Nutrition Home Gardens
An economically and nutritionally impactful intervention
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The Most Defining Feature of Humanity

The anthropologist Margaret Mead was once asked by her students what she considered to be the first sign of civilization in a culture. I was thinking of tools for hunting, grinding stones to prepare food, or even religious artifacts when I read the question. But no. Mead said that the first evidence of civilization was a 15,000-year-old fractured and healed femur found in an archaeological site. A femur is a bone connecting the hip to the knee. Mead explained that in the animal kingdom if you break your leg, you die. You cannot run from danger; you cannot drink or hunt for food.

A broken femur that has healed is evidence that another person has taken time to care about the needs of a fellow human being. Someone has taken the time to stay with the fallen, attended to their injury, carried them to safety, and supported them through recovery.

I think the most defining feature of humanity is our capacity for empathy – the ability to put ourselves in others’ shoes. Research even suggests that compassion and benevolence are an evolved part of human nature, rooted in our brain and biology, and ready to be cultivated for the greater good.

For me, this all comes together in ADRA’s purpose: “To serve humanity so all may live as God intended.”

Frank Reimann
Executive Director
ADRA Hong Kong

ADRA, together with Oxfam, has established approximately 1500 nutrition home gardens (NHG) in estate and rural communities of the Nuwara Eliya, Matale, and Monaragala districts, through their jointly implemented Assisting Communities in Creating Environmental and Nutritional Development (ACCEND) Project. The intervention hopes to increase the nutritional status of households by creating access to food that are safe and nutritious.

The project ensured that the NHGs established were to improve nutrition, are organic-based, and are beneficiary-led (family-oriented). The beneficiaries of the intervention are those who have undernourished children below the age of 5 and families that include those suffering from chronic kidney disease (CKD) and chronic kidney disease of unknown origin (CKDu). The project conducted trainings on organic home gardening techniques and further supported the beneficiaries by providing consultation, gardening tools, and seeds for germination.

To document the success and the impact of the intervention, the project conducted a study with the support of an independent researcher named Mr. Kapila Premarathne, sampling 200 households covering 10 Gramha Niladhari areas of the Wilgamuwa Divisional Secretariat.

The study reveals that the home gardens have benefitted project participants both economically and nutritionally, providing them with adequate food and more even during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Sanjeevani, one of the beneficiaries from the Kumbukanda area, revealed that her whole family survived on the produce of their home garden during the intermittent lockdowns imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “Our home garden has been a Godsend during this time of difficulty. We were unable to buy our groceries due to the restrictions. So, we depended on organic and fresh vegetables, greens, and fruits from our home garden to cook our meals,” she stated.

Another beneficiary, Iresha Kumari’s 3-year-old daughter, was underweight at the beginning of the activity. Upon consuming healthy and organic food from their home garden, she is now within the average weight range.

“After eating healthy food from the home garden, my daughter gradually gained weight. This inspired my mother also to start a home garden,” said Iresha.

Chandrika Kumari is another beneficiary of the intervention from the Wanarawa area of Wilgamuwa. She sold the excess produce from her home garden and used the income to purchase spray cans and a hose pipe. She is just one of the many beneficiaries who have been able to earn a significant income by selling the excess production of their home gardens. This has contributed immensely towards the economic improvement of their households.

To learn more about the intervention and the findings of the study, read the research report through our website at adrasrilanka.org/nghis.

The ACCEND Project is implemented in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Government and with the generous funding of the European Union.

by Shenal Hettiarachch and Khayali John
I wish the best for ADRA and hope that it receives more funding and projects to support the needy in Sri Lanka.

I love working at ADRA because of its beautiful working atmosphere. Most of my colleagues are young and are people to whom I can relate. Everyone is treated equally at ADRA, and its organizational culture makes the workplace feel like home.

I wish the best for ADRA and hope that it receives more funding and projects to support the needy in Sri Lanka.

**NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS**

**A Face-lift for the Tinsin Tamil School**

ADRA concluded the Supporting Children in School (SCS) project, funded by the Czech Republic Development Cooperation, in December 2022. The project refurbished several school buildings, established essential sanitation facilities, and rendered equipment and material support to develop smart classrooms in the Tinsin Tamil School.

**EU funding Utilized to Raise Awareness and Provide Clean Water**

ADRA and Oxfam through their jointly implemented ACCEND project, donated electronic and IT equipment to support the expansion of Health Information Management Systems in Monaragala. Additionally, the project installed and handed over two water systems powered by solar energy in Lediyangala Primary School and Mūraka Divisional Hospital in the Wilgamuwa Division. The project is funded by the European Union.

**BRAVE Project Supports Vaccination Efforts of the Government**

The Building Resilience and Vaccine Awareness (BRAVE) project distributed personal protection (PP) kits in several vaccination centers of the Negombo and Minuwangoda areas of the Gampaha district to support the vaccination efforts of the government and to encourage people to get vaccinated. Additionally, awareness was raised regarding vaccination aftercare through brochures given with the PP kits.

The third phase of the Local Economic and Social Strengthening (LESS) project aims to effectively retain and integrate vulnerable groups such as youth, ex-combatants, and refugee returnees into society. The project is funded by the Australian Government’s Department of Home Affairs and is implemented with the support of ADRA India in the Vavuniya, Mannar, and Kilinochchi districts of Sri Lanka.

Since the first and the second phases of the project, ADRA has been working closely with relevant stakeholders to better support these vulnerable groups. Carrying forward, The LESS III project aims to create a lasting impact within the project’s operational districts through the improvement of the economic landscape and reintegration of refugee returnees and other vulnerable groups.

Through the project, beneficiaries are supported through strengthened Refugee Reintegration Networks (RRNs), while economic growth is supported through empowering family and local community economic systems.

In the last quarter of 2021, the project increased the capacity of the target groups, civil society organizations, and public stakeholders. The project has established a new RRN and several youth groups in the Mannar District as well. The newly established groups also have been linked with Divisional Secretaries and District Secretaries to create space for dialogue between the duty bearers and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) which will lead to better understanding and increased awareness among both parties.

Furthermore, the project has improved the capacity of local government administrative bodies and key stakeholders through various trainings, to effectively perform mandated duties. Among the trainings conducted are human resource improvement trainings, special capacity enhancement activities for the women’s and children’s section of the Divisional Secretariat offices, capacity building trainings for key government stake holders, and debt management trainings for the public sector and community leaders.

One of the other major interventions of the project is to support the livelihoods of selected beneficiaries. The project supports the beneficiaries to develop a business plan and then offers them business coaching to start a livelihood of their choice. In the latter quarter of 2021, the project provided livelihood support to 65 beneficiaries altogether.

by Devashri Peiris