area, an investigation can be launched for possible water or soil toxins.

(ii). **Community and Institutional Level:** [1]. **Water Safety Interventions:** Municipalities and water providers should implement techniques to minimize DBPs – e.g., using chloramination or alternative disinfectants where appropriate, optimizing chlorination (correct dosing, removing organic precursors), and installing activated carbon filters at treatment plants to absorb chemicals. In communities dependent on chlorinated water, public health officials could recommend simple measures like letting water sit uncovered in a pitcher (to allow chloroform to volatilize) or boiling (which can reduce certain volatile chemicals) – though these have limits and must be evidence-based. Rainwater harvesting and protected spring development could be encouraged in rural areas as safer sources if properly managed. [2]. **Agricultural Reforms:** We advocate for a tiered approach to agriculture: (a) *Integrated Pest Management (IPM)* training for farmers to reduce reliance on hazardous pesticides (thus benefiting both farmers' health and consumers'); (b) support for *organic and indigenous farming* as an alternative market – governments could provide incentives or certification help for organic produce which is free of GMOs and synthetic chemicals, creating consumer options; (c) careful *phase-in of biotechnology* with accompanying safety nets –

for example, if GM crops are to be grown, ensure refuges to prevent super-pests, continuous monitoring for any unexpected effects on farmers' health (maybe longitudinal studies comparing farming communities with vs without GM/pesticide use). **[3]. Healthcare System Role:** Clinics and hospitals should be sensitized to consider environmental etiologies when diagnosing NCDs. For instance, doctors could be trained to ask about patients' water source or occupational exposures when seeing cases of young non-smokers with lung cancer or atypical Parkinson's disease (which could hint at pesticide links [Urasa et al., 2024]). Public health campaigns at community level can include messages about washing fruits/vegetables to remove residues, proper storage and handling of pesticides, and perhaps encouraging moderation in consumption of heavily processed imported foods. Community health workers, who are the frontline in many African settings, should receive basic training on environmental health so they can educate households (e.g., advising pregnant women about avoiding certain contaminant exposures given that maternal exposure to DBPs has been linked to adverse pregnancy outcomes [Mashau et al. 2018]). **[4]. Faith and Civil Society Engagement:** Leverage the influence of religious institutions and community leaders. Churches and mosques in Africa have considerable social capital and can champion health causes. A coalition of faith leaders could *endorse stewardship of the environment as part of caring for the body (which many Christians view as the "temple of the Holy Spirit," 1 Cor 6:19)*. Practical actions might include church-run clean water projects, or faith-based advocacy pressing governments for stricter environmental protections. Civil society NGOs focusing on consumer rights or environmental justice should be supported in raising awareness and holding

industries accountable. For example, they could conduct citizen science – testing water locally and sharing results – to empower communities with information.

(iii). Individual Level: [1]. While many risks are beyond individual control, people can be equipped with knowledge to make safer choices where possible. **Consumer education** is key: inform the public about what food labels mean (e.g., if GM content is labeled, what is a GMO and how might it affect them? If organic produce is available, why might one choose it?). Encourage dietary habits that minimize exposure – for instance, peeling or thoroughly washing conventionally grown produce can reduce pesticide ingestion; diversifying diet can prevent excessive accumulation of one type of contaminant; preferring locally grown foods whose supply chain is known might be safer than some imports of unknown standard. **[2]. Promote household water treatment options** that remove chemicals. Typical cloth filtration or basic filters don't remove dissolved chemicals; however, activated carbon filters (like those in some pitcher filters) can reduce chlorine and DBPs. If feasible, disseminate affordable carbon-based filters or point-of-use technologies. Boiling water removes biological threats but can concentrate some chemical contaminants (by evaporation of water), so combined methods might be needed (e.g., filter then boil). **[3]. Advocacy and Reporting:** Encourage individuals to voice concerns. If a community notices unusual illness patterns – say, many young people getting cancer or kidney disease – they should feel empowered to demand an investigation. In some African countries, texting or hotline systems exist for reporting outbreaks; this could be expanded to environmental hazards. Essentially, cultivate a

culture where health is not just a personal matter but a community right that can be defended.

5.3. Foresight and Future Outlook

Looking ahead, how Africa navigates the relationship between technology, environment, and health will significantly shape its development trajectory. If current trends go unaltered, there's a risk of a convergent health crisis: infectious diseases might recede but be replaced by overwhelming NCD burdens – a scenario that could strain economies and social structures. However, Africa also has the benefit of learning from the mistakes of industrialized nations. With timely action, the continent could pioneer a more sustainable model of development, one that integrates health, ecology, and ethics. For example, Africa could lead in “green biotech” – developing crop improvements via traditional breeding or CRISPR techniques that don't rely on chemical load, thus sidestepping some GMO controversies. In water management, African cities can adopt state-of-the-art filtration as they build infrastructure anew, avoiding reliance on chlorine-heavy methods alone.

From a civilizational perspective, the choices Africa makes will also influence global trends. If Africa's leaders demand safer products and enforce standards, multinationals will adjust practices not just in Africa but possibly worldwide (due to market size). Conversely, if Africa is lax, it could become a dumping ground for harmful products. International solidarity and treaties (like the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, which many African countries are party to) are crucial to prevent shifting of dangerous chemicals from one region to another.

5.4. Limitations: It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. First, the evidence base on some links (especially GM foods and human NCD outcomes) is still emerging and sometimes contentious. We had to often rely on animal studies or analogies, which, while suggestive, are not conclusive for human populations. Second, our broad scope meant we could not delve deeply into each specific chemical or disease relationship; we painted with broad strokes to identify patterns. This approach risks oversimplification – certainly not every case of diabetes or cancer in Africa can be pinned on GMOs or water chemicals, and lifestyle factors remain critical. Third, integrating biblical and ethical analysis, while enriching, can be subjective. Different readers might interpret theological implications differently, though we tried to stick to widely accepted principles.

5.5. Future Research: This study opens several avenues for further investigation: *[1]. Epidemiological Studies in Africa:* There is a need for well-designed cohort or case-control studies to quantify the contribution of environmental exposures to NCDs. For instance, a cohort study comparing health outcomes in a region consuming predominantly traditional crops vs. a region consuming GM crops could provide insight (controlling for socioeconomic factors). Similarly, tracking cancer incidence in relation to water quality data over time in various cities could yield correlations. *[2]. Toxicological Research:* More African laboratories should engage in toxicology studies relevant to local diets – e.g., testing the effects of a combination of low-dose pesticide cocktail actually found on market vegetables on animal models. Mixture effects are an important frontier since people are exposed not to one chemical at a time but many. How do malnutrition or infectious diseases (still prevalent in Africa)

interact with these toxic exposures in disease causation? That's another question to explore. **[3]. Social Science and Ethics:** Research into public perceptions and cultural narratives around these issues can inform better risk communication. It would be useful to study how farmers perceive the risks and benefits of pesticides and GM seeds – such insight might explain usage patterns and help tailor interventions. Theological and philosophical scholarship from African perspectives on technology and health could further articulate a framework of responsible innovation that policymakers could draw on (for example, developing an “*African bioethics of food and water*” rooted in values like Ubuntu and stewardship). **[4]. Intervention Studies:** Pilot interventions – such as introducing organic farming in a village and measuring health impacts over years, or installing advanced water filters in a community and tracking NCD markers – would provide practical evidence of what works in mitigating risks. These could be done as collaborative projects between universities, local governments, and communities.

In closing, our research underscores an urgent but hopeful message: *urgent*, because ignoring the environmental determinants of NCDs could undermine Africa's health and development; *hopeful*, because with knowledge comes the power to change course. The rise of NCDs need not be an inexorable side-effect of modernity. By re-aligning our food systems and water management with the timeless principles of protecting life and caring for creation, Africa can strive towards a future where development and health sustain each other. As the prophet Isaiah envisioned, one day “they shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain” (Isa. 11:9) – a poetic image of a world where human progress no longer inflicts harm. Working towards that

ideal, through interdisciplinary wisdom and compassionate action, is the task before policymakers, communities, and indeed all of us who share in the flourishing of civilization.

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