Up to 50,000 Bangladeshi women and their households adopted better child feeding practices, and other health measures, while growing and eating OFSP (orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes)

Published on: April 5, 2021, Submitted by Enrico Bonaiuti on: April 5, 2021, Reporting year: 2020

The International Potato Center (CIP) and partners in Bangladesh trained community nutrition scholars (CNS) to share health, hygiene and nutrition information with 5,000 mothers of small children. Households received seed and produced improved varieties of salt-tolerant orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) and potato varieties, to improve household diets. Interviewed participants shared information with an average of ten other people, so an estimated 50,000 households benefited from the innovations shared with the 5,000 direct project beneficiaries.

Toward more nutritious diets for young children in southern Bangladesh

---

The training successfully improved child nutrition and care, especially exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, combined with complementary feeding until children are three years old. The young mothers adopted other healthy practices as well, such as cooking methods to retain nutrients (such as not cutting the vegetables into such small pieces and covering the pot during boiling). The women also began to use sweetpotato tops as leafy vegetables. The households planted the OFSP and vegetable seed that was distributed to them, and ate the OFSP at home.
Interviewed participants shared information with an average of ten other people, so an estimated 50,000 households benefited from the innovations shared with the 5,000 direct project beneficiaries (1).

In Bangladesh, 5000 women attended nutrition education sessions led by community nutrition scholars (CNS). Each participating woman invited a male household member to attend the first session, to garner the men's support for the program.

To evaluate the program, separate focus group discussions (FGD) were held with 30 women and with 30 men from 60 households in the Khulna and Shatkhira districts of Bangladesh. The FGDs revealed that training given to the young mothers had successfully encouraged health and hygiene practices.

The young mothers said that they were feeding their babies only breastmilk until they were six months old when complementary feeding was added. The women adopted cooking techniques to retain nutrients in foods, such as cutting raw food into larger pieces before boiling it in a covered pot. Almost all the men discussed the training with female household members, which contributed to male support for these training sessions for women.

The women learned and used the health and hygiene measures taught by the CNS. Hand washing was widely adopted (especially after using the latrine and before preparing food). All the women planted the vegetable seed they received and adopted bed planting in their gardens. All but one of the 30 women planted the OFSP distributed by the CNS. The women cooked these healthy foods with improved techniques to avoid losing nutrients. The households ate the vegetables and OFSP at home. Mothers-in-law resisted some of the innovations, but men helped to convince their mothers of the value of the new techniques.

Groups also reported using masks, hand-sanitizer and they washed their hands and clothes more often to protect themselves from Covid.

The women estimated that each one had shared their new knowledge with at least 10 other households. Extrapolating this finding to the 5,000 women who were trained by the project, a conservative estimate of 50,000 households benefited from the training (1).

Level of Maturity and Sphere of influence

- Level of Maturity: *Stage 1*
- Contributions in sphere of influence:
  1.1.1 - Increased household coping capacity to cope with shocks
  2.1.1 - Increased availability of diverse nutrient-rich foods

---

Acknowledgement

CIP led the project ‘Strengthening food system resilience in Asia's mega deltas with salt-tolerant sweetpotato and potato’, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and GIZ with additional funding from RTB and the Gender Platform of the CGIAR. The local NGO partner, Prodipan conducted the training with the CNS. BARI developed salt-tolerant potato and sweetpotato varieties. ACI Seed Ltd and Supreme Seed Ltd provided the seed. The University of Hohenheim provided research inputs.

Projects

- Strengthening food system resilience in Asia’s mega deltas with salt tolerant sweetpotato and potato

---

CRPs, & Partners

CRP on Roots, Tubers and Bananas - RTB

Image not available

International Potato Center - CIP

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute - BARI, Bangladesh

University of Hohenheim

Prodipan

ACI Seed Ltd and Supreme Seed Ltd

References

- Prain, G. (2021). Toward more nutritious diets for young children in southern Bangladesh: Assessing the contribution of Community Nutrition Scholars and identifying constraints to utilization of orange-fleshed sweetpotato. Lima, Peru: International Potato Center.

Keywords

- bangladesh
- ofsp
- covid
- health and nutrition

Countries

- Bangladesh

About the author

Enrico Bonaiuti is Program Management Officer at International Potato Center - CIP.