



# A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING & IMPLEMENTING A Healthy Snack Box Policy



*Suva Office*

25 Pender Street, Suva, Fiji

PO Box 2249, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji

**P:** (679) 331 3178

**F:** (679) 330 2214

**E:** [info@savethechildren.org.fj](mailto:info@savethechildren.org.fj)

**<http://www.savethechildren.org.fj>**

*Labasa Office*

Lot 7, James Madhavan Street, Labasa, Fiji

PO Box 2076, Labasa, Fiji

**P:** (679) 881 8700

**F:** (679) 881 8700

Written and edited: Save the Children Fiji

Design & Layout: Save the Children Fiji

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# A Guide to Developing & Implementing a Healthy Snack Box Policy

A **Healthy Snack Box Policy** is a tool to help ensure children, teachers, parents and guardians are practicing healthy eating and children are bringing healthy lunches and snacks to school.

## Purpose

To provide information and guidance to teachers, parents and guardians on how to develop and implement a “Healthy Snack Box Policy”.

## Who will benefit from having this policy?

Children from any community across Fiji will benefit as there will be improvements in their health and development.

## Specific objectives

- To encourage use of a reliable approach to healthy lunches for children, both at school and home.
- To ensure parents and children have access to knowledge and skills to select a healthy lunch.
- To help families make healthy and affordable choices for children’s lunches.
- To ensure the *Healthy Snack Box Policy* embraces community cohesion and participation.

## Why do schools and communities need to develop a Healthy Snack Box Policy?

Developing the policy will help guide parents and guardians to improve the nutritional content of school lunches and encourage children to eat healthy snacks and meals. This will help children to meet their daily nutritional requirements. Having a *Healthy Snack Box Policy* supports best practice in healthy eating, which leads to positive changes in eating habits.



# What is the Healthy Snack Box Policy Process?

The process outlines steps to successfully develop and implement the policy in schools. It provides information and guidance using tried and tested methods.

## Steps to Developing & Implementing a *Healthy Snack Box Policy*

STEPS	ACTION
<b>Planning and Talking to the Right People</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact the community leader and inform them about the plans of developing a policy on healthy snack boxes.</li> <li>2. Choose a lead person within your school or community – someone who can influence changes to current behavior.</li> <li>3. Talk with people who are involved in the school-schoolteacher, community health worker, school committee members or chairperson and ask them to form a committee.</li> <li>4. Set up a committee, which will take the lead role in developing the policy.</li> </ol>
<b>Investigate</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage children, teachers, parents and guardians to gather insight and views about school lunches and meals. (for e.g. what is in the school lunch, who prepares the lunch?)</li> <li>2. Carry out a snack box check to determine how many children bring balanced or unbalanced meals. A balanced meal contains food from all the 3 foods (see poster on 3 Food Groups on page 8)</li> <li>3. Conduct a check on the nutritional status of children in the school. This can be assisted by zone nurses/dieticians from Ministry of Health. (see the contact list for phone numbers on page 9).</li> <li>4. Ask the Ministry of Health zone nurse/dietician to interpret the findings on snack box check and nutritional status.</li> </ol>
<b>Inform the Community on Findings and Plan for Awareness</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan a presentation to all community members on the findings on nutritional status and snack box survey at a community meeting.</li> <li>2. Conduct a discussion session with community members about the findings. Include an awareness session for all community members on healthy eating and its importance to growth and development among children. This part can be carried out by Ministry of Health dietitians. This is an opportunity to engage with parents and to help them to see the reasons why it is important for children to eat healthily.</li> </ol>
<b>Developing a Healthy Snack Box Policy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community members should write the policy and include their ideas on what needs to be included in the policy.</li> <li>2. The content of the policy should include an action plan of how the community will achieve their policy and ensure children are eating healthy meals and snacks.</li> </ol>

## STEPS

## ACTION

### **Informing Everyone About the Policy**

1. Present the final policy to all community members in a community meeting and ask for the policy to be endorsed by the community members. Ministry of Health or Provincial Council can be part of the endorsement to provide support in its implementation and sustainability. Ministry of Health can support by raising awareness to community members on healthy eating and improving meals. Provincial Council can help in linking communities to stakeholders, monitoring of community plans, and ensuring community action plans are approved.
2. To ensure the policy is implemented in a sustainable way, arrange for a separate session to raise awareness amongst children and parents about the policy.
3. It is important to inform all parents and guardians well in advance to enable them to plan and include a variety of items in their child's snack box.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

1. Nominate teachers who will be responsible for recording of meals brought in by children (for e.g. record child's name, date, what lunch and drink was brought to school).
2. Teachers can regularly conduct a snack box survey to track progress and improvement.
3. Through the Parent/Teacher Association meetings, discussions can be held on the progress and ways to improve snack box meals.
4. The committee needs to provide a progress report at community meetings and provide support to parents for further improvement.
5. Rewards are a great way of encouraging healthier snack boxes —give out stickers and certificates to children who bring in balanced meals consistently (see certificate sample on page 10).
6. For children who consistently bring in lunches that do not comply with the policy, teachers may wish to devise a sensitively written note that can be placed in the snack box to remind parents of the policy. The committee needs to explore ways to support these parents in providing healthier meals.
7. The committee needs to review the policy once every year to include necessary changes through community discussions and feedback from parents and guardians. This is also an opportunity to note the changes since the policy began and to acknowledge and celebrate the good changes.

# Sample of a Healthy Snack Box Policy

Below is a sample of a **Healthy Snack Box Policy**. Your committee may wish to use some of these examples, or write new ones. It depends on what is the best fit for your community.

## The overall aim of this policy

*What would you want to achieve by having this policy? What is the overall goal?*

For example:

- Our aim is to ensure that all lunches brought from home and consumed in school should include local and healthy food.

## What will the policy achieve?

*What will be changed by this policy? What sort of improvements could be made from having healthier snack boxes?*

For example:

- Ensure there are improvements in the weight of children in our community.
- Consistently good healthy eating habits of school children leading to healthier adults with healthy practices.
- Children are nourished with balanced meals made from local foods so they can perform academically.
- Parents encouraged to provide fresh, nutritious and healthy food to children and family members at all times.

## Action Plan

*What will you do to achieve your aim? What are the specific steps that need to be taken to address the aim?*

For example:

- All the community members will plant vegetables, fruits and root crops to contribute to community food security.
- Women's groups will cook children's meals twice in a week at the school.
- Cooked meals for children will include boiled fish, harvested vegetables like cabbage, bean and root crops from the community farms.
- A community project will be started to supplement children's meals with other protein foods such as chicken and eggs.

## This policy applies to?

*Who will benefit and who needs to follow this policy?*

For example:

- Children
- School teachers
- Community members
- Parents and guardians

## A good packed lunch to include?

*What will you include to make a balanced meal? What healthy foods can be easily packed into a snack box?*

For example:

- One portion of local fruits such as pawpaw, banana, kavika, guava or mandarin.
- One portion of protein source such as fish, eggs or chicken.
- One portion of starch such as cassava, dalo, kumala, kawai, uto, rice or roti.
- One portion of local vegetables such as bele, tubua, rourou, pumpkin or baigan.
- Drinks to include water, but fresh fruit juice, lemon juice or coboi (lemon grass tea) only.



## Foods/snacks to be avoided

*What will not be allowed for children to eat or drink? Which unhealthy foods are currently part of snack boxes?*

For example:

- Fizzy drinks, sugar sweetened juice or tea.
- Salty cheese snacks – bongos, twisties, jive.
- Fried foods – fish and chips, fried noodles.
- Sweets, cakes, lollies, sweet biscuits and chocolates
- Plain noodles (Note: these are okay if they include vegetables and meat or fish).

## Monitoring and Evaluation

*Who will check that the snack boxes include healthy foods proposed in the policy and who will take note of the changes?*

For example:

- All lunches brought from home will be checked by the teachers on a daily basis. If parents are not able to meet the policy requirements, measures and strategies will be put in place and discussed with parents and families on ways to improve children's meals.
- Support will be sought from the community to find ways of helping families provide healthier meals for children.
- The school committee will meet to make a report on the changes.

## Support and Contribution

*Who will help to make sure the policy is being followed? Who can assist with implementing the policy?*

For example:

- Women's group to provide support in cooking of meals for children.
- Community Education Committee (CEC) and Turaga-ni-koro (village headman) will provide support in the implementation of the policy.
- Community members to contribute to community-based food security projects. (Note: Ministry of Agriculture can provide advice and guidance on food security projects. See the contact list for phone numbers)

## Reminder

- This policy will be signed and followed by all parents who will be enrolling their children in the school at the beginning of every year.
- Treats that are sent into school to celebrate birthdays are allowed. Where possible these will be distributed at home time so parents are able to monitor.

## Endorsement

DATE: .....

NAME: .....

POSITION: .....

SIGNATURE: .....

NAME: .....

POSITION: .....

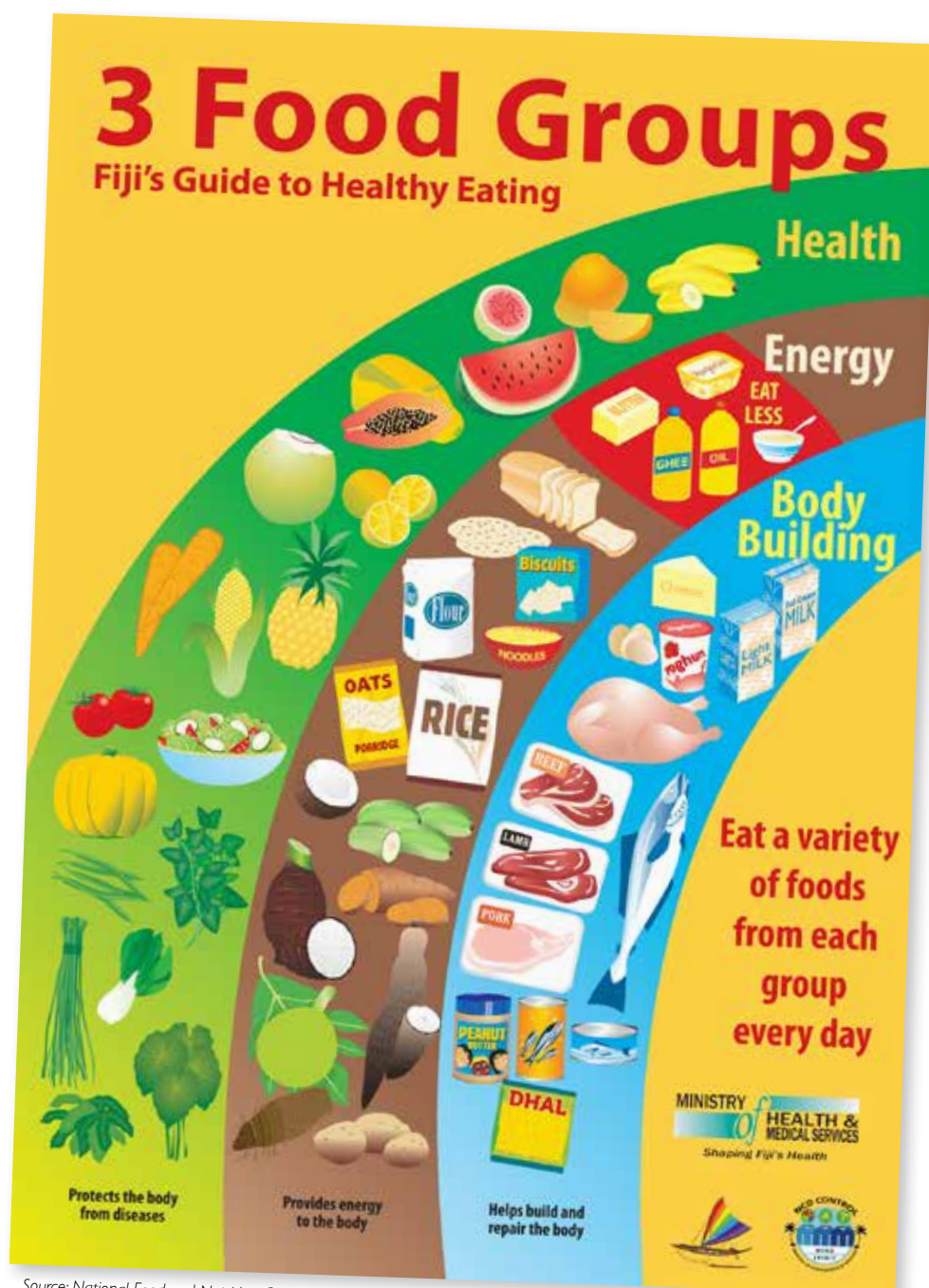
SIGNATURE: .....

# Preparing a Balanced & Healthy Meal For Your Children

Using this guideline, parents and guardians can plan a balanced meal for their children using local foods. A balanced meal includes food from the 3 food groups. The biggest portion should be Health group, then Energy group and the smallest portion should be Body Building group. Packing healthy and nutritious school lunches is one way to contribute to children's lifelong health.

## What parents and guardians need to know:

- Children's appetite vary from day to day depending on the activity and growth.
- Eating healthy meals is important. Children need to eat a well balanced meal as it will give them energy and nutrients to grow and develop and to be healthy and active.
- A healthy and enjoyable lunch gives children the energy they need to learn and play at school.
- Teaching children positive eating habits during childhood can set them up with healthy eating habits for life.
- Being a good role model will set your children up for life and help to develop healthy habits from the start.



Source: National Food and Nutrition Centre



# Acknowledgements

Save the Children Fiji extends a big vinaka vakalevu to Ministry of Health for their support to the communities in the development of the *Healthy Snack Box Policy*.

We also thank the 22 communities in Fiji who were part of the Community Child Nutrition Project for their willingness and commitment to plan and endorse their *Healthy Snack Box Policy*. Their contributions and learning have been included in this document.

## Contact List

### Save the Children Fiji

- Suva ..... (679) 331 3178
- Labasa ..... (679) 881 8700

### Ministry of Health and Medical Services

- Central Division ..... (679) 330 6177  
..... (679) 332 0844
- Western Division ..... (679) 666 0411
- Northern Division ..... (679) 881 2522

### Provincial Council

- Central Division ..... (679) 310 0909
- Lautoka Division ..... (679) 620 9385
- Labasa Division ..... (679) 881 2599

### Ministry of Agriculture

- Central Division ..... (679) 338 4233
- Western Division ..... (679) 666 1000
- Northern Division ..... (679) 881 2318



# Congratulations!

## On a healthy & balanced school lunch!

**Awarded to:** .....

*for successfully adhering to your community's Healthy Snack Box Policy*

**Presented on:** .....

.....  
Early Childhood Education Teacher

# Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page.

