

School Nutrition Education Programmes in the Pacific Islands: A Capacity Needs Assessment

Dr Sarah Burkhart, Ms. Ann Hayman, Ms. Breanna Jones, Ms. Fiasili Lam,
Prof. Steven Underhill, Dr. Elizabeth Swanepoel



USC, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA | CRICOS PROVIDER NUMBER: 01592J



1

Disclosure statement



This project was funded by the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands

2

Background



- The Pacific region is experiencing a number of challenges, including climate change, urbanisation and nutrition transition that potentially impact dietary intake and health.
- The triple burden of malnutrition (acute and/or chronic undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity/diet-related non-communicable diseases) is of concern in this region^{1,2}.
- Nutrition education in schools provides a potential avenue to educate both youth, and the wider community (teachers, staff, parents, community members)³.

1. Abarca-Gómez, Leandra et al. Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016: a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128.9 million children, adolescents, and adults. *The Lancet*. Volume 390:[10113]:2627-2642 2. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2018. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018. Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*. Rome, FAO. 3. School UNSCN 2017 Development Report.

3

Background



School Nutrition Education Programmes (SNEP) project

- Scoping review (Poster #60)
- **Capacity needs assessment**
- Recommendations for regional and local SNEP

For this project, a School Nutrition Education Programme is defined as an intervention to educate school students on nutrition and food preparation with the aim of influencing healthy nutrition choice and practice at an age when life time behaviour habits are developing and in the wider community.



4

Aim



The aim of this study was to explore capacity for School Nutrition Education Programmes (SNEP) in 14 PI countries



Methods – Data collection



- Desk review followed by semi-structured interviews with 88 key stakeholders (in-person n=12 countries, via email n=2 countries)
- Participants included stakeholders from:
 - Ministry of Health (or equivalent)
 - Ministry of Education (or equivalent)
 - Ministry of Agriculture (or equivalent)
 - Local and International NGO's
 - Schools (Principals and Teachers)
 - FAO
 - WHO
 - Local not-for profit groups



Methods – Data collection



FAO member countries included in the project

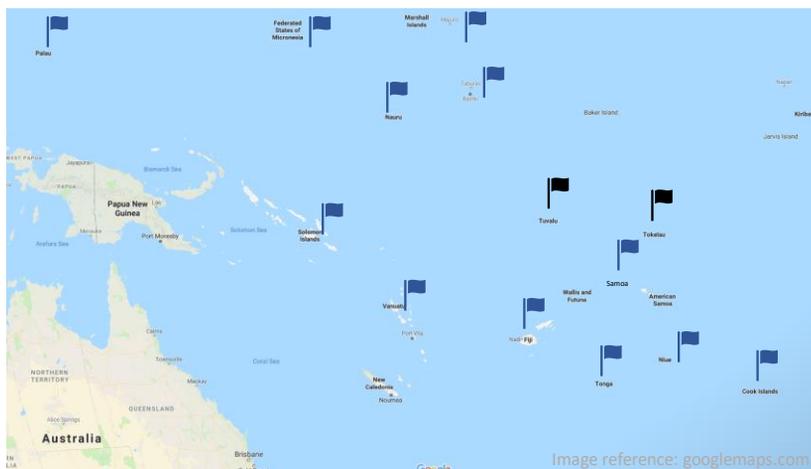


Image reference: googlemaps.com

7

Methods – Data collection



- Interview questions were designed to explore challenges and solutions, and discuss assessment domains (Enabling environments, Organisations and Individuals*), within the functional capacities of policy, knowledge capacity, partnerships and implementation⁴⁻⁶.
- Email verification of meeting summaries

***Enabling environments** includes; policy and legal framework, political commitment and accountability framework, economic framework and national public budget allocation, governance structure and power, legal, policy and political framework.

Organisations includes; mandates, motivation and incentive systems, strategic leadership, inter/intra institutional linkages, programme management, multi-stakeholder processes, organisational priorities, processes, systems and procedures, human and financial resources, knowledge and information sharing, and infrastructure.

Individuals includes; skill levels (technical and managerial skills), competencies, knowledge and attitudes, behaviours and values

4. FAO approaches to Capacity Development in Programming: Processes and tools. Learning module 2, revised edition. FAO Capacity Development, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome 2015. This was adapted with assistance from the following documents; 5. FAO Capacity Assessment Approach and Supporting Tools Discussion Draft, Rome, 2010 and 6. Nutrition education needs and capacity analysis package: Tools for an enquiry into country needs and capacity in nutrition education and nutrition education training. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2016).

8

Methods - Analysis



- The FAO Capacity Assessment Matrix (CAM) Summary Table⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾ was adapted for analysis and synthesis of the findings based on the framework, objectives and questions used for each functional capacity and domain.
- The project team followed a process of content analysis to identify and group common themes.
- Results are presented by functional capacity

4. FAO approaches to Capacity Development in Programming: Processes and tools. Learning module 2, revised edition. FAO Capacity Development, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome 2015. This was adapted with assistance from the following documents; 5. FAO Capacity Assessment Approach and Supporting Tools Discussion Draft, Rome, 2010 and 6. Nutrition education needs and capacity analysis package: Tools for an enquiry into country needs and capacity in nutrition education and nutrition education training. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2016).

Findings - Policy



The capacity to formulate and implement policies and legislation and responsibilities

Capacity to formulate and implement policies and legislation varies

- 9 countries: overarching National Nutrition Policy and/or NCD strategy
- 8 countries: overarching School Nutrition related policy
- Directives or mandates for activities

Responsibility

National policy development: National Government and associated Ministries, support of external consultants (i.e. FAO)

- At a school level: Education and/or Health sector
- Schools develop own policy, sometimes supported
- Stakeholders noted educators and school staff require assistance to develop policy

Findings - Knowledge



The capacity to access, generate, manage or exchange relevant knowledge and adapt it to local systems.

Limited capacity was evidenced through:

- Limited access to appropriate and credible learning and teaching resources. Educators reported using out of date textbooks and material not relevant to the local food supply
- Varying integration of nutrition in the curriculum
- Difficulty in sharing and exchanging relevant knowledge due to geographical location, cost and technology (i.e. lack of internet access or slow download speeds)
- Limited research capacity to generate new knowledge
- Some adaptation of knowledge to the local system occurs, but limited by skill and time

Findings - Partnering



The capacity to connect, to advocate and engage in networks, alliances and partnerships, including linkages with community (parents/church).

Limited opportunities for partnering particularly at a regional level:

- Local partnerships exist in all countries, sometimes formalised
- Difficult for larger multisector groups to understand priorities and activities, better communication of current and planned activities → better use of resources
- Lack of regional networks and opportunities for partnerships
- Methods used to share/collaborate locally and regionally include; informal networks (i.e. the informal Cook Islands example), phone, email, face-to-face meetings and letters/mail. Technology (email/phone) cited as a challenge to communication, particularly with remote islands.

Findings - Implementation



The capacity to manage and implement programmes from planning to monitoring and evaluation. Responsibility for implementation, access to infrastructure (facilities, resources) and aspects of the wider environment that may impact on use and success of SNEP.

- **Limited capacity to manage and implement programmes from planning to monitoring and evaluation in the Pacific region, due to:**
 - Lack of defined responsibility
 - Access to infrastructure (facilities, resources)
 - Aspects of the wider environment (i.e. availability of ‘unhealthy’ foods)
- Current M&E activities include; health recording/growth monitoring, school health checks, participation in the Global School Health Survey (GSHS) and STEPS, educators checking lunchboxes, MoH/MoE staff checking compliance of school vendors and canteens, and gardens/fruit trees.

Summary



There is limited capacity for SNEP in the Pacific Islands due to;

- Lack of supportive policy (at times)
- Access to, and sharing of knowledge
- Workforce capacity
- Geographical location (travel time and cost)
- Communication

But,

there is a high level of motivation for SNEP and current examples suggest that SNEP can be successful, if supported appropriately.



Where to from here? Recommendations for regional and local SNEP developed and provided for FAO consideration

Acknowledgements



The project team would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands, the stakeholders who have contributed to this project, and those individuals who assisted with identifying and contacting key stakeholders.

We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the FAO ESN team (Rome) in providing feedback on project reports.