

Collaborative approach to community-based research: a case study in the Northern Territory

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Iron deficiency anaemia in Indigenous children is a major concern of communities and health service providers in the Northern Territory. Community consultation undertaken to develop the new NT infant feeding guidelines in 2005 stimulated discussion about the need to consider alternative strategies to address the high rates of anaemia in 6 month to 5 year olds and to reduce the number of intramuscular injections given to infants and young children to treat the anaemia. The collective interest in the government and community controlled health sector resulted in the development and implementation of a formative research project investigating the knowledge, attitudes, sources of information and practices regarding feeding of Indigenous infants and young children in Katherine region and Central Australia. Three Aboriginal health services: Katherine West Health Board, Sunrise Health Service and Wurliwurlijang Health Service; Anmatjere Health Zone Steering Committee; NT Department of Health and Community Services, UNICEF and the Fred Hollows Foundation partnered to design and implement the formative research project. Following the analysis and interpretation of the findings, the stakeholders designed a demonstration project to implement preventive micronutrient supplementation and nutrition promotion in the Katherine region and Central Australia. The aim of which is to determine the feasibility of using a home, food-based micronutrient supplement 'Sprinkles' together with nutrition promotion to prevent IDA in Indigenous children aged 6–24 months in the NT. This paper will describe the process for this community-based research project, keys to the success of the partnership and issues to consider for future collaborative projects.