Training was a key component of this project, particularly in regards to the development of the Talking about Feeding Babies and Little Kids Counselling Course (TFBLK). The Fred Hollows Foundation developed, implemented and evaluated a pilot project investigating the feasibility and acceptability of preventive micronutrient supplementation with ‘Sprinkles’ along with community based nutrition promotion. It was conducted in conjunction with the Northern Territory Department of Health, Sunrise Health Service, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council, Queensland Health, Boab Health Services and University of Western Australia Rural Clinical School of Western Australia and occurred within a complex social, political and cultural landscape in six remote communities across Northern Australia.

The project’s aims were to:

• trial an innovative preventive approach to anaemia reduction in remote communities;
• develop the skills and capacity of a largely untrained community based workforce to deliver and evaluate their own program;
• develop a comprehensive infant and young child feeding nutrition counselling training program to up skill the community-based workforce to be effective peer counsellors; and
• implement a range of community wide health promotion strategies to reduce anaemia and improve infant and child nutrition.

What did we do?

Development of the Talking about Feeding Babies and Little Kids Counselling Course (TFBLK). TFBLK was based on the Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling: An Integrated Course, that was developed by WHO for countries globally to adapt to their context with the aim of improving feeding practices for infants and young children worldwide. The adaptation of the course was ongoing over the duration of the project based on input from the CBWs and from direct observation, feedback and learnings during the training sessions that occurred in the pilot communities.

A range of educational techniques were used in an attempt to meet the learning needs of all CBWs. The initial pilot of the WHO Course revealed the course was quite didactic – relying on long periods of lectures and reading. These methods were found to be unsuitable for many CBW participants and so a range of educational techniques were developed. There are still some ‘lecture’ and ‘reading’ components to the training but these have been minimised as much as possible. The course now incorporates a range of engaging and interactive techniques such as hot potato brainstorming, card sorting and charades. Changes were made to the content of the course to reflect issues in the local context (e.g. smoking, drugs and alcohol use during breastfeeding), and Aboriginal cultural practices relating to care of mothers and babies.

A range of teaching and learning media was used. Participants in the pilots of the Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Integrated Course were given a written manual, however this was not utilised by many CBWs. For the TFBLK, a range of handouts and job aids the CBWs could use in their work with families were developed and provided at relevant

An example of sound practice in training and support of CBWs working on the Early Childhood Nutrition and Anaemia Prevention Project.

This is my first job. I like to help with kids with no iron. I was slow to understand about kids. Now I understand about anaemia about kids with no iron and [I’m] willing to learn more.
Community Based Worker

Before the Sprinkles program started I felt really embarrassed and shame about getting up and talking to mothers. It helped me to get up and stop feeling shamed and do my job of talking to mothers.
Community Based Worker
Examples from the field

Training and Support

points throughout the training. Many more pictures, diagrams and photos were incorporated into the TFBLK, many of which CBWs then used in developing their own tools for sharing information with families.

The timing of training was not ideal. Some CBWs completed the Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling Integrated Course prior to commencing work, however many did not. Those CBWs who did not complete the training prior to working with families reported that they lacked confidence in providing information to mothers about nutrition and feeding babies and children. This was especially true for younger CBWs who had less experience caring for young children. Because the ongoing development of TFBLK was embedded within the project, no CBWs involved in the project ever completed the revised, better targeted course. However, the benefit of developing the course during the project was that the process was informed by the needs and input of the CBWs.

In addition to block training sessions, regular on-the-job training and revision activities were conducted with CBWs. CBWs reported that they particularly enjoyed the training aspect of their role.

Training was provided in a variety of training locations that included town based training workshops as well as community based workshops and on-the-job training. Town based training allowed CBWs to meet each other, share stories and experiences and take a break from some of the everyday challenges of life in remote communities. Community based training was facilitated during visits by the Project Coordinator and visiting nutrition and child health staff. Community based training provided opportunities to contextualise the learnings; develop locally appropriate materials for use with families; and to build relationships between CBWs and visiting health staff.

What worked well?

• Using an iterative process of adapting the counselling course incorporating feedback and experiences of CBWs grounded in their work

• Having sufficient financial resources to engage an international master trainer from WHO; to bring CBWs together for training sessions; to purchase and produce high quality training tools; and to engage additional expertise for developing and designing training resources.

• Linking training with existing tools and resources that CBWs, health workers and families were already familiar with (e.g. NT Infant Feeding Guidelines Storybook).

What did not work so well?

• Preferably CBWs would have completed training prior to commencing their project activities, however the timing of the project did not allow for this. Many CBWs did not have the opportunity to fully use their training due to the timeframe of the project.

• High turnover of the support staff who were involved in different stages of piloting the ‘training of trainers’ component of the counselling course hindered continuity in providing on-the-job training and support.

• Training was non-accredited. CBWs did not receive a certificate or formal qualifications from their participation.


What next?

We recognised that although the Talking about Feeding Babies and Little Kids Counselling Course is a valuable training tool, CBWs were also interested in undertaking more comprehensive training about nutrition and food security. We also recognised that for many projects and organisations face-to-face training alone is not feasible in terms of human and financial resources. In response to this finding, the next phase of work has been to engage Menzies School of Health Research to develop an integrated Nutrition and Food Security Training and Education Portal. This portal includes:

• Self-paced, mixed media on-line training modules integrating content from Talking about Feeding Babies and Little Kids Counselling Course, as well as other nutrition and food security training grounded in research supported by Menzies and The Foundation

• A ‘one stop shop’ for high quality, evidence informed tools and educational resources for working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nutrition and food security

• Options for complementary face-to-face delivery of training

• Options for certificates of attainment for individuals to seek recognition of prior learning for a VET skill set in nutrition and food security through a registered training organisation.

This publication may contain images of persons that have passed away. The Fred Hollows Foundation would like to acknowledge these persons and pay our respects to them and their families.

Developed by Pandanus Evaluation & Planning Services in collaboration with The Fred Hollows Foundation Indigenous Australia Program. Additional information about the development of this project can be found at http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/promotion-resources?lid=30884

Designed by Elizabeth Cook - elizabethjcook@optusnet.com.au