TAKING STOCK: INDONESIA FOOD CHANGE LAB

Raising the profile of street food vendors as providers of healthy food for low-income consumers

Hivos people unlimited

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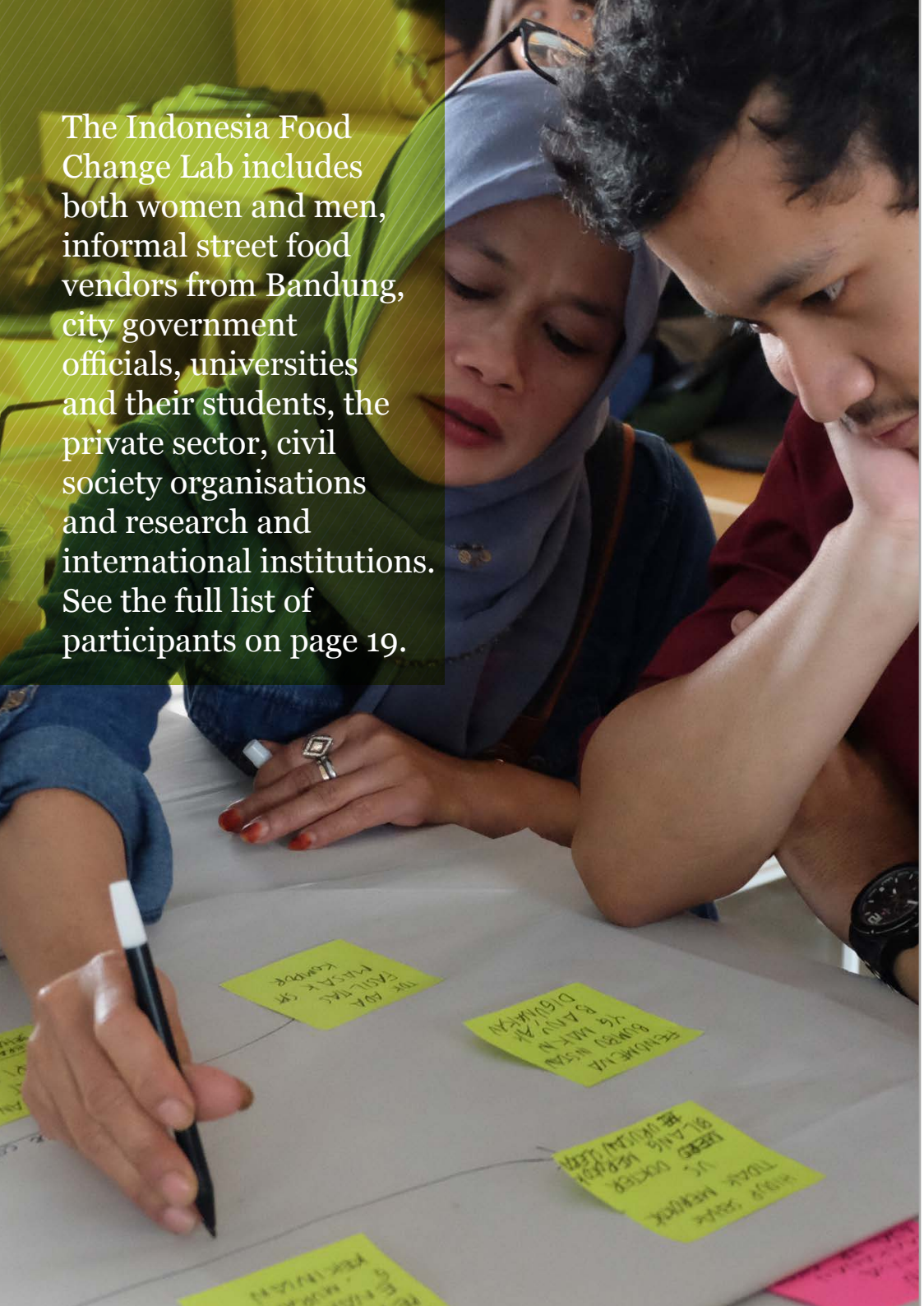

The Indonesia Food Change Lab includes both women and men, informal street food vendors from Bandung, city government officials, universities and their students, the private sector, civil society organisations and research and international institutions. See the full list of participants on page 19.

THE INDONESIA FOOD CHANGE LAB STORY

Bandung in West Java is Indonesia's third largest city, with a population of 2.5 million and growing fast. It is young and progressive, with buzzing fashion, art and food scenes. Reflecting the urbanisation trend throughout the developing world, many low-skilled Indonesians are leaving their rural homes for urban areas like Bandung with economic potential; but living in the city on a low income makes them less food secure. Access to affordable food is crucial, and one important source is Bandung's informal food vendors.

This is confirmed by research involving 300 mainly migrant female factory workers in the Gempol Sari area at the western edge of the city.[1] The women used food diaries daily to record their meals of the last 24 hours for a seven-day period. The results showed that for these female factory workers, food stalls or *warung* are the most important source of nutrition. Street food was their main source of food (50 to 80 per cent of their total food intake), two to three times a day.

Like many rapidly growing cities, street vendors' place on Bandung's crowded streets is contested. The city has responded to perceptions of food vendors as causing traffic congestion and public disorder with police hostility and strict regulations. Policies restrict vendors' presence to certain streets using zoning laws, and seek to relocate and formalise street vending by establishing vendor centres. The positive role of street vendors in urban food security and the food system of the working poor, who are the backbone of Bandung's economy, has been largely overlooked.[2] This includes their ability to provide healthy, hygienic, diverse, and tasty food.

The Indonesia Food Change Lab started in 2015 as a multi-stakeholder platform .to address the deadlock between proponents of safety and public order on the one hand, and access to healthy, fresh food and income-generating activities for low-income citizens on the other. Hivos asked Riset Indie, a Bandung-based creative hub, to convene and facilitate the Lab. The Center for Agrifood Policy and Agribusiness Studies at Padjadjaran University was also invited

[1] Natawidjaja, R S et al. (forthcoming) Informal food vendors and their role in food and nutrition security of the working poor in Bandung, Indonesia. Hivos, IIED and Padjadjaran University.

[2] Ibid.

to the core group as a research partner, to help provide robust evidence on the informal food sector in Bandung.

In its first year, the Food Lab's main mission was to build trust by creating space for dialogue between diverse, opposing actors: street food vendors versus local policy makers and law enforcement. It organised a series of multi-stakeholder discussions on the broad topic of safe, healthy and affordable food in Bandung, using design-thinking methodology to move from exploring to identifying solutions. Some ideas for 'prototypes' (small interventions to test solutions) emerged and were developed: renovating an elementary school canteen with a coupon system for students to purchase snacks; mapping the vendors' raw material suppliers; and awareness-raising activities such as screening films and hydroponic training for a 'creative kampong' community. One result of this first phase was establishing an independent street vendor association for vendors from a designated area in Bandung, Gelapnyawang, helping them to organise and represent themselves at government events.

Following the energy of this early phase, the Food Lab reflected on ways to move forward. University research on the history of street vending and policy provided detailed data on the city's informal food sector, including two case studies on specific city locations. However, the highly political issue of relocation remained the main stumbling block. It had proven difficult to engage stakeholders in an in-depth change process; local government representatives were constantly changing and for vendors, coming to meetings meant losing out on income.

In 2017, the Food Change Lab started a new problem-solving and innovation cycle. This used the expert opinion polling technique: food experts from several institutions and community groups gave their input on the most important issues surrounding sustainable diets for people on low incomes. The resulting key points included the need to look into food distribution and access, especially how they can be improved by government regulation/policy, non-governmental organisations and community initiatives. Points also raised on the topic of street vendors were education on healthy, safe food and the importance of two-way communication with government. With these new insights, and a decision to keep focusing on street vendors, the Food Lab convened a multi-stakeholder meeting with the vendors and city government representatives to bring these two conflicting parties closer together.

The expert opinion polling involved representatives from Bandung government agencies and communities discussing the priority issues for the city's food sector →

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The Food Lab then turned to masters students in Business Administration at the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) for the next step. The institute proved a progressive partner, encouraging students to make their projects socially relevant by connecting the curricula to daily realities on the ground. ITB included the lab process in one course curriculum and invited Riset Indie to facilitate discussion. In these sessions, a group of 30+ students, in collaboration with street food vendors from the Food Lab and located around the ITB campus, co-defined a range of specific issues to look into and came up with a range of prototypes to test (see page 10 for examples). With the support of Hivos, Riset Indie and the institute, these prototypes were designed and tested by the end-users: consumers and/or vendors.

To connect to a wider audience, the Food Change Lab exhibited the prototypes at talk shows and workshops. Speakers and group discussions raised participants' awareness (including government) on the role of street vendors in citizen's lives, both as food providers in public spaces and guardians of the city's culinary heritage. At the event, Health Office representatives commended the Food Lab and recommended it to the Bandung Food Security Council to represent Bandung citizens. In 2018, the Food Lab held meetings with the council secretary to discuss collaborating on the New Generation for Indonesian Cooking initiative, part of the Sustainable Diets for All programme.

Thanks to these efforts, the Indonesia Food Change Lab has shown Bandung citizens and policy makers that everybody can and should take part in building a more inclusive, healthy food system.

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Bandung Institute of Technology students present their prototypes at the Food Lab talk show and exhibition →

THE FOOD CHANGE LAB PROCESS

A change lab:

- Is a multi-actor change process
- Addresses key social issues
- Aims to better understand those issues
- Generates ideas
- Tests those ideas on the ground
- Facilitates adopting and replicating tested ideas.

Central to the change lab process is **citizen agency** – the notion that people (both individually and collectively) have the capacity to act independently and to make their own choices.[3] Hence the bottom-up approach, which brings different stakeholders together and provides a forum in which they can discuss and act on their priorities and concerns.

Because a change lab looks at complex issues, with a myriad of actors, underlying issues and policies, we take a systems approach to ensure a sustainable food system from farm to fork or from field to plate. We not only strive for tangible, imminent results – such as a change in (or adaptation of) policy, or new investments – but also work on more long-term outcomes. These include strengthening capacities, networks and trust between actors, which has the potential to positively influence the system for many years ahead. We facilitate a step-wise process, spending ample time on building trust between lab stakeholders. The process begins with setting a collective intention, and then we explore and connect to the world outside of our own institutional silos. It continues by collecting and connecting findings, proposing solutions and testing them as prototypes (see page 10). This approach builds in moments of reflection, so that we consider our own habits and sources of inspiration first, without jumping too soon into 'solutions mode'. Through this approach, we find solutions to be more substantiated, rooted and sustainable.

[3] Vorley, B (2018) Citizen-generated evidence for a more sustainable and healthy food system. IIED and Hivos, London and The Hague. http://pubs.iied.org/G04300/

Change Lab Methodology

1. Intention setting
Hivos, IIED and partner organisations in Bandung identified the need to look into diets of low-income urban citizens, with a special focus on the informal food system. The tense situation in Bandung between law enforcement and street vendors provided an entry-point for a Food Change Lab innovation process.

2. Exploring
The Food Lab commissioned research on informal food vending in Bandung: its history, policy, practice and value, especially for low-income citizens. Multi-stakeholder Food Lab participants mapped the issue from their perspective in a series of events.

3. Connecting
The Food Lab connected research data, expert polling results and input from dialogue sessions to jointly arrive at a problem definition and avenues for potential solutions. Students from a local university helped turn these solutions into concrete interventions.

4. Prototyping
Students from the Bandung Institute of Technology, in collaboration with street food vendors, tested a range of prototypes to help elevate the role of these vendors as suppliers of healthy food to low-income urban consumers.

5. Unleashing
In 2017, the Food Lab was invited to join the Food Security Council. In 2018, part of the Food Lab process was absorbed into the Switch Asia Local Harvest initiative.

PROTOTYPES

A prototype is a small-scale intervention intended to test the workability of proposed solutions. The following ideas on how to do things differently emerged from the Food Change Lab in Indonesia:

1. Establishing a street food vendor association: Early in the Food Lab process, some street food vendors realised that organising an association could help them communicate their concerns to the government. This resulted in establishing an association for street food vendors from a designated area in Bandung, Gelapnyawang.

2. Including citizen voices in policy making: Local Health Office representatives asked the Food Change Lab to join the Food Security Council, led by the city's Food and Agriculture Office. This was an opportunity to include more citizen voices in the city's policy making process, on topics beyond street food vending. Various Food Lab representatives were involved in a range of Food Security Council meetings in 2017.

3. Collaboration between university students and street food vendors: Masters students at Bandung Institute of Technology developed and implemented a range of prototypes, in collaboration with street food vendors:

- A hand soap dispenser to sell (and deliver) to food vendors via mobile app or SMS, addressing the government's concerns about hygiene at food stalls.
- Educational videos featuring a mock-celebrity TV chef, Dadang Ramzi, targeting the use of monosodium glutamate (MSG) – an additive often used in Indonesian and Chinese dishes. The videos also provide easy MSG-free recipes.
- A water-saving dishwashing device, branded Kumbah. The device ensures that plates are washed properly in three steps and can be used by three vendors at the same time. This is another response to government concerns about health and safety. The group received plenty of constructive feedback that allowed them to iterate on their design.
- A customer rating system for food stalls based on factors such as hygiene and taste.

↑ Bandung Institute of Technology students sharing ideas on street vendors selling safe healthy food.

© Riset Indie

LAB RESULTS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Collaboration with local government actors: The relationship between the Food Change Lab and local government actors helped in setting up another platform, the New Generation of Indonesian Cooking (NGIC), under the Sustainable Diets for All programme. The NGIC platform in Bandung, as well as other potential platforms in cities such as Jakarta and Yogyakarta, will use lessons learned from previous labs and possibly some of their facilitation methods.

A best-practice example of multi-stakeholder collaboration: The Food Lab has brought inclusive, multi-stakeholder platforms to the attention of local government, as well as other actors such as students who had not engaged with the Food Lab before. The model practiced by Hivos and partners in Bandung – involving the 'unusual suspects', or actors not normally included in public consultation and policy making – has the potential to become the model of inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement around food issues in the city.

The value of informal markets: The Food Lab identified informal markets as an issue that cannot be ignored, and elevated the role of the informal sector in addressing issues such as health, food safety and cultural culinary heritage. As a result, the Bandung Food Safety Agency specifically asked for street vendors to be included in NGIC workshops. As NGIC continues to evolve, street vendors will be part of a larger group of food service providers and not the sole focus.

Healthy, tasty food served at the New Generation of Indonesian Cooking talk show in Jakarta, May 2018. →

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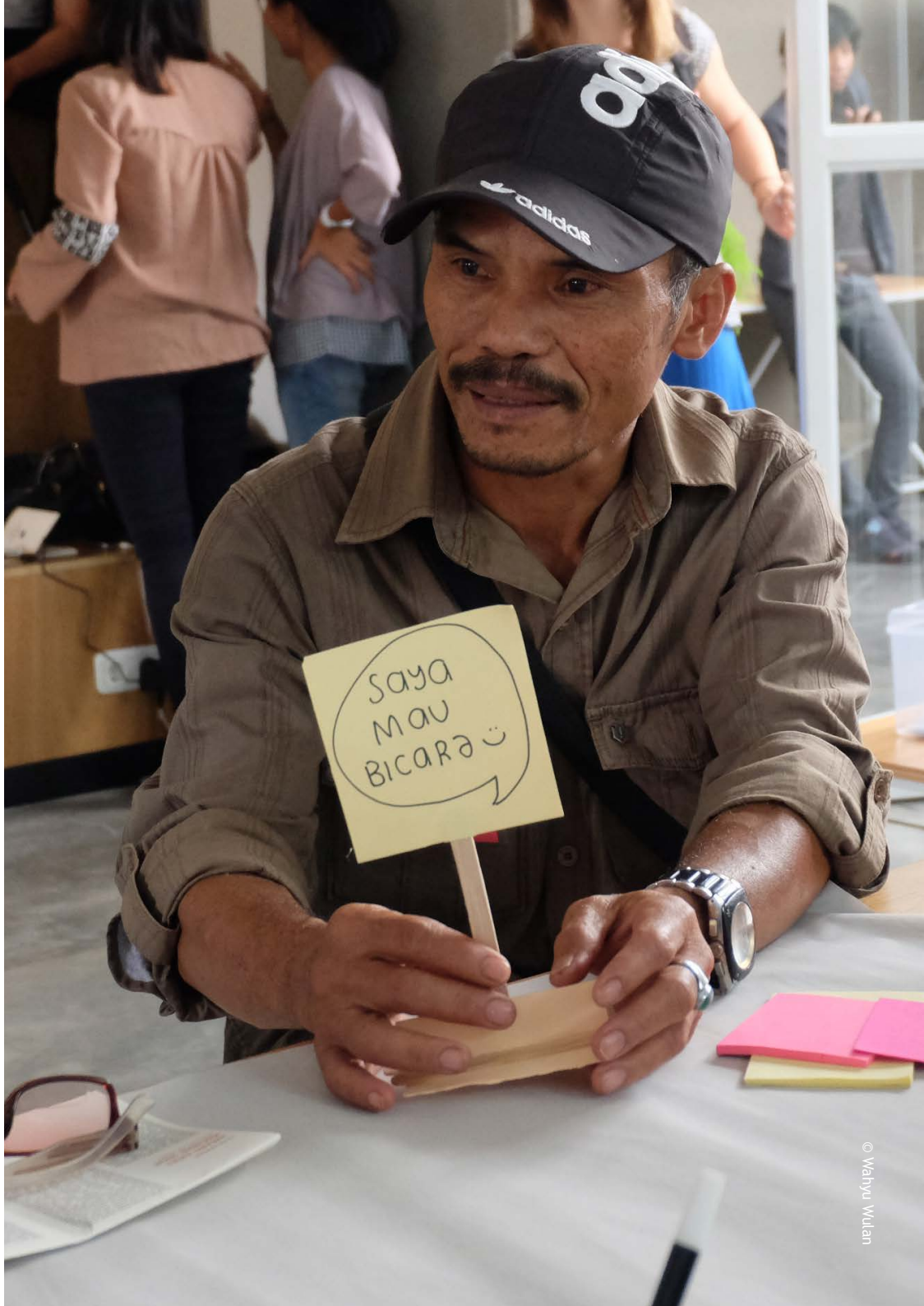
LESSONS LEARNED

Continuity in actors is key. The Food Lab struggled with this, especially at the start of its life cycle, as the process requires a lot of trust building between actors with different agendas. Government departments tended not to send the same individuals to consecutive meetings, and vendors would often miss Food Lab gatherings to avoid losing a few hours of income from their work. To overcome this, it is vital to fully explain the Food Lab concept to the government official in charge of assigning participants, stressing the need for commitment. This also means drawing a line in the sand when a commitment cannot be made. Lab timing and duration need to be adjusted around those realities.

Convening power is crucial. Do you have enough credibility to get the right people at the table (ie convince policy makers to be away from their desks, or farmers and vendors to lose income to come to your event)? Do they trust you to turn their input into concrete change processes? In Bandung, we underestimated the importance of credibility. Our convening partner had a good reputation in the local community, but mainly among young, creative citizens; they did not have the same influence at City Hall. Despite their experience as facilitators, capable of hosting inspiring and productive meetings, they did not automatically have the 'weight' required to work on a contentious issue such as informal street food vending and law enforcement.

Defining the focus of your Lab clarifies the pathway. Be serious about your mapping process – that is, testing the issues with multiple stakeholders. The Food Lab decided to focus on the role of street vendors while that actually did not come out as the top priority for all stakeholders, particularly the government. This is not necessarily a bad thing (and the Lab can function to create awareness of the street vendor issue), but it does create a longer and rockier pathway.

Street vendor holds a sign that says, "I want to speak". →



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Involve a diverse group of consumers. Since the focus was mostly on ITB students and vendors around the institute, the Food Lab only reached a limited number of consumers. Middle-income communities tend to have organic/green groups, like Greeneration Indonesia (who came to all the meetings), so they're easy to invite. However, consumer groups among low-income communities are rare in Bandung, if they exist at all, and this lack of organisation made inviting them difficult.

Research and data are powerful tools in a change process that involves policy making and advocacy. However, the pace of research is often very different to that of face-to-face meetings and generating ideas. A way to address this is to do a robust baseline study before the change lab has its first workshop, so a lot of data is already there before the process begins. Keeping a knowledge partner closely involved throughout the whole process can help, too.

Be aware of generation gaps. The Lab experienced tension between younger participants eager to innovate and try out crazy new ideas, and older generations favouring traditional problem-solving methods. This led to misunderstandings and loss of motivation. In solving complex societal issues, we need all generations to be on board. However, that also means consciously attuning our facilitation methods to cater for both groups and be patient in order to arrive at the ideal situation where they create solutions together.

Make prototyping processes more inclusive and reserve funding for promising ideas. Prototyping involves an obligation to follow up. Intervening in a system means a responsibility to give what we've learned back to that system. Despite linking a prototyping process with a university course that grades the students, there is no guarantee that they will design good prototypes, and there is a great risk that they stop being involved once their course has ended. We learned that prototyping in Bandung's food system should only be done by members of the Food Lab process who have a real, direct stake in the issue – ie those who have limited access to healthy and affordable food, and the authorities responsible for their city's food system and citizens.

↑ The Food Lab breaks intergenerational barriers, facilitating discussion where everyone can have a say.

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SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL

www.sustainablediets4all.org

Hivos and IIED began partnering in 2016 through Sustainable Diets for All, a global five-year partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We work with others to influence the policy and practices of markets, government actors and international institutions through citizen action for the promotion of sustainable diets, with the dual ambition to work towards a healthy planet and healthy people. Three strategies are core to our approach: working with frontrunners, supporting local actors to generate their own evidence, and creating coalitions of the willing through a Change Lab approach. The Indonesia Food Change Lab is being implemented with local partner, Riset Indie.

About Hivos

Hivos is an international organisation that seeks new solutions to persistent global issues. Our primary focus is achieving structural change. This is why we cooperate with innovative businesses, citizens and their organisations. We share a dream with them of sustainable economies and inclusive societies. www.hivos.org

About IIED

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is a policy and action research organisation. We promote sustainable development to improve livelihoods and protect the environments on which these livelihoods are built. We work with some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them — from village councils to international conventions. www.iied.org

Food Change Lab Participants

1,000 Garden Communities, Bandung Health Office, Bandung Institute of Technology staff and students, Bandung Health Polytechnic, Food and Agriculture Office, Food Safety Agency, Indonesian Organic Coalition (Bandung chapter), Municipal Police, Padjadjaran University, R&D and Planning Agency, Unified Licensing Investment Office, Unity in Diversity.

Learn more

Blogs:

- https://sea.hivos.org/blog/looking-for-health-and-value-bandungs-food-street-vendors-and-their-customers/
- http://www.iied.org/building-fairer-food-futures
- http://www.iied.org/building-trust-through-dialogue-street-food-vendors

Videos:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSdAXVjxVdE
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqclZuedSgZXXUihyORXslQ

Publications:

- Food Street Vendors in Bandung City, Center for Agrifood Policies and Agribusiness Studies
- Role of Different Food Outlets in the Food and Nutrition Security of Low-Income Female Factory Workers in Bandung, Indonesia, Center for Agrifood Policies and Agribusiness Studies

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Felia Boerwinkel, Silvana Paath

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