Local monitoring systems exist within the district municipality of Greater Sekhukhune and are implemented by five main agencies in the form of ward committees or counsellors, home-based caregivers, community development workers, non-governmental organizations and traditional authorities. Information is collected on various issues that are called “people’s indicators” (table below). These indicators are simple and can be used practically in addressing community issues. They are also used to raise awareness of poverty and food insecurity problems, to identify priority issues, to identify the most appropriate interventions and to bring about collective action in addressing these problems.

### Key indicators

- Size of family
- Household income
- Unemployment
- Orphans
- Chronic diseases (if sick you cannot work and purchase food)
- Child headed households
- People with disabilities
- Individuals without ID
- Homeless people
- Hunger
- Women and Children who are abused
- Number of children smoking glue
- Structure & size of house

The people’s indicators have been developed through participatory approaches with multiple stakeholders and by taking into consideration the social and cultural characteristics of communities, their beliefs, experiences and the way that they see the world. The main focus of the indicators is on poverty and the many factors that are associated with poverty, including food insecurity, access to income, unemployment, access to services and demographic characteristics of households. More specifically, communities conceptualise food security as simply having “at least a bag of the mielie meal in the household”. This embodies the ability of the household to get access to sufficient food and having it available for consumption on a regular basis.

### What is a local monitoring system?

A local monitoring system is a community based approach to systematically and continuously collect data on specific indicators for use in decision making processes. It is also a system that monitors and tracks indicators on poverty and food insecurity. Focus groups conducted in Greater Sekhukhune have shown that there is the systematic collection of data on poverty and food insecurity indicators and that it is organized by the five agencies mentioned above. These agencies also collect this information within an appropriate framework and existing structures enables it to be analysed and incorporated into the decision-making processes of communities and government departments.

Local monitoring systems are established to improve the poverty and food security situation as well as to enable timely action and the effective targeting of the neediest communities. What is key in establishing a local monitoring system is that the views, roles and responsibilities of the different players participating in the locals monitoring system are recognized and clearly defined. If a local monitoring system can be established then it can be a cost-effective and powerful tool in generating useful information to address food insecurity and vulnerability.

### Information is collected from door to door

Different methods are used by the five agencies to collect the information and populate the indicators. The community stakeholders have different methods for information collection and they link with other stakeholders in different manners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Method for info collection</th>
<th>Linkage with other stakeholders</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Community development workers, home-based caregivers and ward committees | • Door to door  
• Use of questionnaire  
• Community meetings  
• Informal/oral  
• Observation | • Works closely with traditional leaders (with a lot of tensions)  
• Has weak links with NGO & other groups | • Formal method – collects information every three months  
• Informal any time |
| NGO | • Set Questionnaires  
• Set methodology | • Sometimes consults CDWs, HBCG, Traditional leaders & Ward councillors (arrangement not well defined) | • Not recorded |
| Traditional leaders | • Informal  
• Orally  
• Observation | • Not well defined | • Anytime |
The purpose of this step is to During this step the plans are This step involves the planning and vulnerability requires them to be effectively in addressing food insecurity Therefore, for the systems to be used effectively in addressing food insecurity and vulnerability requires them to be strengthened.

This includes identifying appropriate indicators for use in monitoring food insecurity and vulnerability. One of the indicators that can be used is the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) that looks at issues of vulnerability, hunger and food insecurity. The methods of collecting the information for these indicators will also need to be properly coordinated and strengthened. It is critically important that the information is representative of the different community members and that the information is properly captured into some form of database before it is analysed.

A key recommendation that has been made is that the linkages between the different agencies collecting information as part of the local monitoring system should also be strengthened. It is also important that the different tiers of government function and interface effectively with one another to ensure the sustainability of the local monitoring system.

The way that this information is interpreted and used in the decision-making needs to be formalized and the use of a forum that incorporates a variety of stakeholders is recommended. It has been proposed that an Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Task Team (IFSN-TT) be established at the district municipality level and that within this forum, stakeholders from government, private sector, traditional authorities and civil society organizations will use the information to develop strategies and interventions to address food insecurity and vulnerability.

Participatory approaches are key in setting up a local monitoring system

There are five main steps in the participatory cycle and the establishment of a local monitoring system. 

**Step 1:** The purpose of this step is to bring about a change in the way things are done. However, before this is done it is necessary that a relationship be established with the key stakeholders so that information on the existing local monitoring system can be shared. They need to be made aware of the limitations of the system and that innovative approaches need to be implemented to address its problems.

**Step 2:** Within Greater Sekhukhune the key stakeholders have been identified during the user needs assessment. Step 2 is used to get stakeholders to take ownership in changing the local monitoring system. They will need to identify all the key stakeholders to be involved in this process and to identify possible solutions in addressing the problem.

**Step 3:** This step involves the planning and actual strengthening of the local monitoring system. It also involves the defining of stakeholder roles and responsibilities and the development of a joint plan of action in changing the local monitoring system. Part of this step is the strengthening of linkages between the different the players and the identification of the key set of indicators to be used in the local monitoring system.

**Step 4:** During this step the plans are initially pilot tested before being implemented. This step will include the collection, capture and analysis of information generated by the local monitoring system. It will also include effective dissemination of the information generated during this step. It is important when analysing the information from a local monitoring system that it is triangulated with other sources of information such as that from livelihood surveys and the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Mapping System (FIVIMS) on Agricultural Geo-Referenced Information System (AGIS) of the Department of Agriculture.

**Step 5:** Having implemented the system over a period of time workshops could be organised to reflect on the lessons learnt. These workshops can also be used to share information on the process of establishing and using a local monitoring system. It is critically important that any local monitoring system be institutionalised within existing structures of government.

The information is collected by the community development workers, home based caregivers and ward counsellors every three months and is analysed by them before being made available to the municipality and other government departments, such as the Departments of Agriculture and Social Development. This information is provided to them for use in their decision-making and in the development of the Integrated Development Plans (IDP). The information is used to target specific communities in the development of community gardens; programmes for the impoverished, disabled and the sick; providing access to social grants and food parcels and identifying needs of communities. Various methods are being used to communicate the outcome of the information collection process to communities. This includes mass meetings and the use of radio and television.

**Local monitoring systems need strengthening**

One of the major problems in the implementation of the local monitoring systems is that the collection and communication of the information is not coordinated. Furthermore, the information needed to address food insecurity and vulnerability in Greater Sekhukhune is not being collected. What is also important to ensure is that the information being collected is representative of the different communities found in local municipalities. Therefore, for the systems to be used effectively in addressing food insecurity and vulnerability requires them to be strengthened.