DEVELOPING A GOOD FOOD SYSTEM IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Information Sheet 6
THE PROJECT

The Good Food Systems approach was developed during a Project at Menzies School of Health Research.

*The Good Food Systems Project **aimed to develop a way to strengthen the knowledge and skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to influence their own food system** and improve food, nutrition and food security in their community in order for people to have long and healthy lives.*

The Project began in 2009 led by researchers from the Menzies School of Health Research and was carried out with four remote Aboriginal communities across the Northern Territory and Far North Queensland.
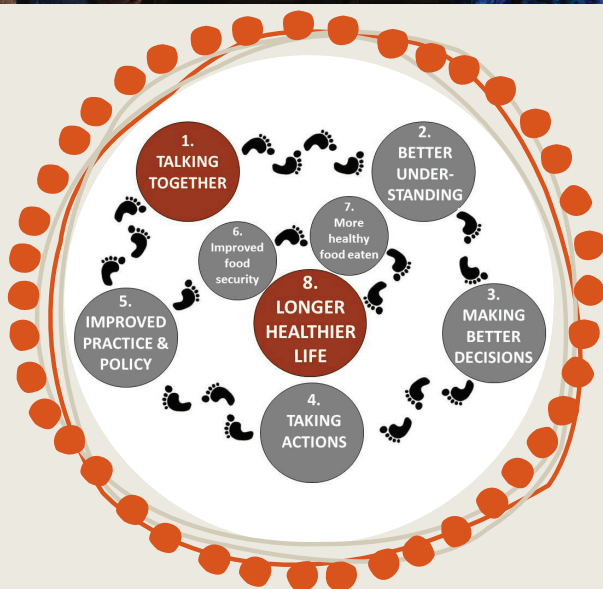
Steps to support improved food, nutrition and food security.

HOW WAS THE PROJECT UNDERTAKEN?

The Project commenced with an intensive consultation process with each community involved and the recruitment of **Community Coordinators, local well-respected leaders, to work alongside the Darwin-based research team**.

Several times a year, over four years, the Community Coordinators **in their communities brought together all the people involved in different parts of the food system**, including the community elders, into local Good Food Group meetings.

WHAT WAS DEVELOPED?

Based on the experiences of four communities through the Good Food Group meetings, a review of the literature, and discussions with external experts, **a number of tools** were developed, trialled and refined (see information sheet 5 for a detailed description of the tools). These tools are intended **to support the process of forming a Good Food Group, provide a practical and systematic way of looking at the whole food system and assist with the collection and feedback of data and information about the food system**.

WHAT CHANGES WERE OBSERVED?

There was **improved communication between different stakeholders**, the creation of a shared vision and space to exchange ideas. Other changes included an **increase in people's knowledge of the food system**, capacity of people involved to work collaboratively and awareness of people about their role in contributing to positive change.

In the beginning the work of the Good Food Groups had a strong focus on the "Food Business" and "Strong leadership and partnership" domains and implementation of actions in these areas helped to achieve **changes in the store practices and spending on healthy food**. The next focus of need could then be chosen from the other parts of the community food system and added to continue the Plan-Do-Collect-Learn cycle.

"Change came from the [Good Food] group. Lollies, including the soft drinks are now placed at the back. It was discussed at the meeting. Changed the fridge, soft drink was at the front, now this is water and milk. Fruit and veg is right at the front, now we have to walk past fruit and veg to get to tea and meat."

Community Liaison Officer (mid-term review, Good Food Systems Project)

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LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Project identified that it is challenging for participants to always give the time to participate in meetings with many competing demands. Early investment in making sure that concerned organisations and groups in the community are **well informed of the purpose and function of the Good Food Group can help build strong commitment from different stakeholders**.

Another challenge can be that actions identified by the group are not implemented. To ensure the best chance, attention needs to be focused on **prioritising actions and providing timely feedback including minutes** to group members on decisions made to maintain momentum**.**

Through **good communication with stakeholders, strong facilitation skills**, the **use of participatory tools** and the **employment and support of Community Coordinators**, this approach can bring everybody together in a structured way to work towards improving the local food system.

NEXT STEPS

The experiences from this Project have been incorporated into these information sheets to **provide guidance for supporting communities towards a Good Food System**.

The information sheets demonstrate the use of the Good Food Systems approach and tools and provide tips based on the Project learnings. There are many different ways to support a participatory process of continuous quality improvement to improve a food system. This approach supports the adaptation and incorporation of the different planning, monitoring and evaluation ideas developed through the Good Food Systems Project.

"The Good Food Systems approach provides the best possible chance of this working, because it is giving ownership, increases self-worth because people are involved and take charge of what to do without dictating."
Store Manager (mid-term review, Good Food Systems Project)

More Information

This information sheet is the 6th in a series titled 'Developing a Good Food System in your community'. It is based on the work of the Good Food Systems Project led by researchers from Menzies School of Health Research. Information sheets developed at this stage in this series include:

1. Good Food Systems Overview.
2. Good Food Group - Formation.
3. Good Food Group - Working together successfully.
4. PLAN-DO-COLLECT-LEARN cycle.
5. Tools.
6. **The Project.**

For more information about the project and the associated tools please click here or visit: http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/Projects/Nutrition/Good_Food_Systems_Project/

The following publications came out of this project:

Brimblecombe J., Bailie R., van den Boogaard C., et al. Feasibility of a participatory multi-sector continuous improvement approach to enhance food security in remote Indigenous Australian communities. (2016 under review).

Rogers, A., Megan, F., Ritchie, J., van den Boogaard, C., Brimblecombe, J., (2016). Strengthening food systems with remote Indigenous Australians: stakeholders' perspectives. *Health Promotion International, 1-11.*

Brimblecombe, J., van den Boogaard, C., Wood, B., Liberato, S.C., Brown, J., Barnes, A., et al. (2015). Development of the good food planning tool: A food system approach to food security in indigenous Australian remote communities. *Health Place, 34I*, 54-62.

Liberato, S.C., Bailie, R., & Brimblecombe, J. (2014). Nutrition interventions at point-of-sale to encourage healthier food purchasing: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health, 14*, 919.

Brimblecombe, J., van den Boogaard, C., Ritchie, J., Bailie, R., Coveney, J., & Liberato, S. (2014). From targets to ripples: tracing the process of developing a community capacity building appraisal tool with remote Australian Indigenous communities to tackle food security. *BMC Public Health, 14,* 914.

Liberato, S.C., Brimblecombe, J., Ritchie, J., Ferguson, M., & Coveney, J. (2011). Measuring capacity building in communities: a review of the literature. *BioMed Central Public Health, 11*(850).