



NEIGHBOURHOOD
HOUSE

Formerly St. Christopher House

Pathways to Social and Economic Inclusion:

Financial Empowerment and Problem-Solving (FEPS) Program

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Setting the context

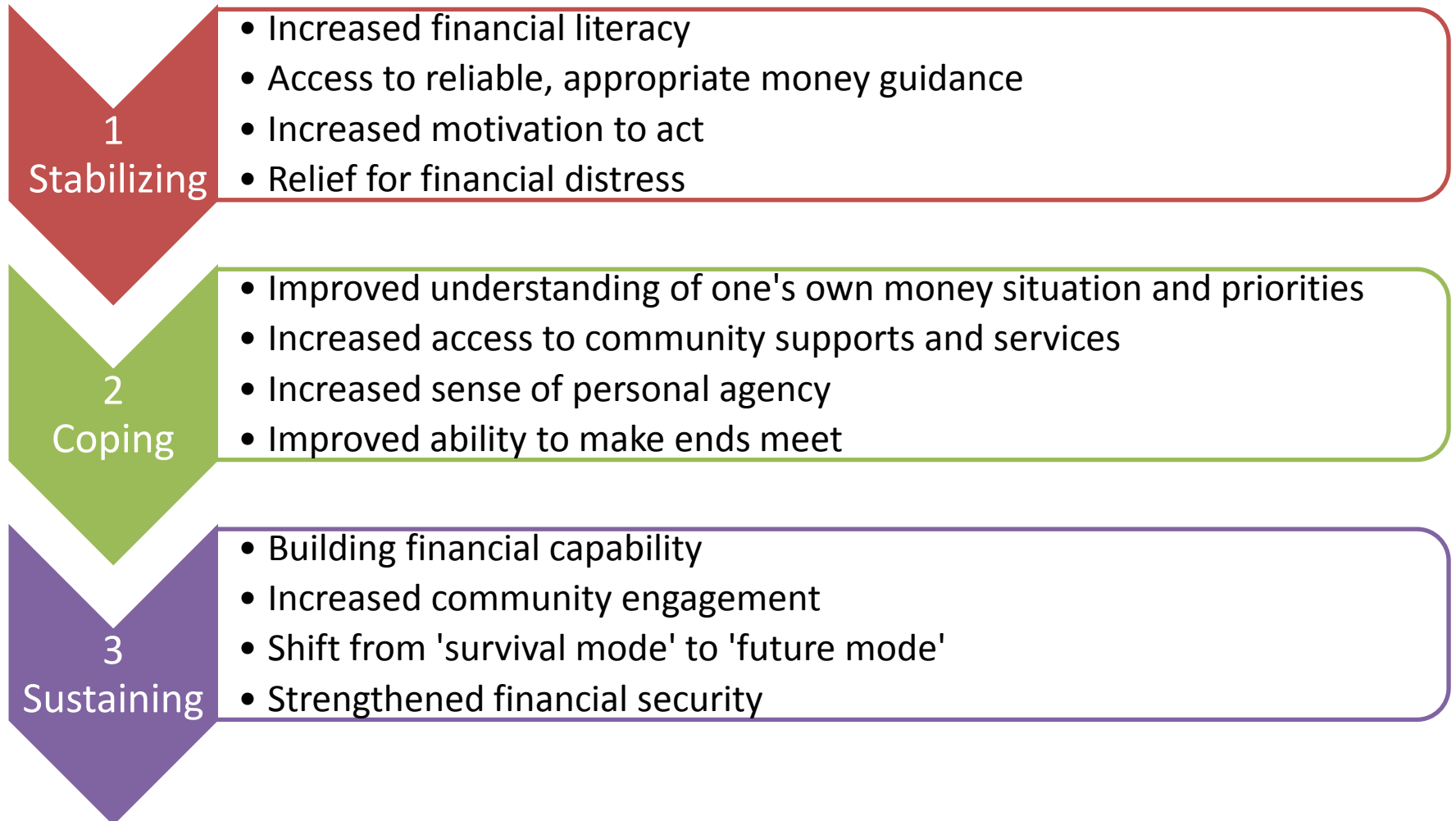


Financial Empowerment and Problem Solving

- *“We are like a second social safety net. We help people who have fallen through the cracks of the existing social safety net to gain access to social supports and income entitlements.” (CFW)*



Early intervention pathways





Pathway 1: Stabilizing

“I came with a specific problem. I was feeling overwhelmed. I had no idea of what to do.”

(Participant)

Stabilizing Outcomes

- Staff and interviewees observed that many participants came to FEPS with **misconceptions** about their rights, entitlements and financial interests. They benefitted from quality, up-to-date information and accurate money-related referrals.
- Interview data suggested a connection between problem solving practice and the increase of financial knowledge, practical money skills, and clients' readiness and motivation to deal with their financial situations.
- Staff reported that 84% of the sample had accessed unforeseen entitlements with the help of FEPS.
- Interviews revealed that participants began to understand their overall financial situation, identifying priorities and planning practical steps that addressed their financial problems quickly. They felt less intimidated, less 'stuck' and less stressed as a result of their participation.
- Participants adopted new ideas and practices through role modeling the work of CFWs, such as: learning how to look things up on the web, making telephone calls, filling in forms, and writing letters to creditors and government.



Pathway 2: Coping

“In my case, I learned that all is not as desperate as it seemed after coming here [to FEPS] – knowing that there are people who want to help and are available. There is always a way to solve a problem. Now I believe that I am well enough of mind and healthy enough that I can face a problem rather than ignore it.” (Participant)

Coping Outcomes

- The pre-post analysis indicates that participants were more likely to keep track of their spending, with 65% of participants in the post-survey saying that they 'usually' or 'always' *'keep track of my spending'* – compared to 53% at pre-survey.
- At the time of the post-survey, participants reported a reduction in stress levels as a result of their participation in the program: 59% had seen their stress levels go down 'a little' or 'a lot'.
- They also adopted new non-financial behaviours that supported financial capability, such as problem-solving and self-advocacy. At the post-survey, there was a 28% increase in number of participants who indicated being 'usually' or 'always' *'good at standing up for myself to get the benefits that I am entitled to.'*
- Participants felt more control in their lives and were better able to make decisions and manage their money. At the post-survey there was a 65% growth of participants who said that they 'usually' or 'always' *'feel in control of my finances'*.
- Women interviewees reported that they were engaging more in managing household money, and that they had begun teaching their children about saving and banking.



Pathway 3: Building a foundation for financial security and engagement

“I felt like a slave before – working. Now, this is my money and I know how to save it. I have more control over it.” (Participant)

“I feel like it’s going to look up even though things are hard right now. By next year, I plan to finish my degree. I’ll go back to school (University) over the summertime. Then I hope to get a full-time job.” (Participant)

Foundation Building Outcomes

- Participants increased their financial capability, practicing new financial management skills and behaviours and deepening their motivation and confidence.
- Staff observed that *'a sense of increased hope and reduced fear'* had been a key outcome for 21% of their participants.
- Staff observed that a *'shift to future mode'* had been a key outcome for 12% of their participants.
- Participants found the task of saving money on low income very difficult, managing to increase their savings only a little. Nevertheless, interviewees made it clear that a small amount of additional money can make an important difference to their well-being.
- Three quarters of the sample participants who had debts had taken steps to manage their debt with the assistance of FEPS. More than a quarter (26%) indicated that their debt levels had *'gone DOWN a little'*; and, five (6%) that their debt levels had *'gone DOWN a lot'* by the time of the post-survey. Nevertheless, debt persists as a serious problem.

FEPS Goal/Objectives and Challenges

- FEPS theory of change reflects the layered addresses barriers to financial inclusion at three levels:
- (1) individuals' access, skills, knowledge and behaviour (correct information);
- (2) gaps in programs and services (scaling);
and
- (3) systemic and policy (advocacy and trends)



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Other information

<http://www.westnh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FEPS-Outcomes-Evaluation-Final-2014-08-25.pdf>

<http://www.westnh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FEPS-Outcomes-Evaluation-Executive-Summary-2014.pdf>

<http://www.westnh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FEPS-Models-Paper-Final-2014-08-25.pdf>

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