



MAKING RESEARCH MATTER

The goal of the Pacific Island Food Revolution (PIFR) is for Pacific Islanders to make healthier food choices, leading to healthier diets and improved wellbeing.

We try to achieve this by combining multi-media, community engagement and partnerships to promote local food and support Pacific Islanders to revolutionise their diets, shifting away from imported, highly processed foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt and returning to their traditional nutrient-dense diet of local superfoods.

To achieve our goal, we need to ensure that our program addresses the correct set of factors and is rigorously evaluated, so that we know whether it works and how we can improve it. To do this, we've partnered with the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics and piloted a series of monitoring, evaluation and learning methodologies from behavioural science.

We started by drafting our **theory of change**, which outlined our understanding of the nature of the problem and its underlying causes, our long-term goal and our best guess as to the conditions which would need to be satisfied to achieve our long-term goal.



Poor health driven by over reliance on foreign food because of:

1. The relative attractiveness of foreign food (cheaper, tastier, more convenient).
2. Prevailing social identity and norms (apathy toward obesity and NCDs, culture and feasting).
3. The relative supply of foreign food (more accessible).

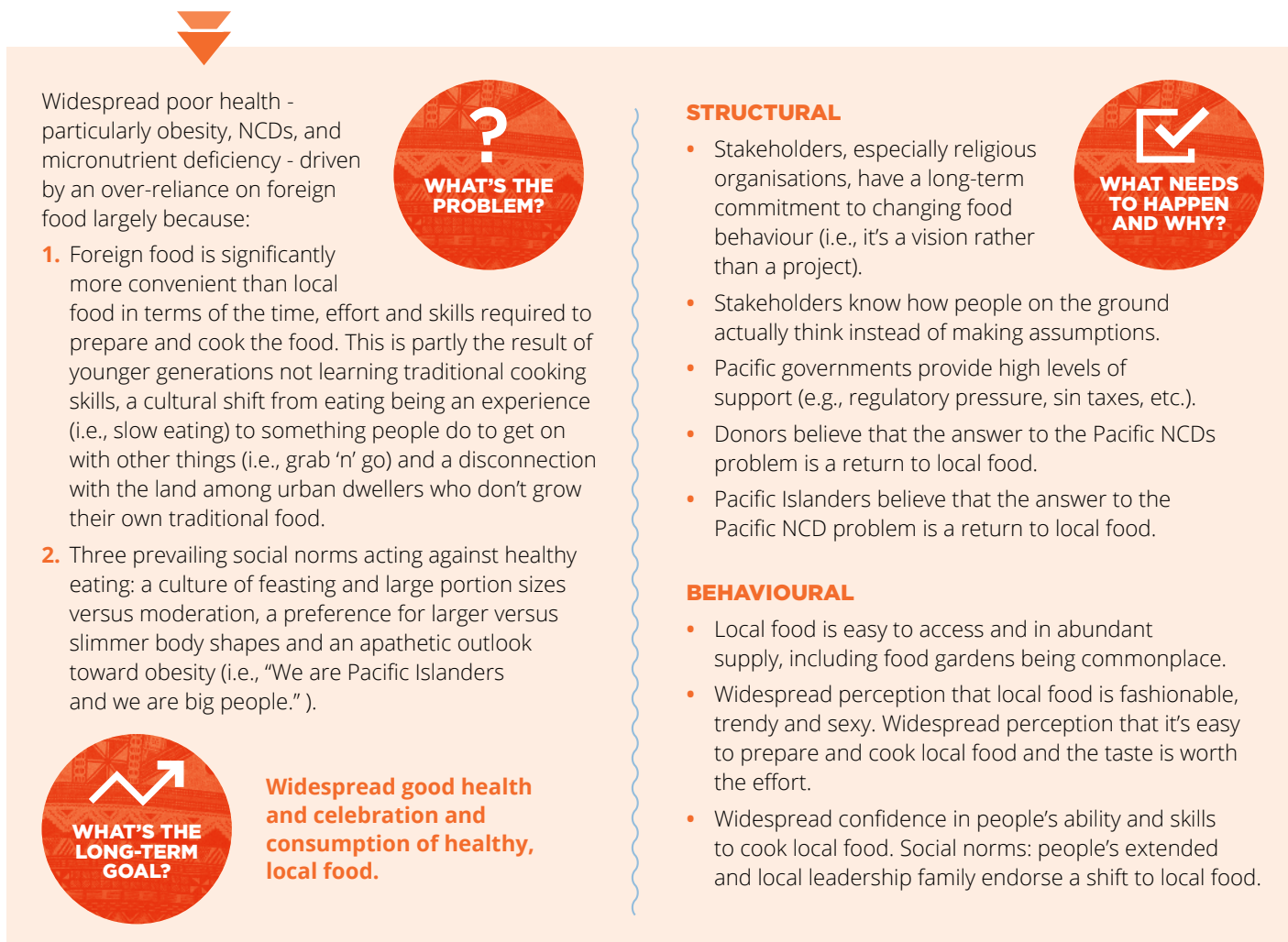


Good health driven by a return to local food.

- Local food is perceived as affordable, tasty and convenient because these drive choice.
- Widespread pride in local food because status drives choice.
- Abundant supply of local food because this drives convenience.



We then sense-checked our draft theory of change by running **in-depth qualitative interviews** with a sample of Fijians. Based on these interviews, we refined the draft theory of change according to the relative evidence in support of each component.



With a better understanding of which factors potentially affect people's food choices, we wanted to test how the PIFR reality TV content affected people's food choices and the determinants of food choice identified during the qualitative research. To do so, we implemented a **lab study** at the Institute of Applied Sciences of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. In this study, students came to the lab, were randomly assigned to watch a compilation of clips from the PIFR TV show or a documentary on climate change in Kiribati, completed a survey on their perceptions of Pacific food and were given a choice of two lunch options: an unhealthy, foreign meal (chicken burger and fries) and a healthy, Pacific meal (grilled fish with local greens and *miti* or coconut sauce).

We found that watching the compilation of PIFR clips significantly increased the likelihood that women chose the healthy, Pacific meal, but had no effect on men's choices and had no meaningful effect on either men's or women's perceptions of Pacific food: availability of ingredients, coolness, level of effort involved in preparing/cooking Pacific food, confidence in their ability to prepare/cook Pacific food and the cultural importance of preparing/cooking Pacific food.

We are not concerned by the absence of a meaningful effect for most of these factors as the baseline levels are very high and so they do not appear to serve as barriers (e.g., in general, people are very confident in their ability to prepare/cook Pacific food). However, we are concerned about the lack of a meaningful reduction in effort perceptions. We believe the high level of perceived effort could pose a significant barrier to the consumption of healthy Pacific food. Therefore, a key focus of our communications activities is on dialling down this perceived barrier to shift perceptions of the effort associated with cooking healthy Pacific food.

To follow up on these findings, we are currently exploring whether we obtain similar results outside of the lab. We are running a **mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative)** survey before and after the PIFR TV show and communications campaign in each country and examining whether people's food choices and perceptions of Pacific food change over this period, and how people think about effort in the context of food. We are also running an **online experiment** to test how different presentations of recipes – print versus video or print and video – affect people's effort perceptions.