

Case study Kitchen garden project - Narayani

Narayani, an 80-year-old resident of Pothukolly village, is a remarkable testament to the transformative impact of the Center for Tribal and Rural Development's (CTRD) Kitchen Garden Project. Her story is an example of how the initiative creates significant improvements in the lives of individuals and their communities.

Pothukonny, a village located in the Nilgiris districts in Tamil Nadu, India, is home to approximately 130 residents distributed among 37 families. Among them, 60 are women, and 30 are children.

Narayani's family owns half an acre of agricultural land, where they primarily cultivate tea, coffee, pepper, and arakanut. The family's income mainly relies on selling tea on a monthly basis and coffee and pepper annually to a local agent. Before her involvement in the Kitchen Garden Project, the family grew only a limited amount of vegetables for their own consumption. They were entirely dependent on purchasing vegetables from local shops, which significantly impacted their monthly expenses.

The Kitchen Garden Project, initiated by CTRD in cooperation with SODI in 2019, brought about a positive change in food security and income generation.

Training in organic farming practices taught her how to sustainably sow and grow a variety of cultures without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, maintaining the soil fertility. Also, the nutritional benefits and how to use the kitchen garden were topics of the workshops. Necessary equipment for the maintenance of the garden and organic seeds for 19 different varieties were provided to the beneficiaries of the project.



Narayani with Lisann Fried, Project manager from SODI e.V., Germany



Narayani at a Beekeeping demonstration

One of the most notable changes was in the diet of the community members. Narayani's family now enjoys a much more diverse and nutritious menu, thanks to the fresh vegetables harvested from their garden. Before her participation in the project, Narayani faced health challenges, including breathing problems. However, these issues have significantly improved since the project's inception. The newfound knowledge about nutrition and healthy eating habits, provided through the project's training sessions, played a pivotal role in her family's improved well-being.

Furthermore, the shift has also led to substantial savings, as they no longer need to purchase vegetables from local shops.

Apart from cultivating vegetables, the community of Pothukolly also received training on making organic manure from their cows, enriching their understanding of sustainable farming practices. This newfound knowledge has not only reduced their dependence on external fertilizers but has also created an additional source of income through the sale of organic manure, which is highly demanded in the region. Narayani's story is a testament to the effectiveness of CTRD's Kitchen Garden Project in empowering individuals and communities.

Case Study Kitchen garden project - Bindhu

The Adivasi, an indigenous community residing in the Indian subcontinent, represent one of the most marginalized and discriminated segments of the country's population. They endure severe poverty, primarily due to the rapid forces of globalization and westernization, as well as the forced cultivation of tea, a practice they have reluctantly adopted over the past three decades, despite their limited expertise in farming techniques. Historically, the Adivasi were food gatherers and hunters who engaged in subsistence agriculture while meticulously conserving natural resources and honoring ancestral spirits for centuries. Today, their lack of resources to purchase nutritious and sufficient food, coupled with their limited understanding of healthy diets, places their communities at risk of food insecurity.

Bindhu is one of the women of the Paniya tribe living in the Uluvad village, situated in the Nilgiris districts in Tamil Nadu, India. She recounts the challenging state of her family's food supply just a few years ago. Relying on purchasing food from nearby shops and markets, her family's modest income severely restricted their food choices. Consequently, their daily diet lacked essential vegetables, and they were forced to consume low-quality products that adversely affected their health. Frequent visits to the hospital became necessary due to stomach problems resulting from food poisoning and deteriorating overall health, often accompanied by fever. Most notably, Bindhu was suffering from the symptoms of sickle cell anemia, a genetic disorder which reduces the life expectancy of those affected.

In 2019, the Center for Tribal and Rural Development (CTRD), with support from SODI, initiated an awareness program in Uluvad aimed at addressing the malnutrition problem and imparting knowledge on healthy nutrition and gardening for the ten families living there. Bindhu and other community members, predominantly women, participated in numerous training sessions, which equipped them with essential skills in garden establishment and maintenance, including proper sowing techniques and the production of organic manure. This sustainable approach also involved utilizing dung from their own livestock, such as goats and cows, as well as preparing Panchakaviyam, a nutrient-rich concoction made from banana, coconut water, ghee, and curd.



Bindhu in her garden with Lisann Fried, Project Manager of SODI e.V. from Germany



Bindhu shows her plant nursery

The project provided necessary equipment, such as fencing nets for the garden and organic seeds, allowing the cultivation of 19 diverse vegetable varieties. With successful implementation of the techniques acquired through these training sessions, Bindhu can now harvest a bounty of vegetables from her own garden, which she manages alongside her

husband. Her diet has become more diverse and nutritious, leading to significant improvements in her health. Most importantly, her blood values and immunity improved and her genetic disease is now under control, also promising a prolonged life. Furthermore, the organic cultivation methods ensure the production of high-quality food while preserving the land's integrity and preventing soil pollution, thereby securing livelihoods for the years to come.

Bindhu is not only saving money by no longer having to purchase food from markets, but she is also generating additional income by selling surplus harvest from her garden. In summary, the kitchen garden project has not only enhanced Bindhu's and her family's well-being but has also positively impacted their entire village by ensuring access to healthy diets and creating income-generating opportunities.