

**Innovation: Khana Khazana (Recipe demonstration) through volunteers to ascertain appropriate feeding practices and behaviors.**

***Background:***

Nutritious healthy food in urban informal settlements has been replaced by cheaply available and mouth-watering junk and fast food. Junk food if consumed regularly is known to lead to obesity and underweight problems, repeated bouts of infections, illnesses, diarrhoea, and affect the functioning of the digestive system.

Often families are not aware of locally available, seasonal healthy foods which are rich sources of energy and nutrients. Therefore, cooking demonstrations serve as a platform and behavior change tool to generate awareness about healthy nutritious foods and the importance of their consumption.

Lately, to improve the quality of food items, protect plants from weeds and hasten the process of ripening, insecticide and pesticides are added to crops. This makes the fruits and vegetables very harmful to consume if not washed thoroughly.

The other important concern is maintaining food hygiene. Food handling and cooking behaviors and practices of certain communities are very poor which leads to nutrient loss and wastage of food nutrition. Different communities have different behaviours and practices such as:

1. Cutting and then washing raw food items
2. Overcooking food
3. Discarding excess water in food
4. Cooking food with the lid open

Community level cooking demonstrations through volunteers can be used as a medium to educate the community in order to have greater acceptance. Cooking demonstrations need to be done with the following objectives:

1. To generate awareness regarding correct feeding habits and practices.
2. To generate awareness regarding appropriate cooking practices and methods.
3. To spread information regarding adverse and side effects of junk and outside food.
4. To generate information regarding low cost, seasonal and healthy food items.
5. To help a volunteer conduct effective demonstration of a recipe.

***Steps/ Processes:***

Cooking demonstration is a platform to have discussions with the community and to understand their cooking behaviors and practices. Every month we select one food item which is a rich source of calcium or iron or protein or energy. Selection of the rich source is based on the following criteria –

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1. Low cost
2. Seasonality
3. Availability

Once in a quarter one ingredient is selected and a variety of healthy recipes are demonstrated. For the demonstrations we also promote food items that are frequently cooked by the community. We train active volunteers to carry out the demonstration. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Sevikas, the SNEHA team and community volunteers are jointly involved in mobilizing and conducting these demonstrative processes. The trained volunteer conducts the demonstrations as per the following steps:

1. Washing of food items – steps to thoroughly wash, handle and clean the food are discussed.
2. Cutting of food items – many women soak the cut vegetables in water which leads to loss of nutrients. This is explained through discussions.
3. Cooking the food – discussions on ensuring minimal loss of nutrients while cooking the food.
4. Hand wash – washing of hands before cooking is reinforced.
5. Nutrient value of food item – discussions regarding the nutritive value is shared with the community and they are requested to increase consumption of certain nutritious food items and include these in their regular consumption.

#### **Results/Impact:**

Every month we conduct diet audits with pregnant women and this shows increased food diversity, change in cooking behaviors and practices in many families. Recent studies have shown that, cooking demonstrations acts as a preventive as well as a curative<sup>1</sup> measure by influencing nutrition related knowledge<sup>2</sup> and practices<sup>3</sup>. This in turn ensures optimum complimentary feeding practices<sup>4</sup> leading to

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<sup>1</sup> Vimbai Chishanu, Okello Aldo Frank, Sarah Ibrahim Nour, Hatty Barthorp and Nikki Connell (2014). Nutrition Impact and Positive Practice (NIPP) Circles. Field Exchange 47, April 2014. p43.  
<https://www.enonline.net/fex/47/nutritionimpact>

<sup>2</sup> Moses-Nagbiku C.P.(2017). Influence of cooking classes on healthy and sustainable food choices by Nigerian Women. Journal of Cellular Medicine and Natural Health. <https://www.jcmnh.org/influence-of-cooking-classes-on-healthy-and-sustainable-food-choices-by-nigerian-women/#1487060806629-b2590148-1be9>

<sup>3</sup> World Vision case study, Nov 2018:In Onga: Using Cooking Demonstrations to Improve Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices is Working. [https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Onga\\_Case\\_Study.pdf](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Onga_Case_Study.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Kuchenbecker, J., Reinbott, A., Mtimuni, B., Krawinkel, M. B., & Jordan, I. (2017). Nutrition education improves dietary diversity of children 6-23 months at community-level: Results from a cluster randomized controlled trial in Malawi. *PLOS ONE*, 12(4), e0175216. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0175216>

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appropriate growth and development of infants and children, combating malnutrition.<sup>5</sup> Consumption of iron rich foods has increased from 18% to 27% among pregnant mothers in our urban intervention areas located in Mumbai.

**Challenges and Solutions:**

Increased preference of the community towards junk food: Repetitive messaging through events is provided to influence the behavior and reduce the purchase and consumption of junk food.

**Key Takeaways:**

1. Community based demonstrations serve as a platform for interaction and discussion around the importance of nutritious foods.
2. Events planned by the ICDS staff around *Khana Khazana* can lead to greater community participation.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development. "Mothers Fight Malnutrition with Healthy Cooking Classes in Rwanda". <https://www.usaid.gov/actingonthecall/stories/rwanda>

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