

Nutrition, Health, Education & Overall Well Being

The outline of a road map in line with agenda 2030



Consolidation of partnership

(Report of Training Programme from 1st - 4th May 2024)



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Action Research: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
Operationalising programme related to
nutrition, health & overall well-being at Ashankur
30th April - 5th May 2024

Goal: Operationalising SDGs 1-5 at Ashankur in collaboration with the women's groups from Ashankur working area.



Active participation of Team-Ashankur at the training programme

This report details a six-day training initiative held at Ashankur, India. Conceptualized and led by Dr. Leena Gupta of HABITAT ECOLOGICAL TRUST, the program aimed to empower women with the knowledge and skills to leverage local biodiversity for improved nutrition, health, and overall well-being. Aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1-5, the initiative focused on women's empowerment, hunger eradication, good health and well-being, quality education, and gender equality.

Recognizing the potential of local biodiversity and traditional knowledge to address health and nutrition challenges, Dr. Leena envisioned equipping women with the scientific

understanding behind indigenous practices. This would foster confidence and leadership in promoting sustainable food systems within their communities.

Leveraging Local Resources for Improved Well-being:

The program emphasized the importance of utilizing readily available resources. Participants explored the nutritional benefits and diverse applications of various indigenous plants, millets, and wild edibles. They learned to integrate these ingredients into recipes, considering Ayurvedic principles for holistic well-being.

Overall Objective: Provide women from Ashankur working area with a scientific perspective to the relevance of the local biodiversity based on its historical application and use over centuries and embedded in Ayurveda (Life Science), traditional and local knowledge.

Objective 1: Operationalising a programme for Nutrition, Health and Overall well being.

Objective 2: Relevance of the above in giving shape to a programme for women's participation in ecological governance at gram sabha and landscape level.

Objective 3: Application in land use and education of children.

Objective 4: Exploring its relevance in the larger developmental agenda related to agenda 2030.

Building on Existing Knowledge: A Foundation for Sustainable Development

The in-depth training provided in the previous program established a valuable foundation for gathering baseline data on land use and regional biodiversity. This newfound appreciation for the richness of local resources empowered the women of Ashankur. They began to see the potential for an alternative development path, one where they hold greater control. With readily available ingredients and traditional knowledge at their fingertips, they can create a more sustainable and self-sufficient future for their community.

The detailed training program module outlined in Annexure 1 builds upon this initial success. During this first phase, we have covered approximately one-third of the planned curriculum. The remaining sessions will be delivered over the next year, allowing the women to solidify their understanding and begin implementing their learnings in practical ways.

Underlying Hypothesis:

Cooking as a Familiar Framework for Learning:

Because cooking is an essential part of their lives, women often find it easier to grasp abstract concepts like nutrition, health, and overall well-being through this familiar lens. This hands-on experience fosters confidence in their understanding of the scientific principles behind their everyday practices. As a result, they are better equipped to educate children about these concepts in a relatable way.

REPORT OF THE SIX DAYS PROCEEDINGS

Daily Program Highlights and Knowledge Sharing:

- **Day 1:** Preparations commenced with collecting and drying local plants for use in recipes and traditional remedies, fostering collaborative learning.
- **Day 2:** Dr. Leena's presentation titled "The Role of Local Biodiversity Resources & Traditional Knowledge Wisdom for Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty" emphasized the link between local foods, health, and the importance of reviving traditional knowledge. Practical sessions focused on incorporating Moringa leaves into various dishes, showcasing the program's emphasis on hands-on learning.
- **Day 3:** Participants learned to make Dant Manjan (tooth powder) using Neem, Babool, and Guava leaves, etc. along with Aloe Vera pickle and Hibiscus Sherbet, highlighting the use of local plants for health and wellness.
- **Day 4:** The focus shifted to the creation of natural products with face packs, hair oil, and Tutti Fruti, utilizing local ingredients.
- **Day 5:** The program explored millet-based breakfast options for children, emphasizing the importance of promoting healthy and local food choices from a young age.
- **Day 6:** A review session facilitated discussions on future actions, including women's participation in school meal programs, integrating local foods into primary healthcare practices, and involving children in documenting local biodiversity.

DAY ONE (30th April): Preparation and finalisation of the agenda:

Prior to the commencement of the training programme, there were interactions between Dr Leena Gupta the trainer and the women staff of Ashankur as to the kind of preparations needed for the programme. Among the things to be done was the collection and drying of leaves and bark that were to be used in the preparation of tooth powder (Dant Manjan) an item well appreciated during the October 2023 training programme.



Drying the bark of Neem and Babool and leaves of Neem and Jamun

In addition, a scan was made of the items available on Ashankur campus and purchases of local millets and other items not on the campus were made. It is to be noted that despite the focus being on local foods, the current reliance is still on the market as most of these items have gone out of practise from the daily production system dependant on the commercial orientation. Since some items had to dry, the training schedule was decided accordingly.

DAY 2 (1st May): Orientation talk and practical sessions.



Dr Leena providing background and orientation to the women

In the orientation talk, providing the background, Dr Leena Gupta presented the *Role of Local Biodiversity Resource & Traditional Knowledge Wisdom for Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty*. Explaining the relevance of Ayurveda (Life Sciences) as a way to scientifically consolidate local and traditional knowledge related to nutrition and medicine, she quoted from an ayurvedic text in Sanskrit she mentioned '*when diet is wrong, medicine is of no use and when diet is correct, there is no need for medicine*'.

Explaining the role and relevance of women in the process of creation and its embodiment in the ancient texts, she quoted another Sanskrit text '*Where women are respected God resides*'. She went on to explain the global movement towards *slow food* and the growing appreciation of the relevance of millets across the globe in the biannual programme at Turin where 160 countries participate every year. This year too the programme will be held there in October/November. Work being done in India was showcased by her there at the *Slow Food Festival* held there in 2022.



Dr Leena preparing Thepla, Mathri and Puri with Moringa leaves mixed in Ragi flour

The making of different items with Moringa leaves mixed in Rago flour included Thepla, Mathri and Puri. Also made on the first day was Khakra where Moringa leaf was added to improve the flavour. While in the first three dishes, Moringa powder was added, in Khakra small bits of leaves were added as powder would change the taste.



A participant tasting Khakra



Para and Mathri

DAY 3 (2nd May): The making of Dant Manjan, Aloe Vera and Hibiscus Sherbat



Powdered bark of Desi babool and Neem and powdered Guava leaves for Tooth Powder



Preparation of Pickle and sabzi from Aloe Vera leaves



Aloe vera being cooked in perforated dish, the salt and turmeric make Aloe vera change colour.



The making of Chhunda



Pre Preparation



Pre Preparations

Day 4 (3rd May) Face pack, hair oil and Tutti Fruti



Face Pack ingredients



Explaining the benefits of Hibiscus and the eight colour facepack mixture



Face pack ingredients



The making of Soaps from Multani Mitti and Kali Mitti



Natural Soap cakes



The making of Tutti Fruti from raw Papaya

Day 5 (4th May) Millet breakfast for children and more



Millet breakfast for children and the final product



The final display

Day 6 (5th May) Review and Documentation



A Child is born at Ashankur

The discussions during the training indicated the following

A three pronged programme at Ashankur and at village level

- a. Participation of the local women's group in the mid day meal programme of the Aanganwadi and school so that healthy local foods are promoted.
- b. Incorporation of principles of nutrition and health based on the local biodiversity into the operation of the primary health care centre at the village.
- c. Facilitation of children in the appreciation and documentation of the local biodiversity by the women's group as a first step in developing an outdoor lab for children to relate theory with practise.

The women have been encouraged to experiment with recipes in their home as a first step which will help them relate to issues related to sustainable land use and livelihood options that first aim at reduction of costs by self consumption.

Addressing Social Stigmas: The program fostered open discussions on social taboos surrounding puberty and the need for societal change to empower girls and women.

The training programme also provides concrete direction and motivation to the earlier exercise initiated in February related to the documentation of the biodiversity and land use practises in the villages.

Conclusion:

The Ashankur training initiative exemplifies the power of harnessing local knowledge and empowering women. By equipping them with the tools to utilize indigenous biodiversity for improved well-being, the program promotes not only nutrition and health but also gender equality and a more sustainable future. This training has laid the foundation for long-term change, empowering women to become leaders in shaping a healthier future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Annexure 1:

Healthy Recipe Making Training Module: Harnessing Local & Indigenous Biodiversity Ingredients

Dr Leena Gupta

HABITAT ECOLOGICAL TRUST

Module Overview:

This in-depth training program equips participants with the knowledge and skills to develop innovative and healthy recipes. We'll explore the vibrant world of local & indigenous ingredients, including:

- Medicinal plants
- Versatile millets
- Wild edibles

We'll integrate these ingredients into recipes, considering Ayurvedic principles for holistic well-being.

Module Structure:

Day 1: Harnessing Local & Indigenous Biodiversity

- **Environmental & Nutritional Benefits:**
Understand the importance of using local ingredients for sustainability, nutrition, and cultural preservation.
- **Biodiversity Inventory:**
Learn about the diverse range of local ingredients available, including underutilized fruits, vegetables, and indigenous grains.

Day 2: The Power of Millets

- **Millet Mastery:**
Gain in-depth knowledge of various millets, their health benefits, and superior nutritional profiles.
- **Culinary Diversity:**
Explore recipes using indigenous grains, legumes, spices, and vegetables.
- **Millet Integration:**
Learn to incorporate millets seamlessly into various dishes, expanding your culinary repertoire and dietary diversity.

Day 3: Medicinal Plants in the Kitchen

- **Safe & Responsible Use:**
Identify common medicinal plants native to the region, emphasizing safe and responsible harvesting practices.
- **Culinary Integration:**
Explore innovative techniques for incorporating medicinal plants into recipes for enhanced health benefits (e.g., ginger for digestion, turmeric for inflammation).

Day 4: Exploring Wild Edibles

- **Foraging Fundamentals:**
Learn how to identify nutritious wild edibles.
- **Sustainable Foraging:**
Emphasize responsible foraging practices to ensure the continued availability of these valuable resources.
- **Wild Edibles in Recipes:**
Delve into incorporating wild edibles into creative and delicious dishes.

Day 5: Ayurvedic Principles for Healthy Eating

- **The Science of Doshas:**
Introduce the Ayurvedic concept of doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) and how they influence individual dietary needs.
- **Dosha Balancing:**
Learn to create meals that promote balance and well-being based on your unique doshic constitution.
- **Spices & Herbs as Medicine:**
Explore the medicinal properties of spices and herbs commonly used in Ayurvedic cooking.

Day 6 & 7: Recipe Development for Specific Needs

- **Focus on Specific Needs:** Develop recipes tailored to various dietary requirements:
 - Newborn Baby (easily digestible and nutrient-rich foods like mashed kichadi)
 - Lactating Mother (recipes promoting milk production and recovery)
 - Diabetes (low-glycemic index recipes with vegetables, lentils, and fiber)
 - Blood Pressure (recipes using ingredients that naturally lower blood pressure)
 - Malnutrition (nutrient-dense and easy-to-digest recipes for restoring health)

Day 8: Recipe Development for Business

- **Market Analysis:**
Gain insights into current market trends and consumer demands within the healthy food sector.
- **Potential Recipes/Products:**
Brainstorm ideas for developing healthy and marketable food products (e.g., millet biscuits, cookies, snacks).

Day 9 & 10: Practical Sessions & Assessment

- **Culinary Experimentation:**
Throughout the module, practice hands-on recipe development using local and indigenous ingredients.
- **Group Discussions:**

Engage in lively discussions on recipe development, business strategies, and best practices for healthy and marketable food products.

- **Assessment:**

Your learning will be assessed through practical cooking demonstrations, recipe development tasks, written assignments, and group presentations.

Expected Outcomes:

By the end of this comprehensive training, you will be empowered to:

- Become a culinary innovator, utilizing local and indigenous ingredients.
- Create healthy and delicious dishes for yourself, your family, even a thriving food business.
- Develop recipes that cater to specific dietary needs.
- Understand and integrate Ayurvedic principles into your cooking.