

Padi Pantalu

Nutri gardens: A sustainable model for Nutritional security

Valmikipuram and Kurabalakota are two mandals of Chittoor districts in Andhra Pradesh where majority of families depend upon agriculture and livestock for their livelihood. In these mandals women usually suffer with anemia, lower body mass index (BMI) and children suffer with malnutrition, which results in stunting of growth, followed by underweight and reduced immunity. APMAS in coordination with its donor partner; AEIN Luxemburg has initiated a project “Padi Pantalu” in these two mandals to promote food and fodder security as its one of the core objectives of the project. This project aims to enhance and improve farming practices, empower women and create sustainable livelihoods to the rural households in 30 villages of 10 GPs (gram panchayaths), so as to achieve food and fodder security.

To break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and fill the gaps of nutritional needs in the villages, establishment of “Nutri Garden” in home backyard intervention was proposed which can change the situation in these mandals. The farmers were encouraged to allot some area in the backyard of their house or farm to grow diverse vegetables and fruits primarily for their own consumption.

Fruits and vegetables from the nutri gardens are good source of micronutrients, as well as add substantially to family’s income. Crops selected for nutri gardens are based on the prevailing food habits and climatic conditions of the selected areas, and with the larger goal of ensuring availability of wholesome and nutritious food. The vegetable minikit supplied to the beneficiaries includes 12 varieties of vegetable seeds. having a combination of Leguminous, Green leafy vegetables, Okra, Bitter guard, Ridge guard, Cluster bean, Cucumber, Pumpkin, Bottle guard, Snake guard, Brinjal, Chilli, Onion, Radish etc. along with fruit plants like Papaya, banana, etc.

Around 1000 families were benefitted with vegetable mini kits. An innovative model named “Suryamandalam model” and “Reliance method” of vegetable



production was introduced to the community, for sustainable production of vegetables in the area. Firstly, the selected land is ploughed, leveled and plot is divided into different parts in a circular manner so as to create blocks for sowing. After the sowing is done farm yard manure is applied along with mulching with dried straw to protect the seedling from drying.

A fruit plant is planted in the centre of the model, leafy vegetables in the second level and remaining vegetables in third and fourth levels. After two or three harvests, the plot is left to collect the seed for next season. The collected seeds will be used to produce vegetables for second cycle, this way the families become self reliant.



Anasuya from Eguvaboyepalle village Kurabalakota mandal says, "I am a single woman who has been benefitted with vegetable mini seed kit and have adopted Suryamandalam model of nutri garden for vegetable production. Every day I harvest the fresh vegetables for my own consumption. Till date I harvested 3 types of Leafy vegetables, Cucumber - 5 kgs, Lady Finger - 10 kgs, and Bitter Gourd 3 kgs from my backyard garden. I sold the surplus produce in the local market and earned Rs 3000 which was used to meet some of my household expenses. I am happy to

say that these vegetables are grown naturally without using any pesticides."

Saraswathi from Eguvaboyepalle village Kurabalakota mandal says "My family depends on livestock for livelihood. We spend our incomes on feeding cows and to maintain their health but due to price fluctuations of milk in the markets and low incomes, we never had to buy fresh vegetables of necessary quantities to meet the needs of my family. With the help of APMAS team I have received the vegetable mini seed kit from the project. I am not aware of the technology but the team have educated me and encouraged to develop the nutri garden. With



small piece of vacant land available in the backyard of my house, I chose to grow vegetables. This month harvest was more than 7 different varieties of vegetables and provide to the family.

Now there is no need for me to depend on the outside markets to buy vegetables which I feel expensive.”

Nallappa from nallamvallapalli village, Valmikipuram says, “As a member farmer in the FPO, I received a vegetable mini seed kit form the project team, and using the kit I have developed a kitchen garden in my farm. I have adopted “Reliance model” to grow vegetables. This has helped me to harvest fresh vegetables and provide it to my family members including my daughter in law who is a pregnant women meeting her healthy diet.”



Monica from Danduvaripalle village “Kitchen gardens not only empowered me but also addressed socioeconomic returns while reduced health costs. Apart from an increase in income, the kitchen garden initiative has ensured food security and improved the nutrition status of my family by the regular intake of nutrient rich vegetables like Okra, Bottle guard and table cucumber which increased energy levels and efficiency in work.”

