

Project 1101 Village Reconstruction and Development Society (VRDS), India: Nutrition education and Food Production for Yanadi Tribal Women

SLIDE 1: Title Slide

This project focuses on education of malnutrition among women and children in tribal communities.

VRDS was established in the year 1978 for integral development of rural areas and poverty eradication. VRDS implemented the non-formal education, community empowerment, land development and disaster management projects. The projects were targeted for the development of underprivileged communities. Mrs. Sireesha , the secretary, is a postgraduate and participated in the training on rural development and women empowerment. This society became dedicated to women empowerment after her entry into a leadership role.

SLIDE 2: Project Aims and Purpose of Project

Specific aims of the project – to promote nutrition education among tribal community, to improve skill in food making/recipes, support nutrition security, introduce methods and techniques for drying fruits and vegetables

The project will be undertaken for 25 vulnerable tribal groups of 126 population who are agriculture labors. Malnutrition among their community is high due to lack of micronutrients typically found in fruit and vegetables. They eat fruits and vegetables when available in nature at no cost and available at low prices which is very rare. The target community is a vulnerable tribal group living in poverty and dependent on daily wages in agriculture fields. Their income falls due to frequent absence from work due to illness and malnutrition. Their typical diet consisted of rice without additional nutrition supportive food for good health. They lack knowledge of the malnutrition effect and micro-nutrition requirement for proper function of immune system. The project aims to reduce malnutrition through nutrition education, promoting home gardens and solar drying for food preservation.

Training will be provided to 40 women in food making to maintain the balanced diet, home gardens including the garden layout development, vegetable calendar preparation and compost making, gardening tools and implements. Similarly, they will be trained in drying fruits and vegetables for preservation. The solar drying technology will be introduced as it is simple and low cost for poorer communities. It will also help overcome food waste, aid pest control management, and support produce preservation. Training will be provided on pre-treatment of fruits and vegetables like washing, boiling and slicing /sizing, drying in solar dryers and packing of dried fruits and vegetables. The trained women will be provided the solar dryers and tool kits and packing machine.

SLIDE 3: Baseline Survey

VRDS conducted a baseline survey to gauge the levels of malnutrition among the community before executing the project. The tribal colony of 25 families had a population of 40 women, 40 men, 36 children and 9 senior citizens. Senior citizens were excluded in the survey. The height and weight of each person were measured, and malnutrition was calculated using the formula of Body Mass Index (BMI) for adults and percentage of median weight-for height for children.

For the adults, 14 women out of 40 were considered malnourished, whereas 12 men out of 40 were. The prevalence of malnutrition among male is due to less food intake because of appetite suppressants such a regular consumption of alcohol and tobacco products. These habits have a significant effect on malnutrition. Poverty is the root cause of undernourishment and lack of nutrition education and greatly neglect of fruits and vegetables in daily meals.

Of the 36 children, 17 boys – 10 of them were categorized as malnourished between mildly and severely; out of 19 girls, 10 were malnourished. Statistically speaking the malnutrition rates in this sample were higher than national Indian data. 52% girls and 58% boys were malnourished in this study while national levels show 47% girls and 55% of boys are malnourished.

SLIDE 4: Key Achievements

Key achievements are benchmarks, these are the actual actionable things that were conducted and achieved. Each key achievement has a direct relation to the aims of the project.

1. Conducting a baseline survey on malnutrition at a community level.
 - a. By conducting this baseline survey, VRDS were able to gauge the malnutrition levels among the community as a starting point to see how their project could impact nutrition among tribal members.
2. Meetings with project stakeholders.
 - a. Project stakeholders such as village volunteers, health staff of primary healthcare centres, elected and local body functionaries, and project staff were briefed on the objectives and activity plan to ensure their participation in implementing the project.
3. Nutrition education
 - a. Community awareness campaigns organised for 40 women and 40 men to educate on malnutrition, nutritional foods, importance of fruit and vegetables in a daily diet. The impact of the education as assessed by a questionnaire distributed to participants.

- b. Awareness through folk media was used in the form of dialogues, songs, art and media performances on malnutrition, nutrition gardens, crop calendars, and solar drying. These forms were used due to high illiteracy rates, so by offering education through visuals and conversation, participants were able to retain the information in an accessible way.
- 4. Food making training
 - a. Training given to 20 women on varieties of foods making and recipes. The food making culture changed 100 percent by imparting knowledge. Distribution of cooking tools/equipment to 20 women to assist in cooking and food preparation.

SLIDE 5: Key Achievements (part 2)

- 5. Promoting nutrition gardens
 - a. Training provided to 20 women on, garden lay out plan, selection of species, seasons for growing, soil health, moisture conservation and compost making.
 - b. Vegetable calendars for 20 women beneficiaries and other stakeholders to identify harvesting seasons and crop patterns to prepare the vegetable calendar. The charts of calendars distributed to women to display at home.
 - c. Seed distribution the selected Seeds distributed to trained women for growing nutrition gardens. 90% of them started the growing vegetable gardens, trainings provided to 20 women on pre-treatment, sizing, slicing, boiling, washing and cleaning. The demonstration was conducted for practical learning.
 - d. Distribution of Solar dryers 40 solar dryers created with local material at low cost. The women involved in fabrication for further repairs. Two women included the dried fruits in their business and planning to enhance the business with selling excess production.
- 6. Final survey conducted and the data was compared to assess their results – 30% reduction of mild to moderate malnutrition was observed during the last six-month period of the project

SLIDE 6: Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact on the community, where the aims and objectives of the project are revisited to see if they have been successfully achieved.

Through all of the actionable achievements previously mentioned, the aims of the project were all reached. This project successfully promotes nutrition education among the tribal community, improved skills in food making, support nutritional security through education on gardening, and introduced the technologies of drying fruits and vegetables.

SLIDE 7: Case Studies

Mrs Nagamma (left photo with solar dryer) is a widow with two sons and three grandchildren. She has developed a vegetable garden through the project and is selling the surplus along with her business. She is earning Rs. 100 daily whereas she was having to purchase fresh produce Rs. 50 out of her income. This cost has been saved by her garden. She has dried fruits and finds they taste well and is planning to dry excess harvest for future sales. She requested 3 more dryers to aid her business and the demand.

Mrs Radamma is a farm laborer with 4 children. Their usual diet consists mainly of rice and sambar, but since the home garden training, she learned about the need for fruits and vegetables for a healthy body and learnt how to grow and nurture these plants in her household. Her family have now had a variety of fruit and vegetables daily for over 4 months (as of end of project) and she is preparing for her next crop. Her family are eating more vegetables than before, and they all feel strong and healthy. She is planning to grow more permanent plants such as banana, papaya, and lemon trees.

PROJECT 1095 Economic Empowerment for the Olmarurui Women with partner organisation Elite Community Development Empowerment Programme (ECODEP), Kenya

Slide 1: Title Slide

ACWW has a long history of providing support to education and capacity building projects which have enabled women to come together and share skills; build entrepreneurship activities for increased income and financial independence; develop financial literacy; establish community-led savings and loan schemes; and life-long learning opportunities.

Elite Community Development Empowerment Programme was founded out of a visible need to empower communities using locally available resources. Prior to the formation of ECODEP, the founder members had been involved in empowerment programmes related to financial literacy for more than 7 years. Therefore, ECODEP represents a consolidation of their experiences and passion of developing local communities especially vulnerable women and the Youth.

SLIDE 2: Project Aims and Purpose of Project

The Maasai woman is traditionally a housewife, unemployed but tasked with fending for subsistence needs of the family. To fit this role, the woman engages in subsistence agriculture. The proposed project is designed to economically empower the Maasai women through a commercial agriculture venture. The project aimed to involve training 200 women on access to use of land, profitable resource use, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, economic inclusion and village saving and loaning.

Out of the 200 women, a selected women group comprising of 50 women shall be taken through a training on agriculture support services and marketing. The 50 woman-group shall then be engaged in an onion's agriculture for business project - the target beneficiaries will be trained on allium management (plant of onions, leeks, garlic) up to marketing and then supported with onion seeds to start them off.

Gender biased culture against land use by women has led to inequalities in land tenure rights resulting to a financially poor Maasai woman. Men in Maasai land are privileged by culture to control productive assets such as capital, livestock, land, and income emanating from these assets. Household assets that women have access and control over are of low value and cannot be leveraged for businesses.

Poverty due to lack of economic resources has led to food insecurity, malnutrition and reduced ability to acquire basic needs. Financial illiteracy has led to reduced access to financial services. This community has also experienced challenges from climate change, aggravated by unsustainable land use practices. These effects have led to uncertainties for the community as they mainly rely on subsistence agriculture.

SLIDE 3: Baseline Survey

A baseline survey was conducted to learn whether Maasai women are knowledgeable in VSL, entrepreneurship, and banking services and to learn whether women have access to agricultural support services.

Most of the residents have access to land for farming and engage in farming as their main source of income. Since most of them are low-income earners, they are not able to raise enough funds to purchase farm inputs such as certified seeds and fertilizers. The market for their farm produce is readily available and thus if the production is high, they are likely to earn more and save more in VSL groups.

86% of the respondents borrow/save from VSLs. This information concludes that most residents engage in VSLs and are committed to saving and borrowing money for their personal development needs. The survey also found that 80% had knowledge of entrepreneurship skills but have yet to utilize them due to lack of finances.

The percentage of respondents who have access to agricultural trainings and extension services was lower than 37% -- this is a driving point of the project to create sustainable community-centered solutions by combining experience as agriculture workers with training on how to capitalize on the potential business opportunities and enhance savings.

SLIDE 4: Key Achievements

1. Financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills training
 - a. Group trainings carried out by ECODEP staff – covid at the time caused regulations on social gatherings, so trainings were split into 4 days with no more than 50 women to avoid overcrowding
 - b. 180 women have gained financial literacy amongst which 140 women have joined VSL for access to financial support services of saving and loaning.
2. Onion farming
 - a. ECODEP hired an Agricultural Extension Officer from Green life. Crop Protection Africa to carry out the training. All participants were issued with onion production manuals for future reference.
 - b. There was a goal of accessing 5-acre land, but that was not available at the time, so members chose to lease land on different areas and 5 nursery beds were established.
 - c. Each group was later able to develop a 1-acre onion farm. Members have been able to maintain pest-free fields as they were all trained on pest/disease control, soil health, and supplied with resources to aid farming.
 - d. There was a goal to yield 12 tonnes of onion bulbs per acre, and as of the project end date, 7 tonnes were harvested on each acre.
 - e. Four beneficiaries grasped these training concepts very fast and were able to become trainers for new incoming trainees. This is a great example of how people who benefit from the project are able to further the outreach of the project to new participants.
3. VSL Groups
 - a. 20 VSL groups were established, each with 10 women and an average of 50,000 Kenyan Shillings (roughly £300) was available to each group. 144 women have applied for loans
 - b. Over 50 women have been able to start commercial and agribusiness ventures through these loans
 - c. Each member has been able to save an average of 5,000 KES for the past 6-9 months and group members meet once a month to contribute to savings
4. Sustainable Agriculture training
 - a. Facilitating the women group with seeds, installing an irrigation system, training on improved and safe crop production techniques, post-harvest practices, marketing, and linking their business ventures to the market

SLIDE 5: Outcomes

Improved access to financial literacy and access to financial services, diversified food and income sources, increased agricultural production, improved economic welfare

Sustainability – will the achievements be sustained beyond the end of the project?

- ECODEP staff will continue to support members and recruit new members to join
- Beneficiaries will receive mentorship and financial support through VSL
- Profits shared amongst members to be used to set up income-generating activities
- Potential to expand farming to beans and maize

SLIDE 6: Case Studies

Susan Njoki - "It is through ECODEP that we have learned to save consistently and do great things. I was not able to save before I was introduced to ECODEP but now I can gladly say that me and my group members are doing well in this exercise, and we hope to do more in the future."

Sabina Namunyak – participate in VSL Entrepreneurship training, acquired a loan to boost her farming business, encourages community members to form VSL groups for reliable saving and borrowing platform, and Agricultural training aided income-generating opportunities.

Final slide: AMPLIFYING VOICES

Revisiting how ACWW ties into supporting Indigenous Communities – through educational and development projects, we help rural women access and control productive resources – control being key, creating space and opportunities for their voices to be heard and involved in decision-making.

Advocacy opportunities – we take what we learn from these grassroots Indigenous communities to involve them at the advocacy table. We work with partners at UNESCO to encourage governments to engage with their local indigenous communities, participate at events such as CSW where there are routine discussions on how to support these communities in way that preserve their culture and find ways to move forward. It is also the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, an overarching theme to keep in mind when we celebrate the lives of indigenous populations and draw attention to the discrimination and loss of rights they often face.

Resources – ACWW have copies of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and have shared access to a plethora of resources and materials on the UN Observances website where fact files can be found overiewing Indigenous communities all over the world.

