

Other Contributions (donors) <i>(if applicable)</i>	
TOTAL:	xxxx
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.	
Evaluation Completed	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: 31.12.2023	
Evaluation Report - Attached	
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Expected Financial Closure date ⁸ :	Xxxx
Report Submitted By	
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⁸ Financial Closure requires the return of unspent balances and submission of the [Certified Final Financial Statement and Report](#).

List of Abbreviations

DOA	Department of Agriculture
ESG	Entrepreneurial School Garden
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
IDDS	Individual Dietary Diversity Score
NSMP	National School Meals Programme
WFP	World Food Programme
UN	United Nations
ToT	Training of Trainers

FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT FORMAT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to Sri Lanka facing one of the worst multidimensional crises since independence, the FAO, with funding from the Government of Australia, commenced a Food Security Initiative to strengthen agriculture production and food security of vulnerable farmers through the Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) program in Mullaitivu, Monaragala, and Badulla Districts. and the Entrepreneurial School Gardens (ESG) program in Uva, Central and Northern Provinces

The GAP program assisted farmers with a smooth transition toward Good Agricultural Practices. All the small-holder farmers were adopting GAP in targeted districts. The Project trained 95 agriculture extension officers over the last 18 months. The Project supported to strengthen market linkages and 317 farmers were linked with buyers. The Project managed to link farmer groups in Mullaitivu with Cargills Ceylon PLC. The Food Consumption Score (FCS) of the farmer households have increased by 3% compared to the baseline.

The ESG program established 400 gardens under Phase I and Phase II of the Project with minor infrastructure. In total, 311 schools established links with buyers to sell the produce from school gardens. 103 officials representing Provincial Department of Education and Provincial Department of Agriculture and 505 teachers were trained by the Project on ESG concept. In addition, more than 900 officers, from Provincial Department of Education, Provincial Department of Agriculture, Provincial Department of Health and Provincial Department of Indigenous Medicine, Officials from the Uva Provincial Council principals from three provinces were made aware of the implementation process of the ESG concept. With the training of 505 teachers, the ESG program capacitated 480 schools to provide nutrition counseling. The program contributed to improving the food and nutrition security of school children by promoting healthy eating practices. The program stimulated income-generation initiatives within the school by introducing health and nutritional concepts, entrepreneurial agricultural practices including basic agricultural and environmental concepts. It was also found that the initiative has a ripple effect on the families of school children. As a result, the High IDDS of school children has improved by 12%, from 76% to 88% compared to the baseline.

Although there were challenges in the procurement process, awareness-raising, and stakeholder engagement at the beginning, the impacts were not significant.

The Project addressed the felt needs of vulnerable farmers, including agricultural production challenges, issues with market linkages, and household food security issues which contributed to building resilience against future shocks. The efficiency of the FAO country team and coordination with the stakeholders were the key factors in the successful delivery of planned interventions.

To mitigate the impact of this multifaceted crisis, WFP, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and its cooperating partner, Scaling Up Nutrition People's Forum (SUNPF), aimed to leverage existing systems in place. Moreover, the Divisional Secretariat (DS) facilitated sensitization training with support from the Health Promotion Bureau of the Ministry of Health.

Training sessions were conducted for 570 smallholder farmers and 4,225 Samurdhi households to promote awareness of nutrition, gender, cash management, and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC). Alongside these training sessions, beneficiaries received cash assistance to enhance their resilience and enable them to bounce back from economic shocks.

I. Purpose

The Project has two components, Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) program and the Entrepreneurial School Gardens (ESG) program. The GAP program aims to safeguard vulnerable smallholder farmers through increased agriculture production and market linkages, whilst supporting food security in households. Entrepreneurial School Gardens (ESG) program intends to promote diverse and healthy eating habits through a better understanding of food production, preparation, and nutrition, the program also aims to encourage students to apply entrepreneurial thinking to agriculture.

Key Results of the Project

Outcome

Vulnerable communities and smallholder farmers are food secure, have strengthened livelihoods, and are resilient to shocks and stresses all year round; and vulnerable school children have access to meals through the National School Meals Program (NSMP).

Outputs

Output 1.1: Smallholder farmers have increased knowledge of the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

Output 1.2: Government agriculture extension officers have increased knowledge on the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

Output 1.3: Market linkages are strengthened between smallholder farmers and retailers.

Output 1.4: Cash transfers provided to 570 smallholder farmers to address immediate food and nutrition needs, during the transition period of GAP.

Output 1.8: Entrepreneurial school garden guidelines and methodology to the approach.

Output 1.9: Entrepreneurial gardens established with minor infrastructure (minor setup structures) and initiated in schools.

Output 1.10: Income source mechanism and context for selling produce from school gardens established.

Output 1.11: Training of Trainers (ToT) for area-based Regional Department of Health Services (RDHS,) extension services, agriculture instructors, and zonal education officers.

Output 1.12: Integrate nutrition counseling using the FBDGs and other material through a mechanism to institutionalize and monitor the approach.

II. Assessment of Program Results

Outcome: Vulnerable communities and smallholder farmers are food secure, have strengthened livelihoods, and are resilient to shocks and stresses all year round; and vulnerable school children have access to meals through the National School Meals Program (NSMP).

Outcome level results were assessed through two indicators for the two key components in the project.

The Food Consumption Score was used as the indicator to assess the outcome of the GAP Programme. The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a comprehensive indicator employed to evaluate household food security by measuring the diversity and frequency of food groups consumed. According to the Endline Survey of the GAP programme, the Food Consumption Score (FCS) of the farmer households has increased by 3% compared to the baseline.

The Individual Dietary Diversity Score was used as the indicator to assess the outcome of ESG programme. The Individual Dietary Diversity Score (IDDS) serves as a parameter to evaluate the nutritional diversity of an individual's diet by counting the number of different food groups consumed over a reference period. As per the Endline Survey of the ESG program, IDDS of school children has improved by 12% compared to the baseline. (Baseline; Low 2% | Medium 22% | High 76% || Endline; Low 1% | Medium 11% | High 88%).

Outputs

Output 1.1: Smallholder farmers have increased knowledge of the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

- 645 farmers in Phase I & II were trained under the Project to implement Good Agriculture Practices (GAP). The farmers are trained using the Farmer Field School (FFS) by Agriculture Extension Officers.
- Smallholder farmers have increased knowledge of the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) from 12% to 74% compared to the baseline. The number of farmers who obtained GAP certificates have increased from 2% to 28.6% according to the Endline Study.
- The installation of the remaining drip irrigation systems in the fields of the selected farmers, and delivery of G.I pipes, plastic mulch, and insect-proof nets was completed.

Output 1.2: Government agriculture extension officers have increased knowledge on the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

- 95 Agriculture Extension Officers were trained to conduct Farmer Field Schools (FFS) on GAP via a ToT (Training of Trainers) Program during the period under review.

Output 1.3: Market linkages are strengthened between smallholder farmers and retailers.

- The Project supported 317 farmers during the period under review to establish links with buyers to sell their produce.
- Selected farmer groups have been connected with the Cargills Food City Market Chain to sell their products.

Output 1.4: Cash transfers provided to 570 smallholder farmers to address immediate food and nutrition needs, during the transition period of GAP.

- All together 645 of unconditional cash grants of LKR 45,000 were given to selected farmers respectively 570 from WFP and 75 from FAO. WFP also provided awareness-raising sessions to the additional 75 farmers.
- The cash-based assistance was provided during the transition period of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). Priority was given to women-headed households or women entrepreneurs, farmers who were keen to follow the GAP certification process, and farmers who had already registered under the supply chain of supermarkets or exporters. The selection criteria were communicated to the community through FAO.
- WFP collaborated with cooperating partner Scaling Up Nutrition People's Forum (SUNPF) to conduct in-person awareness raising sessions on nutrition, gender, domestic cash management and Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC).

Output 1.5: Direct purchase and distribution of rice for the school meal programme

- WFP supported the National School meal program by purchasing and distributing 455 MT of rice.

Output 1.6: Primary school-aged children receive nutritious meals

- The National School Meal Program is continuing to provide nutritious meals to one million students with the support of the Government.

Output 1.7: Food security status assessed among rural, urban, and estate and vulnerable groups of Sri Lanka in collaboration with Government partners

- WFP conducted two specialized assessments on the effects of recent policy changes on agricultural production and farming households and the impact of price hikes on household food security in collaboration with the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI) and the Ministry of Agriculture. Valuable insights were obtained from these assessments, and five policy briefs have been developed based on the findings.
- Additionally, an ongoing feasibility study is being conducted on the establishment of a food security surveillance system in DCS. The draft report has been developed in consultation with DCS, and efforts are underway to finalize the report and conduct a consultation workshop, which is expected to be completed in April 2023.
- Furthermore, a rapid food security assessment was conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) among 1500 households in collaboration with Johan Hopkins University and Wayamba University. The results were finalized and the report was published in 2023.
- The National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey in Sri Lanka was completed in 2022 by Medical Research Institute and the report was published.

Output 1.8: 4,225 Shock-responsive social protection beneficiaries supported with cash assistance and nutrition awareness

- Cash assistance was provided to 4,715 Samurdhi households (18,860 beneficiaries, 1,960 more than initially planned) to address increasing vulnerabilities, inequality, and poverty and enhance individuals' resilience to economic shocks. The cash assistance came as a supplement to Samurdhi monthly social assistance. Households with pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, households with children under 5 and households with people with disabilities and chronic illnesses were carefully integrated into the selection process. The programme took place in Monaragala and Mullaitivu. Prior to receiving cash, targeted beneficiaries received training on nutrition, gender, domestic cash management and Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) to promote opportunities and livelihoods in short and medium terms.
- Out of the 4,715 households reached, 49 percent were women, 24 percent were households with pregnant and nursing women at the time of registration, 41 percent of households had children under 5, 24 percent of households persons with disabilities and 9 percent have members with chronic illnesses.

Output 1.8: Entrepreneurial school garden guidelines and methodology to the approach.

- Guidelines, technical manuals, and curriculums for the ESG program were developed in collaboration with technical experts from relevant fields.

Output 1.9: Entrepreneurial gardens established with minor infrastructure (minor setup structures) and initiated in schools.

- An additional 200 schools were enrolled in the second phase of the Program.
- Initial cash grants of LKR 25,000 were given to 400 schools and the final cash grant of LKR 150,000 was given to 200 schools during the period under review.

Output 1.10: Income source mechanism and context for selling produce from school gardens were established.

- 200 have established marketing mechanisms to link with buyers in Phase II to sell the agricultural products of entrepreneurial gardens.

Output 1.11: Training of Trainers (ToT) for area-based Regional Department of Health Services (RDHS,) extension services, agriculture instructors, and zonal education officers.

- 103 officials representing Provincial Department of Education and Provincial Department of Agriculture were trained under the ToT program and additionally 505 school teachers were trained

Output 1.12: Integrate nutrition counseling using the FBDGs and other material through a mechanism to institutionalize and monitor the approach.

- 480 schools have developed the capacity to provide nutrition counselling by training 505 school teachers representing these schools.

Changes from the Original Proposal

Due to the post-COVID impacts and economic crisis in the latter part of 2021 and early 2022, some of the project activities were delayed. Therefore, the FAO requested an extension up to 31st December 2023. The FAO also requested for reallocation of funds (US\$ 188,900) from other budget lines for scaling up some of the selected project activities on 17th April 2023 which was not in the original proposal. The proposed activities are given below:

Key Outputs	Activities	Proposed Reallocation (USD)
1.1	75 additional farmers provided with - Technical kits - Farmer Field School (FFS) training	78,950
1.4	- Cash Assistance	13,450
1.10	200 additional schools provided with financial assistance for the Entrepreneurial School Garden program	77,000
Overall Project	Development of knowledge products (including demonstration videos, human interest stories, and other visibility items)	16,000
	Impact Assessment	3,500
TOTAL		188,900

Qualitative assessment:

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the World Food Program (WFP) initiated the project with funding from the Government of Australia. The main implementation partners of the Project are the Ministry of Agriculture, including the Provincial Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agrarian Development, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health

The Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and the establishment of farmer field schools for agricultural knowledge and practices helped to improve the knowledge and practices of smallholder farmers. Farmers appreciated the facilitation of market access for farmers by establishing relationships with Cargills, a national supermarket chain. Farmers were satisfied with the training provided by the Project with the support of the Department of Agrarian Development.

570 farmers acquired GAP entry level certificate; 28.6% of the trained farmers effectively secured full GAP certification based on their level of attainment. The GAP-certified farmer gets a higher price when they sell their products to Cargills.

School teachers stated that the Entrepreneurial School Garden (ESG) Program has played a key role in nurturing entrepreneurial skills among students. The concept of agricultural clubs combining practical skills with academic learning have contributed to improved agricultural practices in schools and also promoted healthier lifestyles among students.

Students from Siyambalanduwa, Monaragala, through focus group discussions, shared their experiences of starting home gardens. They used the produce for household consumption, sold any excess, and some even earned money to purchase school items.

Teachers noted an increase in parental support for home gardens and improved attendance and involvement in school vegetable gardens. The project has also leveraged technology, using platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and agricultural apps to promote modern agricultural practices.

Most of the stakeholders and the FAO staff highlighted the impact of the relationships among stakeholders and the coordination mechanism on the achievement of results.

WFP provided cash assistance to vulnerable DSD households and smallholder farmers to address immediate food and nutrition needs, as well as equipping beneficiaries with better knowledge of nutrition, gender, and cash management to promote behavioral change. WFP strongly collaborated to include a nutrition and gender-sensitive lens, thereby ensuring cross-functionality of the programme which is key to improving qualitative and sustainable impacts. Putting an emphasis on targeting women is expected to increase their financial inclusion and knowledge of nutrition and household cash management.

The partnership between WFP and FAO fostered the complementarity of cash assistance. The Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) training provided by FAO offered tools to beneficiaries to manage risks more effectively and improve their crop productivity, while the cash assistance responded to their immediate needs and helped strengthened Samurdhi social protection mechanism. The cooperation with SUNPF was essential in sensitizing government officials and receiving their support to conduct awareness-raising sessions and timely cash delivery.

Using the **Programme Results Framework from the Project Document / AWP**s - provide details of the achievement of indicators at both the output and outcome level in the table below. Where it has not been possible to collect data on indicators, clear explanation should be given explaining why.

Description	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<p>Outcome 1⁹ Vulnerable communities and smallholder farmers are food secure, have strengthened livelihoods, and are resilient to shocks and stresses all year round; and vulnerable school children have access to meals through the National School Meals Program (NSMP).</p> <p>Indicator 1: The percentage increase in High IDDS of students in targeted schools. Baseline: Low 2% Medium 22% High 76% Planned Target: 10%</p> <p>Indicator 2: The percentage increase in FCS of the farmer households in targeted districts Baseline: (Borderline - 9.3%, Acceptable - 90.7%) Planned Target: 10%</p>	<p>12% (Endline Results: Low 1% Medium 11% High 88%)</p> <p>3% (Borderline - 6.3% Acceptable - 93.7%)</p>	<p>90.7% of Farmer Households had an acceptable FCS at the Baseline stage.</p>	<p>Baseline and End-line studies.</p> <p>Baseline and End-line studies.</p>
<p>Output 1.1 Smallholder farmers have increased knowledge of the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GA).</p> <p>Indicator 1.1.1: Number of small-holder farmers adopting GAP in targeted districts. Planned Target: 570 smallholder farmers (30% - 40% female-headed households and female entrepreneurs)</p>	<p>645 (24% Women)</p>		<p>Baseline and End-line study reports.</p>
<p>Output 1.2 Government agriculture extension officers have Increased knowledge on the use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).</p> <p>Indicator 1.2.1 The percentage of agriculture extension officers who have improved technical capacity to deliver GAP advisory services and technology packages.</p>	<p>100% (Women 36%)</p>		<p>Government-approved list of GAP-trained government agriculture extension officers.</p>

⁹ Note: Outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets should be as outlined in the Project Document so that you report on your actual achievements against planned targets. Add rows as required for Outcome 2, 3 etc.

<p>Indicator 1.2.2 The number of agriculture extension officers are trained in GAP. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 95</p>	<p>95 (Women 34)</p>		<p>Training Records.</p>
<p>Output 1.3 Market linkages are strengthened between smallholder farmers and retailers. Indicator 1.3.1 Farmers establish links with buyers to sell their produce. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 300</p>	<p>317</p>		<p>List of formal/informal agreements between buyers and farmers.</p>
<p>Output 1.4 Cash transfers provided to 570 smallholder farmers to address immediate food and nutrition needs, during the transition period of GAP. Indicator 1.4.1 The number of small-holder farmers supported through cash assistance. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 570</p> <p>Indicator 1.4.2 # of households reached through gender and nutrition promotion. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 570</p>	<p>645 (75 under FAO)</p>	<p>Received additional funds to conduct Phase II of the project.</p>	<p>Distribution and finance records. Post-distribution monitoring report.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.4.2 # of households reached through gender and nutrition promotion. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 570</p>	<p>645 (75 under FAO)</p>	<p>Received additional funds to conduct Phase II of the project</p>	<p>Training Records</p>
<p>Output 1.5: Direct purchase and distribution of rice for the school meal programme Indicator 1.5.1: # MT of rice distributed to School Meals Programme Baseline: 0 Planned target: 455 MT of rice</p>	<p>455 MT of rice was procured and distributed to 7917 schools</p>		<p>Procurement records</p>
<p>Output 1.6: Primary school aged children receive nutritious meals Indicator 1.6.1: # of primary school aged children receiving food through NSMP Baseline: 0</p>	<p>160,000 primary school children received school meals through the National School Meals Programme</p>		<p>Ministry of Education Records</p>

<p>Target: 160,000 vulnerable primary school aged children have access to nutritious food through NSMP</p>			
<p>Output 1.7: Food security status assessed among rural, urban, and estate and vulnerable groups of Sri Lanka in collaboration with Government partners</p> <p>Indicator 1.7.1: # of assessments conducted</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Targets: 1 rapid assessment 1 specialized food security assessment 1 feasibility study for a national food security surveillance system 1 nutrition survey</p>	<p>Two specialized assessments were conducted in collaboration HARTI. Five policy briefs have been developed.</p> <p>A feasibility study was conducted on the establishment of a food security surveillance system in DCS.</p> <p>A rapid food security assessment was conducted among 1500 households in collaboration with Johan Hopkinson University and Wayamba University using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI).</p> <p>The National Nutrition and Micronutrient Survey was completed in 2022 by Medical Research Institute and the draft report is ready.</p>		
<p>Output 1.8: 4,225 Shock-responsive social protection beneficiaries supported with cash assistance and nutrition awareness</p> <p>Indicator 1.8.1: # of beneficiaries that receive CBT (disaggregated by vulnerable groups, including Pregnant and nursing mothers (PNM) Households with Children Under Five and Households with Persons</p>	<p>4,715 Samurdhi HHs (additional 490 HHs compared to initial target) received cash assistance and awareness raising sessions</p>	<p>WFP could allocate additional funding to assist more HHs than planned</p>	<p>Training records and partner reports</p>

with Disability) # of households that receive gender and nutrition promotion Baseline:0 Target: 4,225 Samurdhi HHs.			
Output 1.8 Entrepreneurial school garden guidelines and methodology to the approach. Indicator 1.8.1 A comprehensive and easy to use guidelines produced on the approach. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 1	1	NA	Approved Guidelines (document)
Output 1.9 Entrepreneurial gardens established with minor infrastructure (minor setup structures) and initiated in schools. Indicator 1.9.1 The percentage of schools have adopted entrepreneurial gardens. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 200	400 School (200%)	Received additional funds to conduct Phase II of the project.	Formal grant agreements with each school administration with FAO.
Output 1.10 Income source mechanism and context for selling produce from school gardens established. Indicator 1.10.1. The percentage of schools establish links with buyers to sell the agricultural products of entrepreneurial gardens. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 200	200 Schools (100%)		Digital platform of ESG – List of schools established marketing mechanisms. Approved document on schools completed the basic criteria including the marketing mechanisms.
Output 1.11 Training of Trainers (ToT) for area-based Regional Department of Health Services (RDHS,) extension services, agriculture instructors, and zonal education officers. Indicator 1.11.1 The number of technical persons trained under ToT activities. Baseline: 0 Planned Target: NA	103	The officers for the ToT were identified based on the recommendation of the key stakeholders.	Attendance Records

Commented [YS1]: To FAO focal point: This should be Output 1.9

<p>Output 1.12 Integrate nutrition counseling using the FBDGs and other material through a mechanism to institutionalize and monitor the approach.</p> <p>Indicator 1.12.1 Additional schools that have the capacity to provide nutrition counseling.</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: 500</p>	<p>480 Schools (505 School Teachers) -</p>		<p>Attendance Sheet Reports generated by the Provincial Secretariats of Uva, Central & Northern Provinces</p>
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iii) Evaluation, Best Practices, and Lessons Learned

The following assessments and evaluations were conducted during the Project duration.

1. Baseline Data Collection for the Program of Promoting Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) among Farmers in Monaragala, Badulla, and Mullaitivu Districts.
2. Baseline Survey of the Entrepreneurial School Garden (ESG) Program in Uva, Central and Northern Provinces.
3. Post-Distribution Monitoring Report
4. End-line Survey of the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Program.
5. End-line Survey of the Entrepreneurial School Garden (ESG) Program.
6. Evaluation of the FAO Emergency Response to the Economic and Food Crisis in Sri Lanka.

The Project/s were evaluated under the 'Evaluation of the FAO Emergency Response to the Economic and Food Crisis'. The evaluation used a mixed approach and consulted a representative sample of stakeholders representing both the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Program and the Entrepreneurial School Gardens (ESG) Program. Based on the Evaluation and the Endline Surveys, the following were found;

Key Findings:

- The Project as an integral part of the FAO's emergency response directly addressed the critical issues faced by Sri Lanka, including agricultural production challenges, issues with market linkages, and household food security issues.
- The FAO's interventions were relevant in addressing the severe economic hardships and food security challenges faced by households; the interventions were tailored to the felt needs of vulnerable communities such as smallholder farmers, and families with malnourished children.
- The provision of technical guidance, knowledge, and financial support was crucial in enabling farmers to overcome the immediate challenges posed by the crisis but also contributed to building resilience against future shocks, including climate-related challenges.
- The organization's technical expertise in emergency response and operational efficiency were key factors in the successful and coordinated delivery of its interventions.
- The project interventions were significant in addressing the alarming rates of malnutrition, especially among children.
- The Food Consumption Score (FCS) of the farmer households has increased by 3% compared to the baseline.
- Compared to the situation at the baseline survey, there is an improvement in healthy eating among children. The High IDDS of school children has improved by 12% from 76% to 88%.

Key Recommendations:

1. Quality Assurance in Certification: Help support and establish/strengthen independent mechanisms for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and seed certification to ensure sustained quality in agricultural products.
2. Education for Sustainable Development: Continue the Farmer Business Schools (FBS) and Entrepreneurial School Gardens (ESGs) to foster education in sustainable development and cultivate future generations of environmentally-conscious citizens.
3. Staff Capacity: Implement an annual refresher training program, for country staff on emergency response.
4. Nutrition and Food Security: Consolidate the food supplements program and scale up the experience throughout the country.
5. Collaborations: Strengthen collaborations with the World Food Program (WFP) and local food canteen programs to enhance nutrition security, particularly in the poorest, vulnerable communities.

6. Concentrate on conducting more door-to-door awareness-raising sessions in collaboration with cooperating/implementing partners to alleviate the burden on households (mainly female-headed, persons with disabilities, etc.)

Challenges

- There were challenges in the procurement process. Due to the economic crisis and associated factors such as unpredictable market supplies, import issues, and price fluctuation, sourcing suppliers were delayed. Some of the tenders were cancelled and retendered.
- The UN procurement process is rigid and takes a considerable time which is not favourable in the event of an emergency.
- There were delays in receiving goods. Some of the planned activities for the *Yala* season were postponed to the *Maha* season.
- The Project experienced start-up delays as there was a need for a proposer awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement at the beginning of the Project due to the higher number of stakeholders engaged at different levels and attached to different organizations.
- The impacts of climate change, particularly elevated temperatures, led to the deterioration of plastic mulches, prompting the need for replacement using funds from FAO's internal resources.

Key Lessons learned

- Stakeholder Engagement: The Project showcased an excellent model of inclusive stakeholder engagement. The FAO and the Project team actively collaborated with government bodies at national and regional levels, farming communities, school communities, and the private sector.

In future interventions, it is important to build strong networks and collaboration mechanisms with a diverse range of stakeholders in the public sector, private sector, community members from the planning stage and during the execution of interventions.

- The FAO's emergency response program in Sri Lanka was well-informed by a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the crisis. For future interventions, there is a need for a deep understanding of crises, recognizing that their causes and effects are often interlinked and require a response that is both diverse and integrated. It is not enough to address a single aspect of the crisis; the response must be holistic, addressing relevant contributing factors and their interrelations.
- The action-oriented events organized at the grassroots level facilitated the active engagement from all stakeholders. The acknowledgment of their contributions also created a positive engagement towards the accomplishment of the projects 'overall objectives.
- Attending the awareness-raising sessions was challenging for some of the beneficiaries, as it involved travel costs, having to miss work or leaving the kids at home. For future interventions, the projects must aim to conduct more door-to-door awareness-raising sessions or provide an allowance to selected beneficiaries to attend the sessions.

iv) A Specific Stories

CASE STUDY OF SCHOOL TEACHERS AT KN/VIVEKANANTHA VIDYALAYAM VIDYALAYAM

“We market the produce harvested in the garden to parents and surrounding communities and the money we earn is used to maintain the garden”

Teacher in charge of Agriculture.

Introduction:

'Entrepreneurial School Gardening' project was Initiated in the school to improve agricultural skills and knowledge among students to enable them to start their home gardens in their homes.

Under this project, many activities have been conducted in the school such as vegetables, green leaves and fruit cultivation, compost production, and preparation of Azolla for livestock. With the support of the MOH, PHI, and other health authorities BMI of all students were measured to obtain details of their nutritional status (underweight and overweight). Parents were called and educate about their children's nutritional status.

Problem/Challenge Faced:

A few years ago, parents did not give the children home-cooked food with nutritional value to bring to school. They used to send bakery products. Most parents do not have the income to feed their children with nutritious food. The teachers regularly observed that nutritional levels among children were very low, and the food/meals they bring from home are not a balanced diet.

The BMI and medical reports the teachers' received before the program indicated poor nutritional status. Therefore, the teachers' decided to start some programs to improve the nutritional status of children and provide them with nutritious food at school.

At the beginning, a program called 'Ayyamid Un', which means 'Share before eating', was started. A donor sponsored this initiative and provided food to students in the primary school. Students brought vegetables and rice from their homes and put it in a box (meal box). The food was cooked at school and distributed to students who did not bring food and who had difficulty getting a meal from home.

Subsequently, cultivation was started in the school garden with the support of parents, teachers, and students. The objective was to produce something from the garden for food, a concept that was brought up by the former principal. The current principal is taking this concept forward. The teachers pointed out the following:

Project Interventions:

A circular was received from the Department of Education about the ESG project. The teachers were asked to start a school-based garden to develop entrepreneurial skills and knowledge of students, support nutrition issues and address food security issues at the household level.

Later, the FAO Officials and Officers for the Provincial Department of Education and Agriculture visited the school, held discussions, and provided the teachers with more information about the activities. This was followed by three days of training on home gardening. The training program had sessions on organic cultivation, crops and methods, composting, and especially nutrition issues and measuring BMI. After attending the training, students were selected and trained in school. The project commenced, the BMI of the entire student population in school was measured, and their nutritional status analysed.

The school garden program commenced a long time ago. However, after receiving the support of the FAO and other organisations, project was expanded, the support to this praiseworthy project is also received through the Department of Agriculture.

Project Implementation:

Students especially from Grades 06-11 come to work in the school garden before school starts. These students are fully engaged in a practical session during the absence of the designated teacher and also during the agriculture lesson. A notable feature is that children who leave school after passing the GCE Ordinary Level examination come to school and work in the garden.

There is no difference between boys and girls in the involvement in this project. They are both involved equally and share responsibility. Machines are not used to prepare the land for cultivation. Students do this work manually.

“We do not force children to work in the garden; they volunteer. Especially students who are at home after completing O/L support the work in the garden,” said a teacher.

Results:

The results obtained thus far are very commendable. It bears testimony to the commitment of the principal, teachers, parents and students in commencing and developing a praiseworthy project, which is a lifelong benefit, if it is applied to their families at present and after leaving school.

Value-added food and juices using 'Gotukola and Kurakkan' are made. Parents also come to the school and support the work in the garden while their children study in extra classes. “We practice natural pest control liquid made from Chili, Onion, Turmeric, and Garlic, Bio-fencing, and integrating agriculture like biogas, Azolla, vermicomposting, and compost production” was an interesting comment by the teachers.

Due to food insecurity, the meals that were previously provided to children were taken home to their siblings. However, now, most of the children eat at school. A WFP supported school meal program is also being implemented. All the meals are cooked in the school canteen, with vegetables from the school garden.

Surplus vegetables are exchanged at the nearest shop to buy food that is not available at school, such as rice and eggs. Costs, other expenses and savings are calculated every two weeks.

“We have the necessary capacity within the school to continue the project. However, we need some support such as reward, praise, and constant monitoring to measure achievement that emphasizes the motivation of teachers and students to engage in such activities. Also, we have all the necessary skills and knowledge to sustain the project,” said the teachers.

Training is another important area that both the children and parents received. It was interesting to note the teachers' comment that *“It is better to educate the students first and then educate the parents because we have previous experience in doing so. Children can make changes in their homes by working with their parents”*.

The teachers proudly stated that “we have received the Presidential Award twice for Environmental Protection and School-Based Nutrition Garden and the Provincial Award for School Environmental Protection five times”. This is an achievement par excellence!

Lessons Learned

- Parents' involvement in the school garden to promote home gardens in HHs for food security and additional income is very important.

Conclusion

The Project was fueled with the FAO support and the interest of the principal and teachers. As a result of a successful project, parents, alumni, well-wishers and organisations have come forward to help them. This augurs well for the future of this project.



Source: Facebook Page of Kn/Vivekanantha Vidyalayam Green Agriculture Club



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Source: Facebook Page of Kn/Vivekanantha Vidyalayam Green Agriculture Club



Source: Facebook Page of Kuvivekanantha Vidyalayam Green Agriculture Club

CASE STUDY OF N. PUSHPAKANTHAN

“It is important to support vulnerable farmers with finance (Cash grants), materials (toolkits), and capacity building (training provided through FFS) which are very important in continuing agriculture-related livelihood to sustain household food security through increased income and strengthened market linkages. This leads to establishing happy families.”

Introduction:

Nallamuththu Pushpakanthan is a 42 years old farmer engaged in vegetable cultivation. He lives in Thunukkai, Mullaitivu. He was selected as a beneficiary from the farming society he was a member of for a Project organized by the Agrarian Service Center with the support of the FAO and the WFP. This was a turning point in Pushpakanthan’s life as a farmer.

Problem / Challenge faced:

Most farmers in Thunukkai engaged in open-field cultivation. After the recent economic crisis Sri Lanka experienced, the expenses for labour, pests, and weed control increased considerably. Farming activities are mainly dependent on rainwater, and farmers were not aware of good agricultural practices. Neither did they have the required finances to purchase and use new technology.

The farmers faced hardships in selling their agricultural produce. Attacks from pests resulted in reduced yields. Previously, farmers took their produce to the ‘Dambulla Market’ or sold their produce to a middleman. They did not get a good price, and sometimes, their produce was rejected at the market.

Programme Interventions:

Early in the year 2022, some farmers gave up vegetable cultivation due to the high cost of production and scarcity of supplies, including fertilizer. In the latter part of the year, Pushpakanthan was selected as a beneficiary through his farming society for a Project organized by the Agrarian Service Center with the support of the FAO and the WFP. He was given LKR 45,000 in three installments. He underwent comprehensive training on good agricultural practices conducted by the Farmer Field Schools (FFS). The FAO provided them with polythene mulch, insect-proof nets, galvanized iron (GI) pipes, and drip irrigation kits to cultivate vegetables under protected agriculture practices. The Project team also connected the farmers with the Cargills Food City network and encouraged and guided them to obtain the GAP Certificate.

Results:

Pushpakanthan established his farming plot and cultivated ridge gourds using the knowledge gained through FFS and by using the new farming technology provided by the project. The plastic mulch introduced by the project had a substantial impact in suppressing weed growth which led to reduced manual labor for weeding, mulch has preserved soil moisture, creating ideal conditions for ridge gourd growth. The insect-proof netting protected the cultivation from pests, minimizing the usage of pesticides. These innovations resulted in impressive harvests. Ridge gourd yields inside the net house increased significantly from 100-150 kg per cycle to an impressive 200-250 kg per cycle. The improved quality and the demand for pest-free produce increased in markets which was supported by the Cargills Food City by offering a good price for their produce.

Lessons Learned:

In response to emergencies, food and cash grants to vulnerable communities to ensure household food security are essential. However, it is important to support vulnerable farmers with finance (cash grants), materials (toolkits), and capacity building (training provided through FFS) which is essential in continuing

agriculture-related livelihoods to sustain household food security through increased income and strengthened market linkages. This leads to establishing happy families.





Source:

https://www.facebook.com/storv.php?storv_fbid=pfbid02snFxoHZWj7v73sfGrdoVKYR6PcD6WemPgHimdjp9HjNbzeGUvDUb73g1T3PtoJmnl&id=100064390823624&sfnsn=mo&mibextid=6aamW6&paipv=0&eav=AfbnExBBGKoONkRn1NJSfRG9_JPFfibemFLnZwN6Byj2Us5pBwEqVSsocTmpSvuKUKw&rdr

Case Study of Dilani

Dilani woke up before dawn, just like any other day, to tend to her farm in Moneragala district. For the past twelve years, she has been a farmer, providing for her family of four. But this year was different. The economic crisis had hit hard, and she struggled to make ends meet.



Before the crisis, Dilani could sustain her children's needs, especially when it came to nutritious food. Now, with high food prices, she couldn't afford to give her children the same standard of living. To add to her woes, she lacked the capital to improve her agricultural productivity by buying farm equipment, making it even more challenging to make ends meet.

With no other options, Dilani had to take on additional jobs and work longer hours to increase revenue while still taking care of her children and farm. It was a massive burden, and she was barely keeping up.

Thankfully, help arrived through the JFSI. Dilani, with the cash provided by the programme, was able to buy more nutritious food for her family and equipment for her farm, such as irrigation systems. The Programme also empowered her with new knowledge of agricultural practices through the General Agricultural Practice series of training provided by FAO. Dilani learned how to read insecticide labels, identify the level and content of toxins and use drip irrigation facilities. With this new knowledge, Dilani was confident that over time, she could achieve higher economic returns from her production.

The cash assistance provided by the Programme also relieved Dilani of the economic burden caused by the crisis. It meant she didn't need to work two jobs simultaneously, allowing her to focus more on her farm and her children.

Thanks to the programme interventions, Dilani could answer the immediate needs of her family and children, and her farm productivity improved significantly. Dilani was filled with renewed hope that things would continue to get better.

The programme's cross-functionality was instrumental in empowering beneficiaries with GAP while providing them with cash assistance. It showed the strengths of a holistic approach to address the essential needs of vulnerable groups and stimulate local markets. The Programme also highlighted the need for gender-sensitive targeting to ensure women have equal access to assistance and support. Dilani's story is proof that targeted interventions can make a significant difference in people's lives, even during times of crisis.

