

PROGRESS REPORT

India—Enhancement of nutritional health security through home gardens for Dalit women—Project No. 1023



Deepam Trust reports that 250 Dalit women and their families are benefiting from improved regular access to adequate food and better nutritional health through the small scale cultivation of a wide variety of organic crops. Five two-day training sessions were organised and the group reports that a total of 250 women attended them. Furthermore, all these women received seed kits and planted the seeds in their own gardens.

As a result of 300 meetings at village level in 25 Villages in Thanjavur district, the targeted women gained knowledge of food safety awareness, basic health, sustainable cooking methods, organic home garden preparation, and reducing malnutrition. All of them were also encouraged to obtain vitamin A drops and deworming tablets for their children from government departments.

The project team dealt with difficulties encountered such as a lack of water in hand pumps and they advised the beneficiaries to use waste water. Six women were discouraged from attending the training by their drug addict husbands. The Trust offered counselling and the women then did attend. Deepam Trust evaluates the project implementation process with weekly and monthly meetings, as well as through direct discussions with project beneficiaries.

In the last stage of the project all 250 women will continue their food security training and no complications are expected to arise. The team is planning to guide and advise the beneficiaries on organic pest management and the use of manure, water harvesting and conservation, and seed collection in order to cultivate vegetables the following season.



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MONITORING REPORT



Hazel Armstrong was shown Deepam Trust's offices and viewed the paperwork which shows that the beneficiaries of this project are receiving ongoing training in kitchen gardening.

Hazel visited two of the project villages and was impressed with what she found. The women beneficiaries had attended training and each been given good quality start-up seeds. This has enabled them to grow a variety of vegetables, including okra, aubergines, bitter gourd, spinach, tomatoes and pumpkins, and fruits including papaya, plantain, pomegranate, guava and plums, as well as medicinal plants such as turmeric.

Project volunteers in each village monitor the kitchen gardens three times per month to check that weeding is being carried out and that the plants are thriving. The beneficiaries have to rely on the village borewell for water but this does not seem to present too much of a problem.

Hazel discussed with the project team the nutrition awareness training which had been carried out, and noted the

prevalence of breastfeeding mothers in the two villages.

She was told that medical camps carried out two years ago by Tamil and French doctors exposed the high levels of nutritional deficiency in the community. The women report that they are feeling healthier as a result of the project, but this is hard to quantify and Hazel has suggested that a further health camp, including blood screening, be carried out next year to evaluate changes in nutrition levels in a scientific manner.

Case Studies

Mrs. Rajakumari has 7 children and she lives with her husband and her 70 year-old mother. Their income was insufficient to live on. She got seeds from this programme and started growing organic vegetables and fruit for the whole family. Now Mrs. Rajakumari makes enough income to take care of her children and to send them to school.

Mrs. Pavunammal is a widow living with her two girls. She had no adequate source of income and was malnourished. She suffered from weak muscles, anaemia, irregular menstruation, and it took a long time for even small wounds and cuts to heal. She joined the project training sessions and applied her newly acquired knowledge in her little back-yard space. Now she grows enough vegetables and fruit to feed her family and to sell the surplus in the market, which gives her a good income.