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Evaluating the ‘Farm to Fork’ model to improve school meals in St. Kitts and Nevis

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BACKGROUND

- Farm to fork (F2F) models can improve fresh foods consumed.
- A type of nutrition-sensitive value chain (NSVC), F2Fs can improve diets and nutrition of school children in the Caribbean.
- NSVCs involve the careful design of many interventions from field to table based on local needs and assets.
- Evaluation of F2Fs should look at level of involvement and knowledge of diverse stakeholders, how and why they work together across sectors from food production to consumption.

METHODS

This study summarises a participatory approach that evaluated a NSVC model for a “farm to fork” (F2F) project model that was used from 2011-2014 in school feeding on St. Kitts.

Data were collected at a one-day workshop at Ocean Terrace, SKN on November 2018, using a combined group model building (GMB) and theory of change (ToC) approach.

37 stakeholders from different sectors were guided by trained facilitators to evaluate the ToC linking F2F interventions.

RESULTS

1. Participants showed they understood the F2F model as a NSVC and added other interlinked factors that contribute to unhealthy eating by schoolchildren (causal map).
2. They proposed new programmes to promote healthy eating and identified ways to integrate healthy eating into existing SKN programmes (For example, use of the 25 Remarkable Teens as health promoters and influencers). See table 1.
3. Findings showed that using this participatory process can bring different stakeholders together to understand why and how they can respond collaboratively to complex problems.

TABLE 1: LINKING HEALTHY INTERVENTIONS TO LOCAL INITIATIVES

Proposed areas for future interventions	Local value chain actors to be engaged	Existing or new local programs to support
#1. Child-friendly campaign on healthy eating using award winning teens (<i>using ICT-based social media campaign and games</i>)	Public health experts, chefs, teachers, nutritionists, teens, ICT-games designers, award winning teens, sports celebrities, children	‘25 Remarkable Teens’- a youth development award program with teenagers as health promoters
#2. Child summer camps with food demonstrations and learning about healthy eating (<i>child-targeted</i>)	Chefs, nutritionists, teachers, faith-based organizations (FBOs), directors and staff of community summer camps.	Annual community camps during the summer holidays
#3. Increase supply of fresh foods produced on school gardens (<i>strengthening school gardens to increase quality & quantity in school meals</i>)	School meal service personnel, teachers, extension officers, policymakers, food procurement coordinators, parents and children.	School gardens/ with focus on nutrient- dense foods
#4. Backyard gardening to encourage community-based production of fresh and nutritious produce (<i>increase fresh foods at homes</i>)	Parents, community advocates, households, agriculturalists, extension officers.	Backyard gardens to support household food production focused on nutrient- dense crops (easy-to-grow and low-maintenance)
#5. Diversified menus and cooking demonstrations for parents and communities (<i>live demonstrations on preparing healthy, local low-cost meals</i>)	Children, parents, nutritionists, and chefs	Community based demonstrations on preparing healthy, low- cost meals
#6. Good agricultural practice training of farmers (<i>strengthening agricultural production by local farmers</i>)	Local farmers, extension officers, nutritionists, policymakers	Ongoing initiatives on smallholder farmer production of healthy, fresh and unprocessed foods
#7. “Rebranding” the school feeding program (<i>using celebrity chefs</i>)	Principals, parents, nutrition coordinator, chefs, farmers	Local school meals programs
#8. New parent training in healthy foods for first “1000 days” growth and development	Hospital staff, nutritionists, medical professionals	Young parents on healthy feeding of newborns for first “1000 days”
#9. National promotion of healthy eating with rebranding of local foods (<i>media campaign</i>)	Vendors, community champions, doctors, politicians,	“Eat Local Day” --national level promotion of high nutritional value local foods
#10. Integrated public policy on healthy eating	All stakeholders	Supportive policy environment

CONCLUSION

Results demonstrate the value of using a GMB and ToC approach to evaluate NSCVs by engaging and directly connecting local and regional stakeholders with foreign experts. This collaboration is key to identify local needs (why) and mobilise community assets (how) in solving complex problems.

