



## Concept note on **Organic Kitchen Garden for Nutrition (OKGN)**

*Prepared by The Sahayak Trust, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019*



*The Sahayak Trust*

### **1. Nutritional Deficiency Anaemia: A public health problem**

Anemia in more than 40% of the population is considered a serious health problem by the World Health Organization (WHO). The population groups most vulnerable to anaemia include children under 5 years of age, particularly infants and children under 2 years of age, adolescents, women of reproductive age (15–49 years), and pregnant women. India ranked 170<sup>th</sup> out of 185 nations in this category with one out of two women suffering from anemia<sup>1</sup>. Anaemia is associated with poor cognitive and motor development outcomes in children, can cause fatigue and low productivity, and, when it occurs in pregnancy, is associated with poor birth outcomes (including low birth weight and prematurity) as well as maternal and perinatal mortality<sup>2</sup>. About 20% of our maternal deaths are directly linked to anemia and another 20 to 30% are indirectly linked to it. The developing fetus and the breast feeding child are adversely impacted. NFHS-4 data shows that in India 58.4 % of children (6-59 months) and 53% of adult women (15-49 years) suffered from mild and moderate anemia, which impacts health and development. Mild and moderate anemia is usually due to deficiency in nutrition consumed or absorbed and is called nutritional deficiency anemia or nutritional anemia.

To address the multifactorial causes of anaemia effectively, close coordination and cooperation between the multiple relevant sectors like nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as, poverty alleviation, agriculture, industry and education and groups like government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector is needed. The Government is aware of the problem and has been implementing programs for the past 55 years. Most of these have been ‘supplement’ driven and selective i.e., for specific groups such as pregnant women, lactating mothers and adolescents. Being supplement driven, they are time bound and therefore their impact is also time bound and not sustained. Food-based strategies (dietary diversification), food supplementation and improvement of health services are required to reduce the burden of anaemia. Growing an Organic Kitchen Garden for Nutrition (OKGN) is thus a simple, replicable, economically viable and sustainable solution for combating nutritional anaemia.

### **2. Organic Kitchen Garden for Nutrition (OKGN): A simple and sustainable solution**

Based on its own experience, as the Knowledge & Training Partner and the experience of its Implementing Partners, the Sahayak Trust has found that developing an OKGN at household level ensures a continuous and sufficient supply of nutritious, healthy, pesticide free food and the entire family benefits from an OKGN. The role of consumption of a diverse mix of vegetables for curing nutritional anemia is well known and has been scientifically established in many studies.

School going children need a nutritious and balanced diet in order to develop and grow well, to study, build immunity as protection from disease and to have the energy to get through the day. For the sake of their present and future, they need to not only eat well, but also to learn how to eat appropriate nutrition rich food and how to grow it without chemical toxins. Vegetables from the OKGN in the school can provide them these skills and can enhance school meals with micronutrient-rich vegetables.

<sup>1</sup> National Family Health Survey 4.2015-16

<sup>2</sup> Nutritional Anaemias: Tools for effective prevention and control, WHO

In order to understand the impact of an Organic Kitchen Garden for Nutrition (OKGN) to address nutritional deficiency anaemia, a correlation study titled ‘Correlation of Organic Kitchen Garden for Nutrition, Awareness of Consumption of Vegetables and Nutritional Deficiency Anemia’ was conducted by Aamhi Aamchya Aarogyasathi (AAA), implementing and knowledge partner of AFIF, with the support of The Sahayak Trust, in 2018. The analysis shows a noticeable increase of 1.25gm in the level of Hb after consistent consumption of organically grown vegetables from OKGNs. This is a significant improvement and it was also found that OKGNs are a far more acceptable and effective way to combat nutritional deficiency anemia than the standard administration of Fe+Folic acid tablets, which are often not consumed due to unpleasant side effects. AAA has also documented the Hb of 906 women over a period of 18 months and found an increase of 1.1 to 2 gm in Hb in 33.44% and slightly less than 1 gm Hb improvement in 39% of women growing OKGNs. Awareness on anemia and regular consumption of vegetables was a vital starting point for this.

### **3. Why an OKGN is important?**

It is a model which can be easily adopted in rural areas, since growing a kitchen garden is often a traditional practice which fell into disuse. It is a cheaper and healthier option than buying vegetables from the market, since the input cost is low and a sufficient quantity and variety of toxin-free vegetables is obtained. A ‘sufficient’ supply is important for women, as the family’s vegetable purchase is often constrained by their lack of finances. In the prevailing patriarchal society the women often eat last, when the limited vegetables that have been cooked are over. The far higher level of anemia incidence in women compared to men reflects this. An OKGN assures adequate and consistent supply of fresh vegetables for all, improving the Hb of women and children. It also saves the family thousands of rupees in food and possibly also medical expenses.

### **4. The Sahayak Trust (TST)**

The Sahayak Trust was established to provide support through education on low cost and sustainable technologies, particularly in the fields of health, agriculture, livelihoods and ecology, to economically disadvantaged rural populations. The Trust believes that education can transform lives and livelihoods - most of all for the poorest and most disadvantaged. Within its limited funds it seeks to make relevant education accessible at the doorstep of people in need of it, helping them to use their own locally available resources. It does so largely through training of partners who share its belief and are already working effectively in local communities. The Sahayak Trust’s Institute for Rural Education has set up a Centre in Wardha. As a knowledge and training partner for a growing number of NGOs, TST has developed training modules and methodology to impart knowledge and skill on OKGN and capacitate partners to reach out to communities. Much has been achieved already by this model of working.

### **5. Anemia Free India Forum (AFIF)**

The nutritional and health benefits of organically grown food, free of toxic chemicals such as pesticides and chemical fertilizers, are widely recognized as desirable but require knowledge and skill that is not available to the majority of people. TST has been providing education and training to secure convergence of health and nutrition through organic kitchen gardens. This has shown positive results by increasing Hb levels. In January 2016, to take this agenda ahead in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, TST partnered with other like-minded organizations from Vidarbha to form the Anaemia Free Vidarbha Forum (AFVF). TST provided educational inputs/training to the AFVF partner organizations.

Since many other organizations from different states would also like to participate in this mission, an **Anaemia Free India Forum (AFIF)** has been formed. AFIF consists of all organizations who wish to partner in making India free of nutrition deficiency anemia. AFIF is a platform of likeminded NGOs who share a common vision and spirit to combat nutritional deficiency anaemia in India. It facilitates sharing of information, knowledge and experiences among AFIF partners and carries forward

***Vision, Mission & Methodology***

***VISION:*** *To help people recover from nutritional deficiency, mild and moderate anemia, with organic kitchen gardens for nutrition developed by their own efforts and primarily for consumption by the family.*

***MISSION:*** *To reach out to women and children through joint efforts of GOs, NGOs, Educational, Spiritual and other organizations who work with rural poor, in order to reach all those rural families who need to overcome Nutritional Deficiency Anemia.*

***PRINCIPLES & METHODOLOGY:***

- 1. Create awareness on Nutritional Anemia*
- 2. Convergence of Health and OKGN*
- 3. Developing OKGN in different verticals and promotes diversity*
- 4. Get OKGNs grown organically without chemicals*
- 5. Ensure OKGNs are firstly for family consumption*
- 6. Monitor Hb levels of beneficiaries at regular intervals*
- 7. Research, Documentation and Dissemination.*

the program in their respective areas by developing an OKGN in Schools, Anganwadies, Ashramshalas and Communities. Any GOs, NGOs and CBOs working in the field of health, community development, women’s empowerment, livelihood etc., as also SHGs, Youth Groups, Spiritual Groups and whoever shares this vision, can join hands to take this mission ahead. As of December 2018, 47 partners had joined the mission and are going ahead.

**6. The way forward**

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING INDIA FREE OF NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCY ANAEMIA!**

So far TST has reached out to and trained teachers of 3631 schools in Wardha, Amravati, Bhandara, Gondia and Chandrapur Districts. School children are receptive and eager to learn and can take the knowledge back to their homes. A preliminary independent survey of the Wardha schools showed that 91% of the kitchen gardens developed in schools after training by The Sahayak Trust were organic in nature, 92% of the vegetables from the OKGN go into the mid-day meals and that 51% of the schools have initiated efforts to spread the concept of OKGNs to the community. To ensure the coverage of so many schools in a timely and efficient manner, TST intends to develop a pool of 150 trainers across Maharashtra. The program will also be extended to Anganwadis, Ashramshals and community. It welcomes new partners for this!

<p>For more information  <b><i>The Sahayak Trust</i></b>  <i>Institute for Rural Education</i></p>	
<p><b>Head office</b>  32 B.S Marg, Near Stock Exchange  Mumbai 400023  Email: <a href="mailto:headoffice@sahayaktrust.org">headoffice@sahayaktrust.org</a>  Ph.022 40574414, 40574431</p>	<p><b>Vidarbha Centre</b>  New Vidya Vihar Colony,  Pipari (Meghe), Wardha 442001  Email: <a href="mailto:afyfwardha@gmail.com">afyfwardha@gmail.com</a>  Ph.9405529397</p>

[www.sahayaktrust.org](http://www.sahayaktrust.org)