

Mooligai Thottam (Herb Garden) CRUSADE/TAMWED

Report for 6 months ending December 10

Introduction

The Tamwed-funded Herb Garden project, implemented by CRUSADE with technical assistance from FRLHT (the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions), based in Bangalore, was launched in July 2010. The aim of the project is to enable local people in Tamil Nadu State in South India to reconnect with traditional methods of healthcare through education and creation of Home Herbal Gardens. It will relate to other forms of medicine and healthcare to enable the treatment of everyday ailments that do not require advanced medical intervention.

This project will support rural families which would otherwise find it difficult to pay for healthcare treatment as well as revitalising knowledge about the use of herbal medicines in a safe and effective way for everyday ailments.

This two year project will create two nurseries and 220 herbal gardens in CRUSADE's project villages.

Project Orientation

Ten project staff and ten Health workers and coordinators were given orientation on the project by the FRLHT team in June 2010. Seven local traditional healers also attended the day-long session facilitated by Mr. Harirama Moorthy from FRLHT. He explained the overall objectives and the plans of the project while the traditional healers shared their treatment methods using herbs. The resource person mentioned that the project aims at early treatment of simple diseases with minimum expense. The staff and health workers were asked to identify suitable Women's Self Help Group (SHG) members for developing home herb gardens.



Identifying herbal medicine plants during a training session.

Baseline Survey and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Training on conducting a baseline survey and PRA for CRUSADE staff and Health workers was conducted by FRLHT team in August 2010. The baseline survey focused on people's knowledge of traditional healing, prevalent diseases, and aspects and expense of treatment. The questionnaire for the baseline survey was finalised in consultation with FRLHT. The PRA training was conducted in a village for replication later by the staff and volunteers.

In all, 495 households were covered by the baseline survey which demonstrated which herbs are being used for the treatment of minor ailments.

Following the baseline survey, PRAs were conducted in 17 Panchayat villages where diseases were listed and those that were highly prevalent, those that affected women and those that needed expensive treatment were prioritised. Participants were sent to the field to identify and collect the herbs known to them and to present the medicinal properties and methods of treatment. The traditional healers in the area were asked to attend the PRA sessions to share their traditional treatment practices for different diseases.

On average, 45-50 women participated in PRA sessions and listed 50-55 diseases. About 10-15 diseases were prioritised on the basis of grading and around 20 plants were identified by the participants along with uses of these plants. The top ten prioritised diseases are leucorrhoea, common fever, common cold and cough, menstrual disorders, jaundice, diarrhoea, anaemia, knee joint pain, piles, and ear ache. Some of the commonly listed out herbal plants are keezhanelli (*Phyllanthus amarus* Stonebreaker), shembaruthi (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* Hibiscus), karpooravalli (*Coleus aromaticus* All-Purpose herb, Five Seasons Herb, Mother of Herbs), thulasi (*Ocimum sanctum* Holy or sacred basil), nochi (*Vitex negundo* five-leaved chaste tree), ammanpacharisi (*Euphorbia Hirta* asthma weed/snake weed), sotrukatrzhai (*Aloe vera* Aloe vera), vepilai (*Wrightia tinctoria* Pala indigo plant or dyers's oleander), musumusukai (*Mukia maderaspatana* Madras Pea Pumpkin), mudakaruthan (*Cardiospermum halicacabum* Balloon Vine or Love in a Puff) and thuthuvalai (*Solanum trilobatum* Purple-Fruited Pea Eggplant).

Exposure Visit

CRUSADE staff and volunteers (21) went for an exposure visit to LEAD, an NGO based in Trichy district and FRLHT in Bangalore. The visit helped them to have a better understanding of the concept of home herb gardening and to gain more knowledge about the identification of herbal plants and their uses in primary health care.

Documentation of Local Health Traditions

Documentation of herbal treatments practiced by local traditional healers for the prioritised diseases (using information from the PRA) was the next step in this project. A One day training session on documentation was facilitated by Mr.Harirama Moorthy of FRLHT in October for CRUSADE field staff and health volunteers in the presence of some of the traditional healers. The format for documenting the treatment practiced by traditional diseases was explained to participants. Each staff and volunteer was asked to document treatment process of five diseases; giving priority to five different prioritised diseases. On the whole 100 such documentations were completed by the end of October.

Commencement of Demonstration Garden

Demonstration gardens were established in Pudupakkam and Merattur at the beginning of the project in August 2010. At present there are about 30 varieties of indigenous herbal plants in the gardens. These are open to the public which lead to increased knowledge about indigenous flora by local people.



The herbal nursery garden in Pudupakkam

Nursery training at FRLHT

The project manager and the gardeners from CRUSADE were sent to FRLHT, Bangalore for one day hands-on experience of establishing a herbal nursery. Various techniques in propagating herbal plants were learned during the training.

Establishment of Nursery

A herbal nursery was established in Pudupakkam in November 2010. Presently, the Nursery has 12 beds with 20-25 varieties of herbal plants. It is planned to have 500-1000 saplings of each variety for distribution to home herb garden practitioners.

Training the Trainers (TOT)

The first TOT session on home herbal gardening focused on two prioritised diseases: 1. common cold, cough and fever and; 2. leucorrhoea This was conducted in November at Pudupakkam and facilitated by Subananthan, a traditional healer from Madurai. He explained the symptoms and treatment of these diseases using the herbal plants available in the nursery. All field staff also had hands-on experience of propagation methods through shramdhan (gift of labour) work at the nursery.

Jothi Ramalingam, revised Diana Lee Jan 11