

1023 – Deepam Trust – India

Enhancement of Nutritional Health Security through Home Gardens for Dalit Women

In 2017, the World Bank Joint Malnutrition dataset⁴ was published, and showed that in India, as well as several other developing countries, almost half of child deaths under the age of five are from nutrition-related causes.

The health complications they develop largely relate to poor nutritional habits and hygiene in their day-to-day lives. The data also shows that the nutrition of the mother during pregnancy is a crucial factor in the health of her child. This data is supported by findings from the Indian government's National Family and Health Survey 4⁵, which highlights that 52% of pregnant women aged 15-49 years are suffering from Anaemia. When the mother is undernourished, her child will also suffer from insufficient nutrition. Project 1023 addresses this issue through nutrition education and small-scale agricultural training for women in the Thanjavur District of Tamil Nadu.

The Final Report received from project partner Deepam Trust summarises the achievements of the year-long project:

- A total of five training sessions were conducted on reducing malnutrition, food safety awareness, basic health, sustainable cooking methods, and organic home garden preparation. As a result, 250 Dalit women have a better understanding of the importance of good nutritional habits and the potential that home gardens have in improving the nutritional quality of the food consumed by their families.
- 250 women from 25 villages constructed small vegetable gardens in the backyards of their homes and received seed kits and seedlings to ensure the diversity of their produce. As a result, 222 (89%) families increased consumption of fresh home garden products.
- 56% of the targeted households reduced expenditure on vegetable by 75% and over 50% of them doubled their household income from their home gardens.
- 600 women from village self-help groups attended awareness meetings on the importance of good nutritional practices and organic home gardening. They were also provided with clear instructions on how they could get Vitamin A drops and deworming tablets from local government departments.

This project aimed to promote gender equality through the empowerment of the target group with livelihood skills. It gave these women greater control over the products consumed by their families and provided them with a small source of income. Most importantly, the women who took part in the training became recognized in their community for their agricultural skills, resulting in higher self-esteem and allowing them to interact outside their usual social circle of family and neighbours.

⁴ UNICEF, WHO, World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition dataset, updated May 2017

⁵ National Family Health Survey – 4, 2015-2016

* Names may have been changed to protect the identity of beneficiaries



Nutrition,
Good Health
& Wellbeing

Gunitha* from Keluthur village of Thanjavur district has a physical disability which made it difficult for her to provide for her family. A field worker from Deepam Trust invited her to take part in the training, where she received a seed kit and guidance on best agricultural practices. She owns half an acre of land behind her house where she now cultivates various produce. With a drip irrigation system in place, Gunitha has harvested approximately 1200 kg of vegetables in two consecutive seasons. Of her harvests, she sold 1000 kg of vegetables and earned INR. 28,500 (around £315). She sold vegetables in a local market, at shops in the Dalit community, as well as at a street stall in her village. Gunitha used the profit from the sale of the excess produce to cover her family's medical expenses and general household supplies.

