

NUTRI-GARDEN INITIATIVE, RAJASTHAN

In a nutshell: Community nutrition gardens – promoting nutrition security and dietary diversity.

Nodal agency: Department of Women and Child Development in collaboration with MGNREGA and National Rural Livelihood Mission, Government of Rajasthan

An unbalanced diet and lack of food is directly linked to high rates of stunting, wasting, and death in children under five years of age. The Government of Rajasthan has been looking into multiple strategies and means to combat the critical problem of malnourishment amongst pregnant and lactating women and young children. It has implemented programmes for providing food security and ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food. However, there is a need to look at multiple strategies to combat the issue of food security.

Community and nutrition garden is one such innovative approach that can gear the community towards attaining food security, enhancing dietary diversity by providing micronutrients through ready and constant supply of fruits and vegetables sufficient to meet a family's demand. In a bid to address the challenge of malnutrition among children and to make better use of the vacant space on the premises of Anganwadi centres (AWCs), the 'nutri-garden' program was launched on a pilot basis in the district of Shri Ganganagar.

Taking cue from the nutri-garden initiative at Sri Ganganagar, the Secretary DWCD took the decision of development of nutri-garden in the AWCs across the State of Rajasthan in convergence with MGNREGA and NRLM.

This is an innovative, cost effective and sustainable approach for promoting nutrition security, dietary diversity, fulfilling the additional nutritional requirements, and reducing malnutrition. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic also posed a challenge for food to be readily available in remote areas of Rajasthan. The complete lockdown was a challenge that perpetuated already existing malnutrition in rural areas of Rajasthan.

Realizing the need of the hour the Secretary DWCD expedited the process of development of nutri-garden with the convergence with MGNREGA.

The collectors were notified about this initiative and urged to take forward the concept of nutri-garden in their respective area.

The program was scaled-up State-wise and it was decided that the kitchen gardens would have:

1. Trees like karonda, mehendi, lemons, oranges etc. which grazing animals generally don't consume, and will be used for line fencing.
2. Fruits – lemon, guava, banana, pomegranate, papaya, mango, amla etc.
3. Vegetables – Okra, gourd, tomato, chilly, radish, coriander, mint, onion, potato, pea, cucumber, spinach, fenugreek and other green leafy vegetables.

The concept and the entire process of developing nutri-gardens in the AWCs across the State of Rajasthan has been facilitated by UNICEF.

It is envisaged that successful nutri-garden project at AWCs would encourage the households to adopt the concept in their backyards to start cultivating nutritional varieties for domestic consumption that can include, spinach, potatoes, other green leafy vegetables. Anganwadi workers and beneficiaries would be trained for cultivation and on the significance of healthy food for undernourished children.

Impact

ICDS, a central government scheme, disbursed Rs 10,000 per nutri-garden and with the help of workers of MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), these gardens were set up at anganwadi centres across the state to grow vegetables and fruits conducive to the local weather conditions. In Banswara district, 149 nutri-gardens were constructed in Anganwadi centres due to which 70% of 300 malnourished children registered in these centres were able to fight malnutrition.



Nutri-garden In Rajasthan