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Building community capacity to prevent adolescent obesity in Tonga – two case studies

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on behalf of the
Tonga Ma’alahi Youth Team
Community Capacity Building in Ma’alahi Youth Project (MYP)

- MYP intervention sites – 22 villages, 3 districts, Tongatapu
- Community capacity building (CCB) - very important for MYP
  - All interventions have a CCB component
- Examine 2 interventions as case studies of CCB
  - vegetable gardening
  - aerobics instructor training
- Compared them in terms of
  (i) skills and knowledge
  (ii) organisational structure and relationships
  (iii) accessing resources
  (iv) leadership and ownership
Vegetable growing project

• Implemented in 11 sites
• Objectives –
  (i) increase vegetable consumption amongst youth
  (ii) build community capacity through training in land preparation, planting, garden maintenance, produce marketing
• Background to project
  – Committee was created, including one rep from each site.
  – Each site pays $20 per month and returns 30% of net profit to the committee
  – Sites are linked with other organisations, such as Ministry of Agriculture and Ma’ui’ui Organic.
  – All sites report to the committee on their progress
Vegetable Gardens
Vegetable growing project

**Skills and knowledge:** Youth gain skills and knowledge through whole process from land preparation, planting, maintaining, harvesting and marketing of produce

- meetings
- talks by agricultural experts
- workshops attended by participants

**Organization structure and relationships:** Engage existing youth groups and forming new relationships with food and agriculture organizations

- setting-up committee across all sites
- partnerships - Ministry of Agriculture

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Vegetable growing project

**Accessing resources:**
- New start-up resources - seeds, irrigation supplies
- Commercial markets for the vegetables to ensure project sustainability

**Leadership and ownership:** Strengthen the existing youth leaders and create community champions for the project
  - training in project management and activities
  - facilitating networking with related organisations

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Aerobics instructor training

- Community aerobics project operated weekly in 14 villages and 3 schools

- Sessions organised and led by MYP team members but we could not keep this up. That model not sustainable – it needed community ownership

- So we developed and organised a training course to produce new instructors from the communities.

- Aerobics instructor training course:
  - ran for 4 hours per week for 8 weeks
  - conducted by a qualified aerobics instructor
  - 18 participants, nominated by community groups.
Aerobics instructor training

**Skills and knowledge**: Gained skills in conducting an aerobics session, designing an aerobics routine

- only one participant out of 18 completed the course (big time commitment)

**Organization structure and relationships**: The aerobics remained an “outside” program, without community organization engagement

- no partnerships, no incentives, no support

**Accessing resources**: The aerobics had no comparable business model to reward the aerobics leaders for their efforts

**Leadership and ownership**: This project lacked the community ownership which was displayed in the vegetable gardening project

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Essential components of CCB

Skills/Knowledge
- Strengthen skills of individual to identify priority needs
- Ensure abilities and commitment developed to contribute to organisational and community goals

Organisational structures/relationships
- Develop workforce at level of organisations/communities
- Establish links with other related groups and organisations

Access to resources
- Individual access to related resources and incentives

Leadership/ownership
- Building confidence in community leaders
- Individuals and community feel that program belongs to them
Conclusions

1. Getting CCB right increases chances of success and sustainability

2. Before implementation, use CCB checklist to test likely success and sustainability

Pacific OPIC Project
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