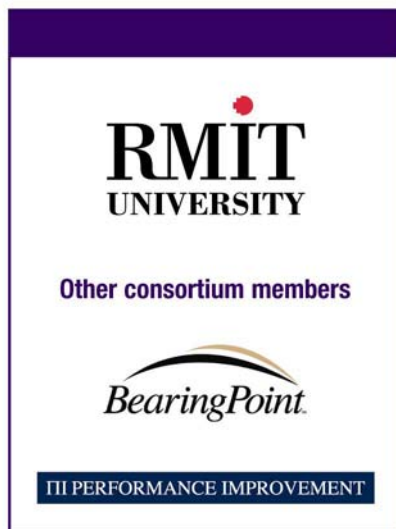


Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000 - 2004

**Economic and
Social
Participation**



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Funding for the evaluation of the SFCS 2000-2004 was provided by the then Commonwealth Department of Families and Community Services

Published 2008

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The opinions, comments and/or analysis expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs or the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and cannot be taken in any way as expressions of Government policy.



1 Summary

This paper has been developed as part of the evaluation of the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 (the Strategy). The Strategy, which included funding to over 600 community-based projects, had a specific focus on working with those at risk of social, economic and/or geographic isolation. The Final Report of the evaluation reported on the achievements of the Strategy.

This paper sets out some key ideas in economic and social participation, and provides illustrations from projects funded under the Strategy. It does not assess the effectiveness or otherwise of the Strategy in increasing social and economic participation as manifested within the Strategy's multitude of projects. Rather, it presents key issues and findings from the literature relevant to social and economic participation. These issues and findings are illustrated through reference to Strategy funded projects and their reports.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an insight into the issues and factors affecting approaches to enhancing social and economic participation, as well as how approaches varied across the Strategy's projects. It aims to inform people contemplating how to enhance social and economic participation, either at a government (policy) level or at a project (planning and practice) level. It also informs and supplements the Final Report of the evaluation.

'Economic and social participation' refers to a range of ways in which people contribute to and participate in the life of their community. Economic participation includes employment, self-employment, enterprise development and education and training. Social participation includes participation in formal community organisations and in informal community networks and activities, volunteer work, and care of family (including children and elderly).

All participation has both a social and an economic component. Social participation can provide broader economic benefits and economic participation provides a social good, as well as a financial/economic one.

All projects funded under the Strategy were intended to contribute to stronger families and communities, including increased engagement in the community. Some projects were specifically focused on developing economic participation, such as through developing enterprises or providing training. Many contributed to economic participation through assisting participants to enter training or employment. Many projects contributed to social participation by providing volunteer training or by training community leaders. Many projects worked to increase participation in the community, social capital and trust.

The paper is being distributed widely to organisations managing projects funded under the 2000-2004 Strategy and the 2004-2009 Strategy, to staff in the Department of Family and Community Services, and to other interested individuals and organisations to guide the implementation of current projects, to inform future policy and project development, and to guide the evaluation.

Feedback on this paper is most welcome, and can be sent to the Evaluation Project Director Dr Patricia Rogers, CIRCLE at RMIT University, 124 Latrobe Street Melbourne VIC 3000, fax (03) 9925 2998, email: Patricia.Rogers@rmit.edu.au.



2 Overview of economic and social participation

2.1 Defining economic and social participation

'Economic and social participation' refers to a range of ways in which people contribute to and participate in the life of their community. The Reference Group on Welfare Reform (McClure, 2000) made clear the importance of social participation in its own right, in addition to economic participation:

The Reference Group considers that a broad concept of economic and social participation can provide a positive underpinning for the Participation Support System. This broad concept extends beyond the traditional focus on financial self-support and labour force status (employed, unemployed or not in the labour force) to recognise the value of the many other ways people can participate in society.
(McClure, 2000)

Different definitions of these terms have been used at different times and for different purposes. This section sets out the way these terms are used in this paper.

Economic participation

This includes four different types of economic participation:

- **paid employment** full-time or part-time;
- **training and education**, including on-the-job training, short courses, school education and accredited post-secondary;
- **self-employment** and **enterprise development**;
- **micro-finance** schemes.

Social participation

This includes four different types of participation:

- **social engagement** in informal community networks and activities, including attending sport and community events, and sharing a meal with non-household members,
- **volunteering**, whether formal (for example through a community organisation) or informal (for example caring activities such as look after those who are elderly or ill, or other people's children)
- **civic engagement**, such as leadership in community organisations, or contribution to governance processes in the local community or with government
- **accessing services**, such as child care, parent education and health or welfare services



2.2 Relationships between economic and social participation

Activities that involve both economic and social participation

All participation has both a social and an economic component. Social participation can provide broader economic benefits and economic participation provides a social good, as well as a financial/economic one.

It is not possible, and probably not desirable, to draw a clear line between those activities that could be classed as economic participation and those that constitute social participation. Paid work has social value and unpaid work has clear economic value. All activities that build relationships with others have both economic and social dimensions and should be encouraged and supported. (McClure, 2000)

Pathways from social to economic participation

While social participation has a value in itself, it can also contribute to economic participation through developing skills, knowledge, confidence and supportive networks:

Social participation, valuable in itself, can also enable people to develop skills that may be transferable to paid employment. (McClure, 2000)

Social participation has been variously described as a way of maintaining engagement with the community, as a pathway to employment, as a vehicle for the development of skills and attitudes that are transferable to the workplace, or as a mechanism to actually assist people to overcome their personal barriers. (Butterworth, 2002/3, 3)

Some forms of economic participation, for example developing community enterprises, depend on having firstly established sufficient social capital, through appropriate participation.

Pathways from economic to social participation

Economic participation can increase social participation as people develop supportive networks through their work, business or study.

Conversely, a reduction in economic participation often reduces social participation, particularly for men as discussed in Flood's (2005) paper mapping loneliness in Australia. Men with more hours of paid work report increased levels of support and friendship while women experience similar levels of friendship and support regardless of whether working part time or full time.

...[S]ocial engagement in paid work, caring for others, and participation in clubs and sporting groups act as buffers against loneliness. Both men and women face a greater risk of social and emotional isolation if their financial situation has deteriorated or they have lost their jobs. Much more than women, men show a reliance on paid employment as an important source of their personal support and friendship. (Flood, 2005: vii)



Tensions between economic and social participation

Economic and social participation are not, however, always positively linked. In some cases economic participation comes at the cost of social participation. When volunteers move onto paid employment as a result of their increased skills, it may reduce the pool of available volunteers.

For families with dependent children, and people with other caring responsibilities, the tensions between economic and social participation are evident in the issue of work and family balance. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 4.7 in the context of balancing social and economic participation.



3 Economic and social participation and stronger families and communities

3.1 Defining strong families and communities

Strong families and communities can be understood as families and communities that effectively and sustainably apply resources, responding to challenges and opportunities, to achieve and maintain well-being.

This definition recognises that family and community strength is not just about resources, or how they are applied, but also the result of this application. It also recognises the inter-relationship between these three elements – improvements in wellbeing (for example physical and mental health) can also increase various types of capacity (for example, ability to contribute to volunteer activities) and opportunities to apply this capacity.

This definition fits with Black and Hughes’s (2001) definition of community strength as:

...the extent to which resources and processes within a community maintain and enhance both individual and collective wellbeing in ways consistent with the principles of equity, comprehensiveness, participation, self-reliance and social responsibility.

There is a considerable and growing body of literature on conceptualising and measuring family and community strength (for example, Gauntlett *et al*, 2000; Black and Hughes, 2000; Zubrick *et al*, 2000). A review of this literature conducted as part of the development of the evaluation framework for the Strategy (SuccessWorks *et al*, 2002:32) proposed the following domains, shown in Table 1, as relevant to the evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004.

Table 1: Domains of stronger families and communities

<i>Common to both stronger families and communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience • Wellbeing • Solution focus
<i>Specific to stronger families</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental competence • Social functioning • Risk behaviour • Income management and time
<i>Specific to stronger communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development • Knowledge building • Partnerships • Participation • Leadership • Commitment



Some descriptions of the characteristics of stronger communities combine both aspects of wellbeing and of the processes that build and maintain this wellbeing – for instance Gauntlett, Hugman, Kenyon and Logan (2001), which described communities that:

- Provide a clean safe environment;
- Meet the basic needs of residents;
- Comprise residents that respect and support each other;
- Involve the community in local government;
- Promote and celebrate their historical and cultural heritage;
- Provide easily accessible health services;
- Possess a diverse, innovative economy;
- Rest on a sustainable ecosystem.

3.2 Links between economic and social participation and improved well-being

Economic and social participation can contribute to stronger families and communities through directly contributing to improved well-being; or through building capacity; and increasing opportunities to apply this capacity.

In a recent study of local government areas in Victoria and New South Wales, it was found that social cohesion can mitigate the effects of economic and social disadvantage (Vinson, 2004)

The presence of social capital can help improve usage of human, natural, physical and financial capital, as social capital stocks can lead to more efficient management of these resources. As such social capital can be a mediating agent between other forms of capital, amplifying and enhancing their effects. On the other hand lower levels of social capital tend to lead to fewer benefits from these forms of capital for the society as a whole. (Cullen and Whiteford 2001:7)

Low levels of social capital predict poorer government performance, plagued by problems such as corruption and inefficiency – areas with higher social capital tended to have local government that performed efficiently and effectively. (Cullen and Whiteford 2001:20)

Both economic and social participation can directly affect wellbeing in terms of physical and mental health.

Various studies have reported links between unemployment and adverse outcomes for individuals and families that include: poverty; suicide; homelessness; boredom; alienation; shame and stigma; increased social isolation; and reductions in confidence and self esteem. These factors are often likely to be both a consequence, and a cause, of unemployment. (Perkins and Angley 2003). There is however significant evidence of a causal relationship between unemployment and depression and anxiety (Headley 2002 cited by Perkins and Angley) and separation, divorce and family conflict (Feather 1997, cited by Perkins and Angley).



Social inclusion and access to economic resources (which is in turn linked to economic participation), have been identified as two of the three key social and economic determinants of mental health (along with freedom from violence and discrimination). (VicHealth 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

- ‘Social inclusion’ clearly covers the different types of social participation discussed in this paper: supportive relationships; involvement in community and group activities; and civic engagement.
- ‘Access to economic resources’ covers a number of aspects of economic participation: access to work and meaningful engagement; and access to education. It also includes two aspects which are affected by economic participation, but which can also be addressed through social policy initiatives: access to adequate housing; and access to adequate financial resources.

Participation in social activities with family and friends builds bonding social capital, which provides a buffer for individuals in times of stress. A lack of confiding relationships is a risk factor for depression. Beyond Blue, the National Depression Institute describes social exclusion as a risk factor for depression and one of the tips for helping someone with depression is “encouraging them or getting them involved in social activities”. (Beyond Blue 2003)

Social exclusion also affects physical health. The National Heart Foundation (2003) reported the following findings on the relationships between heart disease and depression and social isolation:

- There is strong and consistent evidence that people who experience depression or are socially isolated or do not have quality social support are at greater risk of developing coronary heart disease.
- These three factors can have as great an effect on a person’s risk of coronary heart disease as other, better-known risk factors such as smoking, high cholesterol levels or high blood pressure.
- For people who already have coronary heart disease, depression or social isolation or lack of quality social support can affect their recovery and future health.

In short, people who are socially isolated tend to be less happy, less healthy and have a reduced life span (Putman 2001, cited by Cullen and Whiteford 2001).

Social inclusion is an important concept for the Strategy and many projects focused on developing new and improved social support networks, often centred around a community based activity and/or engage people who do not usually access services.

3.3 Links between economic and social participation and improved family and community capacity

Strong communities are able to draw on, and effectively utilise the different types of capital that exists in the community. The Strategy evaluation has focused specifically on human, social, institutional and economic capital. Within the concept of social capital, it can be useful to distinguish between **bonding** social capital, (linking members of a social group), **bridging** social capital (involving different social groups) and **linking** social capital, (which involve vertical relationships, such as those between communities and government). Other types of capital (e.g. environmental, natural, cultural, spiritual and personal capital) may also be usefully identified and addressed. Economic and social participation can contribute to stronger families and communities by contributing to these different forms of capital.



Funnell's (2004) paper on *Community Capacity Building*, produced earlier in this evaluation, discusses these different types of capital in more detail, and ways in which Strategy projects contributed to building them in different communities. This includes a discussion of the different ways in which Strategy projects were working to build social capital.

Similarly, strong families are able to draw on, and effectively utilise, the different types of capital that they have. In their possible Indicators of Social and Family Functioning, Zubrick *et al* (2000) identified five major categories of resources that might be mobilised on behalf of children:

1. income;
2. time;
3. human capital;
4. psychological capital; and
5. social capital.

Table 2 details categories of resources that may be utilised on behalf of children.

Table 2: Categories of resources that might be mobilised on behalf of children

Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family income • Financial strain and poverty • Family assets • Health Insurance • Housing Tenure 	Psychological capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction • Perceived level of social support • Number of job changes • Occupational complexity • Strains/Gains of work to parenting • Strains/Gains of work to marriage
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental employment • Hours of paid work • Hours of unpaid labour • Parent / child activities and interactions 	Social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Civic involvement • Social engagement • Reciprocity • Participation in local community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family and friends connections ○ Work connections ○ Sense of community • Social participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participation in sports ○ Membership in clubs ○ Member of a club or group • Civic participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Civic involvement ○ Participation in local community activities ○ Participation in school activities
Human Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental/carer education • Parental/carer physical health • Parenting style • Culturally acquired knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and traditions 		



Clearly, economic and social participation, of various sorts, can have an impact on these different types of resources.

In some cases, these impacts are likely to be positive – for example, if employment reduces financial strain, or if social engagement in community activities increases a sense of community.

In other cases, these impacts could be negative – for example, if employment leads to increased strains on parenting, or decreased time available to spend with children.



4 Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

4.1 Overview of the Strategy

The Strategy 2000-2004 (Phase 1)

The \$226 million Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 (the Strategy) was an Australian Government initiative to help build family and community capacity to deal with challenges and take advantages of opportunities. It had a special focus on those at risk of social, economic and geographic isolation.

The Strategy consisted of seven linked initiatives that provided funding and support for projects in the community:

- Potential Leaders in Local Communities;
- Local Solutions to Local Problems;
- National Skills Development for Volunteers Program;
- Can Do Community;
- Early Intervention Parenting and Family Relationship Support;
- Stronger Families Fund;
- Early Childhood Initiative.

The Strategy also included:

- The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children;
- National Skills Development of Volunteers (non-linked project component) including International Year of Volunteers activities in 2001;
- Can Do community – (non-linked project component) including web page and awards.

Through the linked initiatives over 600 diverse projects were funded including:

- early intervention projects that focused on parenting;
- early intervention projects that focused on other relationships;
- playgroups;
- holistic family support projects;
- integrated family and community strengthening projects;
- playgrounds;
- community leadership;
- volunteer training;
- community capacity building (social capital and physical infrastructure); and
- projects to document and disseminate successful social innovation.



The Strategy 2004-2009 (Phase 2)

The new Strategy builds upon the achievements of the first phase of the Strategy, and is part of the Australian Government's development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood.

There are four initiatives in this new Strategy. These are:

- Communities for Children;
- Early Childhood—Invest to Grow;
- Local Answers; and
- Choice and Flexibility in Child Care.

Phase 2 of the Strategy commenced in 2004 and will continue over five years until 2009. It aims to help families and communities build better futures for children; build family and community capacity; support relationships between families and the communities they live in; and improve communities' ability to help themselves. Phase 2 of the Strategy comprises four streams, the Communities for Children initiative, Invest to Grow, Local Answers and the Choice and Flexibility in Child Care initiative.

4.2 Building stronger families and communities

The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy aimed to:

Strengthen families by investing in prevention and early intervention in three priority areas:

- *Early childhood and the needs of families with young children*
- *Strengthening marriage and family relationships, and*
- *Balancing work and family.*

Strengthen communities by investing in community capacity to solve problems and grasp opportunities.

In October 2002, the priorities of the Strategy were revised to focus on:

- Early intervention and prevention – family relationships, early childhood and crime/violence; and
- Welfare reform – jobs, training, volunteering and social participation.

While the projects funded under the Strategy were diverse, they all were intended to contribute to strengthening families and communities. A common framework has been developed for describing and analysing these projects, which shows a sequence of outcomes leading to this ultimate outcome, as set out below in Table 3.

These are described in a linear fashion, from short term, through medium to longer term outcomes, but there is likely to be considerable iteration, where positive outcomes feedback to reinforce and encourage further participation, and also emergent outcomes, where the development of capacity leads to activities that develop skills and trust.



Table 3: A common causal pathway leading to stronger families and communities



4.3 Links between economic and social participation and building stronger families and communities

The various types of economic and social participation that are involved at different stages of the development of stronger families and communities are shown in the table below:

Table 4: Economic and social participation at different outcomes levels

Level of outcome	Possible economic and social participation
1. Participation in the Strategy and enhanced trust.	<p>Social participation, in terms of engagement with project as participants or volunteers</p> <p>Economic Participation in terms of employment of project workers (sometimes community members)</p>
2. Greater awareness.	<p>Social and economic participation in terms of access to services that promote social and economic wellbeing</p>
3. Greater choice, understanding, skills and capacity for initiative.	<p>Social participation, in terms of developing motivation and skills that support community and civic engagement such as leadership, managing conflict or disagreement in a group, and meeting skills</p> <p>Economic participation in terms of developing motivation and skills that enhance economic participation such as training, education or employment</p>
4. Demonstration/application of greater understanding, skills and capacity.	<p>Economic and social participation, in terms of application of new skills in employment, education or enterprise development or in volunteering or community leadership roles</p>
5. Family and community trust/resilience/adaptability.	<p>Social participation, in terms of broader trust and co-operation within the community and within families</p>
6. An environment where communities participate in and drive their own solutions to strengthen their families and communities.	<p>Social participation, in terms of sustained engagement with the community and civic engagement</p>
7. Stronger Families and Communities	<p>Economic participation, in terms of ongoing employment or enterprises, material wellbeing and productivity but also affected by several other aspects of well being such as physical and mental health.</p> <p>Social participation primarily in terms of place in community but affected by most other aspects of well being including those relating to economic participation</p>



4.4 The importance of initial engagement and development of trust

The first stage of this sequence of outcomes, initial engagement, is particularly important for families and communities with low levels of trust and social participation.

Chapman and Kirk (2001, p.18) see trust as involving “a willingness to take risks in a social context”. Families, or individuals within families, demonstrate their willingness to take risks in a social context (their trust) through their participation (or investment of part of themselves) in networks and the larger community. Trust is thus seen as being linked to social capital and participation.

For projects that worked with individuals, families and communities with low levels of existing participation and trust, this first step was both extremely important, and often lengthy. Various strategies for engagement were used by different projects.

4.5 The importance of civic engagement

The penultimate stage in this process, an environment where communities participate in and drive their own solutions to strengthen their families and communities, is also particularly important, as it is essential for sustaining stronger families and communities.

This includes civic engagement such as involvement in formal community organisations, and active interaction between the community and various government and non-government services and organisations.

4.6 Addressing social, economic and geographic isolation

Implementation of the Strategy paid particular attention to those at risk of social, economic and geographic isolation. This included particular target groups (for example, families from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds), particular communities of interest (for example, parents of children with a disability) and particular geographic communities (for example, remote towns).

One of the risks of an application-based funding process is that funding allocation will largely go to groups and communities that already have considerable capacity, including skills in writing submissions. The implementation of the Strategy addressed this risk through encouraging and supporting the development of proposals from groups and communities with less experience in funds generation.

Each State and Territory developed a Targeting Plan that identified priority areas where project proposals would be encouraged. Public information sessions provided initial information on the Strategy, and organisations could begin the process with a short initial proposal, providing a brief description of the planned project. Officers in State and Territory Offices and the National Office worked with organisations to develop a full proposal, and to revise it if necessary to better meet the scope of the Strategy.

This targeted approach to address social, economic and geographic isolation has some parallels with the notion of ‘social exclusion’ and ‘social inclusion’ which are central concepts in UK approaches to place-based management:



Social exclusion ... is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, bad housing, high crime, poor health or lack of transport (Social Exclusion and Cabinet Office 2001: 2). Hence, social exclusion prevents people from participating in the mainstream activities of society and accessing the standards of living enjoyed by the rest of society.

Social exclusion can happen as a result of problems that face one person in their life. But it can also start from birth. Being born into poverty or to parents with low skills still has a major influence on future life chances....

Social inclusion is the process by which efforts are made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life. To achieve inclusion income and employment are necessary but not sufficient. An inclusive society is also characterised by a striving for reduced inequality, a balance between individuals' rights and duties and increased social cohesion. (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion 2002)

Within this targeted approach, the Strategy explicitly involved using a 'strengths-based' approach to working with families and communities. Funnell (2004), in her paper on Community Capacity Building in the Strategy, describes how this involved identifying assets and resources, as well as needs, and mobilising them.

4.7 Balancing economic and social participation

Balancing work and family was one of the three priority areas of prevention and early intervention under the Strategy. As discussed in Section 2 there can be tensions between economic and social participation. Since time is a finite resource, time spent in paid employment (and commuting) reduces time available for social participation. Flood and Barbato's (2005) analysis of data from the 2002 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey showed that:

Commuting exacerbates the negative impacts of long work hours and work stress on people's family lives and interpersonal relationships.

The analysis shows that the more time employees spend commuting, the less frequently they socialise with friends and relatives. Full-time workers with longer commuting times are less likely to be active members of sporting groups or community organisations. The more that people commute, the less likely they are to report high levels of satisfaction with the amount of free time they have.

Each week over ten per cent of parents in paid employment spend more time commuting than they do with their children, travelling for between ten and 15 hours weekly to and from work but spending less time than this supervising, caring for and transporting their children. There is an inverse relationship between the time that parents spend commuting and the time they spend in caring for and interacting with their children.



Research comparing working hours in Australia to other industrially developed countries (Tiffen and Gittens 2004, cited by Denniss 2004) showed that Australians work the longest hours in the developed world. Another recent international study showed that Australian had the fourth highest proportion of people working in excess of 50 hours per week and had the fastest rate of increase in the proportion of people working more than 50 hours per week than any other industrialised country. (International Labour Organisation 2004 cited by Denniss 2004). Denniss warned that:

... working to the point where our personal and community bonds are weakened is not only not economically responsible, it is socially irresponsible.

Balancing work and family was largely addressed through the “Greater Flexibility and Choice for Child Care” element of the Strategy, which is not included in the scope of the evaluation of the Strategy. This component included a number of new child care measures:

- the expansion of in-home child care, particularly to address the needs of families living in rural or remote localities, parents working shift-work or non-standard hours, families where a parent or child has an illness or special needs, and parents with multiple pre-schoolers.;
- enabling other operators, including private for-profit operators, to provide Commonwealth funded family day care and outside school hours care, supported by quality assurance; and
- incentives for private operators to establish child care centres in rural and regional areas.



5 Contribution of the Strategy to economic and social participation

5.1 Examples of projects that directly addressed economic participation

A number of projects explicitly focused on increasing participants' economic participation. For example, some projects specifically focused on developing community enterprises, or developing skills that were relevant for employment. In this section two projects are discussed as examples of projects that aimed to enhance economic participation; the Unemployed Workers' Network Project in Tasmania and the South West Community Financial Services project in Western Australia.

Many projects contributed to economic participation as an indirect result of their project – for example, a family strengthening project which trained volunteers, some of whom subsequently found employment as a result of their new skills and experience. Examples of outcomes from these types of projects are provided in section 5.3.

Unemployed Workers' Network Project, Tasmania

Description¹

This project, auspiced by TasCOSS, established six networks of unemployed workers around Tasmania. The networks were located in:

1. Hobart;
2. St Helens/Scamander, Fingal and St Mary's in the local government area of Launceston;
3. Rocherlea/Mayfield in the local government area of Launceston;
4. Glenorchy in the local government area of Glenorchy;
5. Cygnet in the local government area of the Huon Valley; and
6. New Norfolk in the local government area of the Derwent Valley.

The networks sought to develop ideas, strategies and solutions to address the negative effects of unemployment on the lives of individuals, their families and local communities. Each site involved the formation of a network of unemployed workers, and a local community-based resource group to develop, with unemployed workers, the concept and process of local community enterprise development projects.

¹ This description, and the analysis that follows, are based on the publicly available Project Report available at http://www.tascoss.org.au/projects/sub_index.php?subsecid=s3b.



The project led directly to economic participation through training, skills development and short term employment. The project also contributed to increased social participation – a focus of one group was mutual support and self-help. The project contributed to developing bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Its contribution to building social capital was also likely to contribute to economic participation, as building 'linking' social capital helps to create opportunities for economic participation.

Table 5: Example of a project that focused on economic participation – Unemployed Workers' Network

Who	Types of economic participation	How project contributed
Unemployed workers in Tasmania	Enterprise development Employment Training	Supported development and maintenance of 6 local groups Support to develop and maintain partnerships (local and statewide) Supported networking between groups Networks and reputation of auspice Provided training Leveraging further investment (in kind and financial)

Enterprise development and employment

Africa Enterprises has become an Incorporated Association with plans to develop an African Food Outlet that will provide accredited training and work skills development, create profits to start other enterprises for the African Community and to encourage the African community to participate socially and economically in the wider community. A local employment agency (STEPS) has offered \$18,000 and is making available two restaurateurs who are accredited trainers in the food and hospitality industry to support the project. The group have submitted an expression of interest to the Partnerships to Jobs Program.

Jobs Action Group North is actively developing a partnership with Housing Tasmania to develop a community enterprise that will buy, renovate and landscape or redevelop, and sell public housing properties providing employment and skill development opportunities for disadvantaged local job seekers. TasCOSS have employed two Unemployed workers for 12 weeks to develop the project further.

Other groups are developing community enterprise plans in partnership with local Councils, schools, employment agencies, and various State Government departments.

Training

A range of training activities were involved in this project including:

- Three day Project management workshop organised by the Department of Economic Development;
- Developing Business Plans;
- Horticultural training at TAFE;



- State Employment conference involved all project groups and other stakeholders including potential partners. One outcome from the conference was establishing an “Employment Roundtable” between the Tasmanian Minister for Employment and the TasCOSS Unemployed Workers Network Project Steering Committee.

Examples of leveraging further investment

- Break O’Day Council provided office space and facilities.
- St Mary’s High School made land available to establish a community garden.
- Exploring the acquisition of a disused railway station to become a centre for local community social enterprise activity.
- Funding applications to the Partnerships to Jobs program.
- \$18,000 business contribution
- In-kind contributions from a range of businesses and government departments.

South West Community Financial Solutions, Western Australia

Description²

This project, auspiced by Edith Cowan University, aimed to revitalise rural communities and reduce 'economic leakage' through the application of micro-finance solutions. Strategy funding built on previous stages of the project.

The project was intended to provide knowledge and support for groups of people in small towns to get together to pool their moneys and ideas to assist each other for their mutual benefit. This project aimed to provide the community with a range of information covering different examples of community banking micro finance and mutuality. Communities were then encouraged to think through their options and needs and develop options with the support of the partnership group.

Table 6: Example of a project that focused on economic participation – South West Community Solutions

Who	Type of economic participation	How project contributed
Small rural towns in South West of Western Australia	Micro finance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no interest loan scheme • savings and loans groups • Local Enterprise Trading Scheme 	Created a data base of micro finance examples Promoted and explained concepts of micro finance Facilitated community exploration of micro finance opportunities. Supported communities to develop ideas through mentoring ‘social activators’ – community leaders

² This description, and the analysis that follows, are based on the publicly available presentation on the project available at < <http://www.lgcsaa.org.au/docs/556179.pdf>> and the Southwest Financial Solutions website:< <http://www.solutions.wn.com.au>>.



This is an example of a project that intentionally built human and social capital (supported 'social activators' and local groups that developed trust through working together) in order to develop economic capacity of the community. Micro finance schemes depend on cohesion and relationships between members of the group, therefore strong links between economic and social participation and capital.

5.2 Examples of projects that directly addressed social participation

Increased social participation was a result of the majority of Strategy projects. At times this was an indirect result of project activities however many projects specifically aimed to increase social participation.

The Koori Community Leadership Projects project in Victoria is discussed as an example of a project that implemented a number of strategies that aimed to increase social participation.

Koori Community Leadership Projects, Victoria

Description³

Strategy funding supported five community leadership projects as part of the VicHealth Promotion of Emotional and Spiritual Well Being in Koori Communities Program. This program aims to address the challenges for the future survival and growth of Koori culture, community and self-determination, by integrating the promotion of emotional and spiritual well being with the future of leadership in communities at state wide and community levels.

The **Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation Community Dreaming Project**, in the south-west of Victoria, worked with 30 Indigenous and 35 non-Indigenous young people from secondary schools, employment groups and community job programs in the district. The project was in three phases: preparation, including training; identification and conduct of a community development project, with facilitator support; and celebration and completion. The program was supported by more than 25 local businesses and reached in excess of 500 people in the community through the twelve community development projects.

The **Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Koori Community Leadership Development Project** provided four modules that were nationally accredited in the Diploma of Community Services at RMIT University. Six intensive, residential training modules were held in various locations, with input from local Aboriginal Elders, leaders and community members about the issues and challenges relevant to that community..

The **Victorian Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Co-operative 'Three Tribes' leadership project** involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous sportspeople working with young community leaders in three Melbourne suburbs, including development and implementation of a community development project at each site.

³ This description, and the analysis that follows, are based on publicly available reports on the project available at <<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/rhadmin/articles/files/BIL-program.pdf>>.



The **Rumbalara Football Netball Club** worked with the existing leadership structure of team captains, coaches and team leaders, to develop understanding of mentoring and leadership, and to develop and undertake specific projects.

The **Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative** involved formal coursework (recognised as part of a Certificate III in Community Services Leadership), and an experiential component, including outdoor education and team-building activities.

These projects developed the self esteem, skills and self confidence of young Indigenous people in the project locations. Some projects involved accredited training modules increasing the young participant's potential for future economic participation.

While primarily concerned with developing the leadership skills of young Indigenous people these projects have also benefited the communities in which they were located. In some cases the projects had an economic outcome with funds raised for local projects or charities. In other cases local communities benefited from the work of the projects. Many projects resulted in increased social participation by other community members.

All of these projects contributed to developing bonding, bridging and linking social capital:

- Bonding – within Aboriginal communities;
- Bridging – between different Aboriginal communities and between Aboriginal communities and mainstream organisations and communities;
- Linking – contacts with key Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, with business, community and government organisations.

Table 7 shows the main types of participation, and examples of how the project contributed to increasing participation, for each of the five projects that made up the Koori Community Leadership Projects.



Table 7: Example of a project that focused on social participation – Koori Community Leadership Projects

Who	Main type of participation	How project contributed
<p>Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation – Community Dreaming Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people in the south-west of Victoria</p>	<p>Civic engagement - Involvement with local community organisations</p>	<p>Supported 65 young people to develop and implement 12 community projects that reached in excess of 500 people and involved 25 local businesses. Intensive leadership development camp Young people introduced to a broad network of community agencies. Used action learning techniques to develop community development projects Existing community leaders mentored young people Community celebration and certificates presented to participants</p>
<p>Koori Community Leadership Development Project Young Kooris in the Northern metropolitan area of Melbourne</p>	<p>Civic engagement- Training Encouraging young people to participate in community life.</p>	<p>Provided 4 nationally accredited modules in the Diploma of Community Services at RMIT University 6 intensive residential training programs in various regional and rural locations to facilitate direct contact with Elders, leaders and community members Support to develop and enhance leadership, policy development, management and communication skills including public speaking and working with the media.</p>
<p>Three Tribes Leadership Program Young Kooris from three Melbourne communities</p>	<p>Civic engagement Young community leaders trained and supported to develop community projects</p>	<p>High profile role models and community leaders provided with intensive training in facilitating leadership Young community leaders had intensive leadership training Young community leaders supported to develop community projects Leadership facilitators mentored young leaders to plan, implement and evaluate community projects.</p>
<p>Rumbalra Football Netball Club Young Indigenous people in the Goulburn Valley in Victoria</p>	<p>Civic engagement Several community projects emerged</p>	<p>Mentor training Intensive weekend "leadership challenge program" to assist in applying learning to practical problem solving and team building activities</p>
<p>Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative Young Indigenous people in the Ballarat area in Victoria</p>	<p>Civic engagement and training Young people trained in leadership and experienced the benefits of participation.</p>	<p>Extensive recruitment process to engage young people Accredited leadership training – formal coursework delivered by academic staff of University of Ballarat at Coop premises Personal development, decision making and teambuilding activities including an outdoor education program Participation in a range of community development activities.</p>



Civic engagement

Community development projects in the 'Three tribes' project included:

- Glenroy Koori Open Door Education - Established a canteen, upgrading physical infrastructure, changed culture at the campus, breakfast program running, new facilities used for ongoing food education.
- Northlands Secondary College renovated a local soup bus used to feed homeless people, wanted to increase self awareness of Indigenous young people through participation in cultural activities and making a visible contribution to the broader community
- Dandenong – to build cultural pride, community confidence and connection organised a demonstration of Marngarook, a traditional game of football complemented by an Elders welcoming ceremony, and traditional and modern dancing. Group invited to play a demonstration game prior to an AFL match at Telstra Dome extending the reach of the project to the broader Victorian community.

5.3 Examples of other projects that contributed to economic and social participation

Most projects made a contribution to increased economic and/or social participation. Table 8 presents a small selection of Strategy projects to illustrate the ways in which projects contributed to social or economic participation, or to a mix of both types of participation.



Table 8: Examples of other projects that contributed to economic and social participation

Project	Description	Major Types of participation	
		Social	Economic
Community Empowerment Project (Vic)	Organised a training program with a university/TAFE College and supported participants to return to further education and implement skills developed in training. Established the Collingwood Community Information Centre on the estate, providing ongoing opportunities for volunteers to participate.	Social engagement Civic engagement Accessing services	Volunteering Training
Children and Families Everywhere (CAFE) – Enfield (SA)	Provision of a broad range of services for families in Enfield, SA	Social engagement Accessing services Volunteering	Employment
Australian Indigenous Rural Leadership Program (National)	Development and delivery of national leadership development program for Indigenous people	Civic engagement Volunteering	
Tasmania's Can Do Community Leadership Workshop (Tas)	Brought together potential leaders from all local government areas of Tasmania for a 2.5 day workshop	Civic engagement Volunteering	
National Arts and Museums Regional Volunteer Skills Project (National)	Provided low cost training to voluntary workers in arts and museum industries in regional/rural areas	Volunteering	Training
West Belconnen Good Beginnings Program (ACT)	A program to develop volunteer family support for families with a 0-5 child	Volunteering	Training
Hunter Community Renewal Scheme – Hunter Housing Maintenance Employment Training Project (NSW)	Provided accredited training to social housing tenants to develop a local labour force to access local employment opportunities and establish a community-based employment co-operative		Training Employment Self-employment & Enterprise development
Central West Volunteer Skills Development (NSW)	Promotion and development of volunteering to support the community sector in small towns in NSW central west.	Volunteering	Training
Smart Start (WA)	To link parents of young children in the Central Great Southern Region to a range of information, support, networking and referral services	Social Engagement Accessing services	
Young Family Support Project (Qld)	Provides young parents with individualised assessment, intensive support, one-off assistance and referrals. A range of groups and brokerage funding assist participants to improve their independence, parenting skills and to link them into education, training or work.	Social Engagement Accessing services	Education



6 Conclusion

Social and economic participation are characteristics of strong families and communities and, as discussed in this paper, increasing social and economic participation has been shown to strengthen families and communities.

The Strategy has an emphasis on prevention and early intervention. Increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors in early childhood decreases the likelihood of poor outcomes for children. A fact sheet produced as part of the Strategy includes a summary of risk and protective factors in early childhood.

Amongst the protective factors in early childhood identified in the research are:

- positive attachment to an adult outside the family
- family attachment to community or support networks

Risk factors in early childhood identified in the research include:

- isolation from community or informal support networks
- chronic poverty/unemployment

Clearly, increasing social and economic participation is an important element of a preventative approach to family and community strengthening.

The paper has provided an overview of key issues identified in the research literature and has discussed factors affecting approaches to enhancing social and economic participation. Examples of strategies adopted by Strategy projects to increase levels of social and economic participation in different communities have been drawn on to illustrate these approaches.



7 References and further reading

7.1 Further reading

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7.2 Useful web sites

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Social Exclusion Unit: <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/>

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Other papers produced as part of the national evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004

Issues papers

Partnerships and Networks
Community Capacity Building
Early Intervention – particularly in Early Childhood
Sustainability and Legacy
Service Integration and Coordination
Evidence based Policy and Practice

Case Studies

Mandurah Targeted Region
Gillies Plains Community Garden
Early Intervention and Early Childhood Initiatives
Stronger Families Fund Initiative
Sustainability of projects
Lessons Learnt about Strengthening Indigenous Families and Communities: What's Working and What's Not?
Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative
Qualitative Cost Benefit Analysis

Final Report

Evaluation of the SFCS 2000-2004 Final Report

Available at http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-evaluation_reports.htm

