

The Community Food Initiative Programme Ireland

Which 'life stage' for CVDs prevention targets the intervention?

- Childhood, adolescence, adulthood and ageing.
- The focus of the Community Food Initiative (CFI) Programme is on adults who are responsible for food shopping and meal preparation for their family and/or children.
- The target audience for the CFI has a low level of income.

Short description of the intervention:

The Community Food Initiative (CFI) Programme aims to promote greater access and availability of healthy and safe food in low-income areas through a programme of local projects using a community development approach, across the island of Ireland. The programme also aims to positively influence the eating habits of families in low income communities by addressing the barriers to having a healthy diet and supporting greater access to affordable and healthy food at a local level. The programme supports and encourages the involvement of ten individual community projects, through shared learning, training and collaboration. Crucially evidence from the programme is used to identify best practice and inform policy change. A detailed outline of the ten CFI projects can be found on <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/Community-Food-Initiative-year-1-report-appendix-B.pdf>. This is a three-year (2013-2015) programme funded by Safefood and is managed by Healthy Food For All. SafeFood, is an all-island implementation body set up under the British-Irish Agreement with a general remit to promote awareness and knowledge of food safety and nutrition issues on the island of Ireland. Healthy Food for All is an all-island charity combating Food Poverty by promoting access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups <http://healthyfoodforall.com/>. The programme builds upon the key learnings and experiences from an initial Demonstration Programme of CFIs 2010–2012. The demonstration programme provided funding, technical support, collective training and facilitated networking of seven CFI's between 2010 and 2012 <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/safefood-Community-Food-Initiatives-2010%e2%80%932012-Evaluation.pdf>.

The Objectives of the CFI Programme are to:

1. Fund ten community-based food initiatives across the island of Ireland, over a three year period (2013–2015)
2. Provide technical support, collective training and facilitate networking
3. Encourage projects to consider long term sustainability from the start of the programme
4. Promote shared learning among CFIs on the island
5. Identify policy and best practice lessons and increase awareness of the programme among key stakeholders.

Key features of the CFI programme included:

- on-going support was provided i.e. a programme approach was used, as distinct from the provision of money only i.e. a grant scheme. Support included technical advice, training, regular networking opportunities and on-going evaluation.
- the selection process sought projects that were hosted in an established organisation with a proven track record in managing grants and projects. This allowed an immediate focus on developing the CFI itself rather than the organisation.
- all projects were located in communities of socio-economic disadvantage.
- a development worker from Healthy Food for All provided the technical support, and facilitated collective training and networking between projects. They also co-ordinated the programme and assisted in raising awareness of the programme on IOI.

- three networking meetings were held each year to make training, sharing learning amongst the CFIs and site visits possible.

Target audience: A broad range of participants engaged in CFI projects, from children to older people. The host organisations were very important in promoting CFI's through their other services, and their client groups determined who was most likely to engage with their CFI. There was no clear pattern in one gender engaging overall with CFIs to any differing degree. CFIs which had difficulty engaging males or females found targeting with gender specific activities useful, e.g. women's gardening groups and men only groups. In year one, more than 12,000 persons took part in an activity organised by a CFI and people from marginalised backgrounds were introduced to the benefits of healthy eating.

Key Success Factors of CFI's:

- There is a transfer and sharing of best practice, knowledge, and learning across the 10 community food initiatives. This allows learning from local projects to inform and influence policy in relation to community food programmes.
- The community development approach to the CFI enables recognition of issues at local level and identification of appropriate solutions by the local community. Skills are transferred from those participating in CFI's to other community members and families.
- CFI's encourages community and family cohesion.
- The CFI uses a targeted approach to reach low income groups
- Participants reported improved levels of health and well-being, better mood, more motivation to do other things (e.g. go walking).

Was the design of the intervention appropriate and built upon relevant data, theory, context, evidence, previous practice including pilot studies?

Based on the success of previous Demonstration Programme safefood committed funding for this current Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-15. The Demonstration Programme achieved what it set out to achieve and the evaluation found that CFIs are a worthwhile and valuable approach to tackling food poverty at a community level with every programme CFI reporting making a difference to food poverty at a local level.

Based on the findings from the evaluation, the following recommendations were made for future funding of CFIs in the current programme, all of which are being adhered to:

Approach:

- CFIs are supported financially through a programme approach of technical training and shared learning.
- A designated Development Worker, co-ordinates and manages the programme, which is essential to its success.

Types of CFIs funded:

- We chose those that are part of an established community development 'host' organisation.
- We ensured more commonality between CFIs under the programme to ensure that learning can be harnessed fully by choosing community-wide projects.
- We prioritised those that have the potential to integrate their activities with existing local resources such as peer-led training programmes, local authority land and schools.
- We considered the potential of projects to develop food skills more broadly than food growing skills through their associated activities. Food gardens are excellent at engaging communities with food and improving access and availability of foods, but CFIs have greater potential to build further broader food-related skills. These can range from budgeting, shopping, storing, preparing and cooking healthy and safe meals.

Process:

- We endeavoured to ensure that the training and networking commitments of the programme approach were fully understood by CFI co-ordinators from the outset.
- We simplified the application process and provided clarity on what is and what is not eligible for funding.
- We keep the financial reporting process as simple and straightforward as possible.

Where possible we allow adequate flexibility in budgets to facilitate CFIs in developing and adapting to local needs.

- We made evaluation needs for the CFIs simple and clear from the outset.
- We keep training practical, relevant and accessible as possible, considering the emerging needs of all the projects.
- We have encouraged CFIs to think about long-term sustainability and resource from the outset, e.g. building local partnerships, developing steering groups, developing a strong volunteer base.

Increasing awareness about the programme and influencing policy

- We have endeavoured to ensure more scope to share learning among community organisations from this programme.
- We make the learning of the Programmes available to statutory and voluntary organisations to influence policy and practice.

Did the design thoroughly describe the practice in terms of purpose, SMART objectives, methods?

Yes, there were clear aims and objectives at the outset, even though all 10 projects are very diverse, all have a common aim of promoting healthy eating among participants and ultimately the wider community. The recruitment process into the programme was rigorous and adhered to strict eligibility criteria for this three-year programme, which was based on the learnings and the recommendations from the evaluation of the previous Demonstration Programme.

For example:

- We chose projects that are part of an established community development 'host' organisation.
- We ensured more commonality between CFIs under the programme to ensure that learning can be harnessed fully by choosing community-wide projects.
- We prioritised those that have the potential to integrate their activities with existing local resources such as peer-led training programmes, local authority land and schools.
- We considered the potential of projects to develop food skills more broadly than food growing skills through their associated activities. Food gardens are excellent at engaging communities with food and improving access and availability of foods, but CFIs have greater potential to build
- Further broader food-related skills. These can range from budgeting, shopping, storing, preparing and cooking healthy and safe meals

To which type of interventions does your example of good practice belong to?

Individual Intervention

How is this example of good practice funded?

National funding provided by SafeFood, See more at: <http://www.safefood.eu/Utility/About-s.aspx#sthash.OlwWCuBK.dpuf>

What is/was the level of implementation of your example of good practice?

Local

What are the main aim and the main objectives of your example of good practice?

The Community Food Initiative's Programme aims to promote greater access and availability of healthy and safe food in low-income areas through a programme of local projects using a community development approach, across the island of Ireland. The Objectives are to:

1. Fund ten community-based food initiatives across the island of Ireland, over a three-year period (2013–2015)

2. Provide technical support, collective training and facilitate networking
3. Encourage projects to consider long term sustainability from the start of the programme
4. Promote shared learning among CFIs on the island
5. Identify policy and best practice lessons and increase awareness of the programme among key stakeholders

Please give a description of the problem the good practice example wants to tackle:

The numbers of people experiencing food poverty increased from 450,000 in 2010 to 600,000 in the Republic of Ireland in 2013 (Social Inclusion Monitor, 2015). Food poverty is associated with low income, deprivation, labour market inactivity and households with large numbers of children. Certain household types are more vulnerable to food poverty, with almost one-third (30%) of lone-parent households food poor in 2013, an increase from 23% in 2010 (ESRI, 2015). Unemployed households are the most likely to be food poor. Food poverty is defined as the “inability to access a nutritionally adequate diet and the related impacts on health, culture and social participation” (Friel & Conlon, 2004). Not only does it have a negative impact on an individual’s health, it also adversely impacts on an individual’s social engagement. Low-income households consume less nutritionally balanced diets and suffer from higher rates of diet-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and certain cancers at a younger age. These factors have long-term implications for demands on the health system and to the State, with safefood estimating the cost of obesity alone at €1.13 billion (safefood, 2012).

This Community Food Initiative (CFI) Programme is a three-year funded programme by SafeFood and managed by Healthy Food for All. The overall Programme is a combination of 10 Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) based in areas of socio-economic disadvantage across the island of Ireland. Underpinning this project is the conviction that CFIs represent a practical way in which barriers to healthy eating can be addressed at local level. The Community Food Initiative (CFI) programme follows on from an earlier Demonstration Programme of CFIs, which ran for three years, from 2010 to 2012.² The aim of the CFI Programme is to promote greater access and availability of healthy and safe food in low-income areas through a programme of local projects using a community development approach.

Is your example of good practice embedded in a broader national/regional/ local policy or action plan?

Yes. Food poverty is linked to a number of critical public policy issues, notably welfare adequacy, health inequalities, low educational attainment and constraints on social participation. Food prices in Ireland remain above the European average. The cost of food varies depending on access to different food outlets. Lack of access to multiple or discount supermarkets means food costs are significantly higher if bought in a local convenience store.

- 11.7% of children live in consistent poverty (Social Inclusion Monitor, 2015)
- 37.3% of children live in households experiencing basic deprivation (Social Inclusion Monitor, 2015)
- 1 in 4 children are living in jobless households (ESRI 2012)
- 1 in 5 children (21%) are going to school or to bed hungry because there is not enough food in the home (HBSC 2012)
- 1 in 6 children never have breakfast on weekdays (HBSC 2012)
- Families with older children would have to spend 59% of Child Income Support on food alone in order to meet the recommended dietary requirements for a teenage child (VPSJ, The Cost of a Child, 2012)
- It is up to ten times cheaper to provide calories in the form of unhealthy foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar than it is in the form of protective foods such as fruit and vegetables and other important foods such as lean meat and fish (Healthy Food for All, 2009)

Implementation of your example of good practice is/was:

Single. The Community Food Initiative (CFI) Programme 2013-15 is a specific three-year funded programme. As per learning from the evaluation of the previous Demonstration Programme 2010-12, from the outset the CFIs involved have been encouraged and supported to consider long-term sustainability, through for example specific training

and networking events. Three-year funding gives them the chance to be at a stage of development which is anticipated will lever additional funding from local agencies and organisations. It is also anticipated that after three years the CFI will have evidenced its many benefits to the community and that the host organisation could absorb some of the minimal costs of running it. All of the funded CFIs are and/or have expressed that they are determined to keep going beyond the current funding stream as they all recognise the many benefits to their communities. Management of the CFI Programme has also encouraged a strong partnership approach and local ownership from the outset to help ensure its long-term sustainability.

Target group(s):

The target audience is specifically families and young people experiencing food poverty in low-income areas. However, due to the broad remit of the host community organisations, the CFIs encourage participation of all low-income community members and have been very successful if engaging even hard-to-reach marginalised groups such as men and the migrant population.

During implementation, did specific actions were taken to address the equity dimensions?

All CFIs were chosen as part of community-run organisations in low-income areas on the island of Ireland. Therefore many different dimensions of equity were taken into consideration by way of the fact that the host organisations only work in disadvantaged, targeted areas. The target audience is specifically families and young people experiencing food poverty in low-income areas in both rural and urban areas. However, due to the broad remit of the host community organisations, the CFIs encourage participation of all low-income community members and have been very successful if engaging even hard-to-reach marginalised groups such as men and the migrant population.

In design, did relevant dimensions of equity were adequately taken into consideration and targeted?

All CFIs were very deliberately chosen as part of community-run organisations in low income areas on the island of Ireland. Therefore many different dimensions of equity were taken into consideration by way of the fact that the host organisations only work in disadvantaged areas. For this programme the target audience is specifically families and young people experiencing food poverty in low-income areas. However, due to the broad remit of the host community organisations, the CFIs encourage participation of all low income community members and have been very successful if engaging even hard-to-reach marginalised groups such as men and the migrant population. Nobody is excluded.

Which vulnerable social groups were targeted?

For this programme the target audience is specifically families and young people experiencing food poverty in low-income areas. However, due to the broad remit of the host community organisations, the CFIs encourage participation of all low-income community members.

Did the intervention have a comprehensive approach to health promotion addressing all relevant determinants and using different strategies?

The Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-15 supports low-income communities in tackling food poverty issues locally. The programme adopts a community development approach through various activities that address barriers disadvantaged communities face in accessing a healthy diet. This helps promote and improve the health of local people and all CFIs have self-reported improvements in the overall wellbeing of the people who engage with the CFI.

Was an effective partnership in place?

The Community Food Initiative (CFI) Programme 2013-15 is a specific three-year funded programme based on the learnings from the evaluation of the previous Demonstration Programme 2010-12. The programme is a successful partnership between SafeFood, the funding provider and Healthy Food For All who manages and supports the programme operationally at local level. A key success factor in this programme was the establishment of a dedicated Development worker who plays a key role in supporting CFI's to set up the necessary infrastructure for their gardens and establish administrative structures. The host organization ensures the accountability of the project and its ongoing support. The local community partake in the healthy food related activities and ownership is encouraged at local level by, for example, encouraging establishment of a steering group to ensure long-term sustainability of the CFI. Local partners (e.g. local authorities) are engaged with to ensure sharing of valuable resources and information at local level. From the outset the CFIs involved have been encouraged and supported to consider long-term sustainability, through for example a strong partnership approach locally to help ensure its long-term sustainability. All CFIs were very deliberately chosen as part of community-run, well established organisations with a proven track-record in low-income areas on the island of Ireland.

Was the intervention implemented equitably, i.e. proportional to needs?

Yes. The Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-15 supports low-income communities in tackling food poverty issues locally. The programme adopts a community development approach through various activities that address barriers disadvantaged communities face in accessing a healthy diet. This helps promote and improve the health of local people and nobody in the community is excluded. All CFIs were very deliberately chosen as part of community-run, well-established organisations with a proven track record in low-income areas on the island of Ireland.

Were potential burdens, including harm, of the intervention for the target population addressed?

All CFIs were very deliberately chosen as part of community-run, well-established organisations with a proven track-record in low-income areas on the island of Ireland. The Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-15 supports low-income communities in tackling food poverty issues locally. The programme adopts a community development approach through various activities that help local people address the barriers they face in accessing a healthy diet. No 'harm' was anticipated.

Were the intervention's objectives and strategy transparent to the target population and stakeholders involved?

The host organisations have always encouraged the participation of local people by explaining what the Community Food Initiative activities will entail and what the intended outcomes will be. Ultimately each host organization is encouraging local ownership.

Did the evaluation results achieve the stated goals and objectives?

Yes, the evaluation results suggest that the objectives of the programme were successfully addressed in the first year of the programme, with some more work to be done in years two and three. These results can be found in the Report on the Evaluation of the Community Food Initiative Programme (2013-2014) at <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx> All five objectives have been successfully addressed in year one, with further development required in years two and three.

1. Ten CFI projects were established across the island of Ireland.
2. Technical support and training has been provided and three all-island networking events took place.
3. Long-term project sustainability is now a growing focus for CFIs.

4. Shared learning and networking has been developed among the projects.
5. Stakeholder awareness has been encouraged through promotion, building the evidence base and networking.

Did the intervention have a defined and appropriate evaluation framework assessing structure, processes and outcomes?

Yes. Findings from the evaluation of the initial demonstration programme of CFI's 2010 – 2012 provided a testing ground for the future funding and support of CFI's and led to improvements in the current CFI programme 2013-2015. The Evaluation of the Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-2015 is based on an analysis of quarterly questionnaires/reports collected from each of the ten CFI's between July 2013 and March 2014. The questionnaire can be found at <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/CFI-Appendix-A.pdf>. The methodology used in the evaluation is detailed at <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>

Did the intervention have any information /monitoring systems in place to regularly deliver data aligned with evaluation and reporting needs?

Yes. The Evaluation of the Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-2015 is based on an analysis of quarterly questionnaires/reports collected from each of the ten CFI's between July 2013 and March 2014. The questionnaire can be found at <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/CFI-Appendix-A.pdf>

Specifically, what has been measured / evaluated?

The following is a list of the key data collected and measured/evaluated. Details can be found at <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-oneof-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>

1. Programme reach – number of individuals who took part in a CFI activity
2. Participation in regular on-going activities
3. Profile of participants
4. Main challenges, successes and 'learnings' from the first year of the programme
5. Achievement of CFI programme objectives

Reach of the CFI Programme: In year one, the CFIs engaged with more than 12,000 persons in activities related to healthy eating, growing food and cooking skills (Table 1). Many individuals engaged in activities from time to time e.g. school or community events while a smaller number of individuals regularly took part in core activities such as gardening and cooking. Projects varied and some had an association with local schools. While participants were initially mostly female, a more mixed group developed throughout the year but there was still low participation from teenagers and the elderly. The evaluation found that there is a need for greater emphasis on participation in food skills activities such as meal planning, budgeting and shopping skills.

Table 1: Total engagement in CFI activities in year one

Number of individuals that took part in CFI Activities	
Overall reach of all CFI activities	12,117*
Healthy eating	3,299
Gardening/Growing	3,273
Cooking skills	1,515
Planning/Budgeting/Shopping	373
Other activity such as physical activity, food and healthy living seminars/demonstrations, community meals, open or fun days, foraging and networking	3,717

*number of individuals who took part in an activity organised by a CFI. 60 individuals took part in more than one activity and are, therefore, counted twice, most participants (74%) took part in only one activity during any given month.

Programme achievements and successes: All five objectives have been successfully addressed in year one, with further development required in years two and three. (see section 5.1, above). Year One project objectives achieved include:

1. Community gardens were established
2. Administrative structures/budgets met
3. Positive engagement with and response from local community/schools
4. Training courses were well attended with positive feedback from participants.

Other successes reported by the 10 projects included the volunteer contribution to the project (n=3), reaching marginalised groups (n=2), networking and sharing of knowledge in local community (n=2), bringing people together (n=2), providing practical life skills in growing and cooking (n=2), increasing consumption of healthy food (n=2), introducing people to the joys of physical exercise (n=1), the hosting of special events that got people interested in healthy eating (n=1), and beginning to address food poverty (n=1).

What are the main results/conclusions/recommendations from the evaluation?

The main results from Year One of the current Community Food Initiative (2013-2015) are outlined in section 5. 6 above and a detailed conclusion can be found at <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>. The main conclusion arising from the current CFI programme 2013-2015, is that CFI's are a worthwhile and valuable approach to tackling food poverty at a community level. Some of the main conclusions and future priorities are as follows:

Reach: Overall, it can be concluded that the current community food initiative programme demonstrates its ability to reach and engage with a very large number of individuals (n= 12,000) in activities related to healthy eating. In particular, a substantial number of people, including people from marginalised and disadvantaged communities, took part in a CFI activity and have been introduced to the benefits of healthy eating. These projects have engaged with their local communities, and feedback on their training courses and once-off events has been positive.

Infrastructure: Each of the projects has set up the necessary infrastructure for their gardens and established administrative structures. However, some administrative difficulties were identified by the Development Worker relating to the completion of reports by some CFIs. This will need to be resolved by the projects concerned so that they do not worsen and threaten the good relationship that clearly exists between the Development Worker and all the projects.

Designated Development Worker: A designated development worker was an essential resource to provide technical support, training and networking and learning opportunities among CFI's. In Year one, the development worker supported the 10 CFIs in a number of ways, including establishing and maintaining good relationships with the 10 CFIs, visiting each CFI site, organising three networking events and encouraging the CFIs to share with each other, and identifying and organising the training needs that reflect the emerging needs of the 10 projects and the programme.

Engaging target groups: Maintaining and growing participant numbers for some projects was challenging, especially those from the most disadvantaged communities.

Sustainability: Recognising the need for a long term sustainability plan for the project is a requirement in moving forward. CFIs have begun to consider the implications of sustainability for their projects by, for example, investigating additional funding opportunities, recruiting volunteers and considering ways in which their CFI brand may be sustained when the programme has run its course.

Shared learning: Most shared learning occurs at the networking events and when projects visit each other. Learning is also shared through an online forum, Mango Apps. The Development Worker believes that networking is a very powerful forum for the projects to build relationships and share learning and encourages projects to visit other sites so that they can gain a different perspective on their project. Half of the CFIs said they were satisfied with the shared learning to date, while the others were somewhat dissatisfied. A key feature in Year two and three will be promoting shared learning among CFI's outside of the organised networking events.

Identifying policy and best practice lessons and increase awareness of among key stakeholders in Ireland: A substantial amount of evidence was gathered during Year one which will be used for promotion and advocacy purposes when dealing with government departments and others involved in policy development.

Prioritise healthy eating/food activities: Most emphasis by the CFIs in Year one has been on the establishment of the community garden and gardening skills. More emphasis in future will be on developing meal planning, budgeting and food shopping skills.

Is the evaluation report available, preferably in English or at least an English summary?

Yes the evaluation report is available in English at <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>. Also available in English are:

1. A summary of the evaluation report.
2. The questionnaire/report used in the evaluation.
3. A detailed outline of each of the Ten CFI projects.

Who implemented the intervention?

Safefood fund and Healthy Food for All (HFfA) manage the CFI programme. The Community Food Initiative host organization ensures the accountability of the project and its ongoing support. The local community partake in the healthy food related activities and ownership is encouraged at local level by, for example, encouraging establishment of a steering group to ensure long-term sustainability of the CFI. Local partners (e.g. local authorities) are engaged with to ensure sharing of valuable resources and information at local level. A designated Development worker plays a key role in co-ordinating and managing the programme.

What core activities are/have been implemented?

- Site visits by the Healthy Food for All (HFfA) programme manager to participating host organisations are a crucial way to develop strong links with the CFIs and build a database of learning to share and link to policy messages.
- Three Networking Events are hosted each year for programme projects to share learning and challenges. Networking events also offer a training dimension based on the emerging needs of the projects and the programme. For example, some of the networking events to date have been on sustainability and community engagement.
- The HFfA programme manager presents on the CFIs at various fora and conferences and attends external events to input on learnings from the programmes.
- The Development Worker also updates the HFfA quarterly newsletter and the annual report to reflect CFI Programme activities. Quarterly evaluation reports and half-yearly financial reports are also coordinated by the programme manager and HFfA run National Conferences where learning from the programme is shared with a wider stakeholder audience. The Development worker also uses evidence from the programme to make submissions to the Government Departments recommending key actions to support the future development of CFIs nationally.

Safefood is responsible to share learning and outcomes www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx

Was the intervention designed and implemented in consultation with the target population?

Yes. The host organisations are well established and have proven track records of successful engagement in their local communities. They have always encouraged the participation of local people by explaining what the Community Food Initiative activities will entail and what the intended outcomes will be and by asking them what they would like in their own communities to tackle these issues. Each host organization encourages local ownership to ensure long-term sustainability of the projects.

Did the intervention achieve meaningful participation among the intended target population?

Yes. The CFIs have proven very successful in engaging local people in healthy food related activities. The current programme concentrates on accessing families and young people but nobody is excluded from participation. The CFIs have proven to successfully engage hard-to-reach groups such as men, Traveller and migrant communities. Host organisation report local people requesting additional healthy food related activities and they are often inspired to start up other groups such as walking groups. Everybody can relate to food and it is integral to the experience of poverty. Everybody who partakes realises that they have valuable skills to share and their new-found confidence helps them share their learning with others in their community, which encourages the participation of more community and family members.

Did the intervention develop strengths, resources and autonomy in the target population(s)?

Yes. The CFIs have proven very successful in developing the skills and strengths of local people in healthy food related activities. The current programme concentrates on accessing families and young people but nobody is excluded from participation. The CFIs have proven to successfully engage hard-to-reach groups such as men, Traveller and migrant communities. Host organisation report local people requesting additional healthy food related activities and they are often inspired to start up other groups such as walking groups. Everybody can relate to food and it is integral to the experience of poverty. Everybody who partakes realises that they have valuable skills to share and their newfound confidence helps them share their learning with others in their community, which encourages the participation of more community and family members. Often people go on to further education in, for example, horticulture and cookery classes as a direct result of being involved in the CFI. Host organisations encourage local ownership by established steering groups for the CFIs and a strong volunteer base. This helps ensure the long-term sustainability of the CFI.

Was the target population/s defined on the basis of needs assessment including strengths and other characteristics?

With high food costs and recessionary times in Ireland low-income families struggle to put food on the table and can be disproportionately affected by food poverty. Access to the target population(s) is through established community organisations in low-income areas who have the trust and relationships built with local people.

Is the continuation of the intervention ensured through institutional ownership that guarantees funding and human resources and/or mainstreamed?

Implementing a three year CFI programme aimed to allow CFI's the time to develop and become sustainable through a variety of measures, including a strong partnership approach and encouraging local ownership. Some CFI's have begun to consider implications of sustainability for their projects by for example, investigating additional funding opportunities, recruiting volunteers and considering ways in which their CFI brand may be sustained when the programme has run its course. However with funding cuts and challenges faced by all organisations at community level, this is not ensured. Mainstreaming is being encouraged at national level through using the evidence from the programme to inform policy inputs at government level.

The reality for the sustainability of many community initiatives is that they are reliant on at least some level of funding. To support CFIs with on-going funding, the initial Demonstration programme highlighted that integration of a CFI into other activities of a host organisation and a strong volunteer base are greatly beneficial to long-term sustainability. Other important lessons for best practice for supporting CFIs in the future can be found in the Recommendations section, page 20, of the Report on the Demonstration Programme of Community Food Initiatives 2010-2012, see <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Res>

Is there a broad support for the intervention amongst those who implement it?

Yes. All host organisations are (and were in advance of getting funding) very supportive of their CFI and the work of Healthy Food for All and Safefood. All CFIs self-report a marked increase in the overall wellbeing of their target communities through their healthy food related activity and all recognise the many benefits of running a Community Food Initiative.

Healthy Food for All very much support the intervention and recognise CFIs as viable ways at local level to help tackle food poverty issues and the many barriers people on low-incomes face in accessing a healthy diet. Safefood are very supportive of the intervention and have funded two three-year programmes to date.

Is there a broad support for the intervention amongst the intended target populations?

Yes. All host organisations are (and were in advance of getting funding) very supportive of their CFI and the work of Healthy Food for All and Safefood. All CFIs self-report a marked increase in the overall wellbeing of their target communities through their healthy food related activity. Participants are keen to continue the work and courses are well attended and often encourage the development of additional activities, e.g. community gardening and healthy eating courses can lead to walking groups being established.

Were sources of funding specified in regards to stability and commitment?

Yes. The eligibility criteria for success in getting funding and being part of the programme of shared learning was clearly outlined and specified in advance of signing of contracts and drawing down of first tranche of funding. All organisations chosen are well established and have a proven track record of sustainability and accountability.

Were organisational structures clearly defined and described?

Yes. Key senior members of staff were identified in each organisation to regularly link in with the Healthy Food for All (HFfA) managers of the programme. These staff members were also required to attend the networking and training opportunities to ensure the continued sharing of learning throughout all projects and for the duration of the three-year programme.

Is the potential impact on the population targeted assessed (if scaled up) ?

While there has been no formal assessment on the potential impacts on the target population if scaled up, the evaluation results following the first year of the programme are very encouraging, particularly in relation to the very large reach and engagement of more than 12,000 persons in activities related to healthy eating, growing food and cooking skills. Findings from the first year evaluation can be found on <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>

Are there specific knowledge transfer strategies in place (evidence into practice)?

All information is shared on various social media forums, website, Facebook, Twitter. Visit <http://www.safefood.eu/> for details. Healthy Food for All (HFfA) partners with other national organisations to share the evidence garnered from working with CFIs to promote the work and advocate on their behalf. All evidence and learning informs pre-budget submissions and statement of strategy to the Government.

Is there available an analysis of requirements for eventual scaling up such as foreseen barriers and facilitators?

Key learnings and recommendations for the future funding and development of Community Food Initiatives can be found in the following reports: Report Demonstration of Community Food Initiatives 2010-2012 at <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/safefood-Community-Food-Initiatives-2010%e2%80%932012-Evaluation.pdf> & http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/K8336-SAFEFOOD_CFI-EVALUATION-REPORT_A4.pdf

What were, in your opinion, the pre-conditions for success? Were there any facilitating factors?

- Using the recommendations from the evaluation of the previous Demonstration Programme led to improvements in the current CFI programme.
- Working with well-established and respected community organisations in the local low-income Areas
- Adopting a strong community development approach.
- Having a designated development worker to co-ordinate and manage the programme.
- Offering networking and training opportunities that resonated with the emerging needs of the projects and the programme.
- Networking, communication and sharing the information and learning with other CFIs and stakeholders. To learn and share any learnings with others.

What were, in your opinion, the main lessons to be learned?

- The programme shows evidence that Community Food Initiatives work at local level to help tackle the issues of food poverty.
- All projects self-report improvements in the well-being of their communities by having a CFI locally.
- All projects are very keen to continue their CFI beyond the current funding stream.
- All CFIs have exceeded their original expectations.
- Many of the CFIs have experience challenges due to funding cuts.
- It is important to be flexible and facilitate community member's needs – no 'one size fits all' approach
- Actively promote the project in the local community.
- Encourage community ownership – let locals shape the project.
- Continue to develop skills – long term planning, time management and project prioritisation.
- Encourage long term sustainability planning – including a social enterprise approach.
- Continue to identify policy and best practice lessons and increase key stakeholder awareness.

References to the most important articles or reports on the intervention:

Evaluation of the Community Food Initiative Programme 2013-2015. (Safefood, 2014). <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>

Demonstration Programme of Community Food Initiatives 2010-2012. (Safefood, 2013). <http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Demonstration-Programme-of-Community-Food-Initiati.aspx>

Department of Social Protection (2015), Social Inclusion Monitor 2013, Dublin: Department of Social Protection.. www.welfare.ie or www.socialinclusion.ie . Accessed 24th June, 2015

ESRI (2015) All-Island Food Poverty Network Belfast 21th April, (2015) Presentation by Bertrand Maître The Impact of the Republic of Ireland Food Poverty Indicator. <http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/files/7d/7d19abbc-f3d6-40dd-b022-79326d5d0aea.pdf> Accessed 24th June, 2015

Friel, S & Conlon, C. (2004) Food Poverty and Policy. http://www.combatpoverty.ie/publications/FoodPovertyAndPolicy_2004.pdf. Accessed 24th June, 2015

SafeFood (2012). The cost of overweight and obesity on the Island of Ireland. <https://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/Final-Exec-Summary-The-Economic-Cost-of-Obesity.pdf>

Department of Health and National University of Ireland, Galway (2012). The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study 2010. http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/documents/nat_rep_hbsc_2010.pdf Accessed 24th June, 2015

Mac Mahon B, Weld G, Thornton R & Collins M (2012). The Cost Of A Child. A consensual budget standards study examining the direct cost of a child across childhood. A Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice research report <http://www.budgeting.ie/images/stories/Publications/cost%20of%20a%20child%20-%20full%20report.pdf>

Healthy Food For All (2009). Policy Briefing, October (2009). The affordability of healthy eating for low-income households. http://healthyfoodforall.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/2009-10-20_AffordabilityOfHealthyEating.pdf. Accessed 24th June, 2015

Other relevant documents:

<http://healthyfoodforall.com/about/hffa-programmes/cfi-programme-2013-2015/>
<http://www.safefood.eu/Home.aspx>
<http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Evaluation-of-year-one-of-the-Community-Food-Initi.aspx>
<http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Demonstration-Programme-of-Community-Food-Initiati.aspx>
<http://healthyfoodforall.com/topic/community-news/>
<http://healthyfoodforall.com/community/community-case-study/>

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