



Dietary Supplement to Combat Malnutrition

Project Rationale

Healthy diet is one of the keys for good health. Poor families in rural India have little access to nutritious food, and many families also lack knowledge of healthy eating and the link between malnutrition and chronic diseases. We support Rural Development Trust (RDT), our local partner, in its commitment to improve health and people's wellbeing at the grassroots level. We support educational and awareness campaigns about health problems, personal hygiene, and nutrition, and facilitate nutritional support to vulnerable groups.

Andhra Pradesh, located in southeast India is one of the eight states with the highest child mortality rate: out of 1,000 children over 40 die here before they are five years old. One of the main reasons for this sad fact is widespread malnutrition. Recurring droughts in the state intensify poverty and many people in these rural regions do not have access to nutritious food. Milk or dairy products are usually not on their diet, the regular consumption of eggs is expensive, and the cost of vegetables is also very high. The results of the National Institute of Nutrition in India show that 38.8% of children in the age group of one to five years in Andhra Pradesh are currently undernourished. Overall, 45.6% of children in rural India are underweight and 49.6% of them have stunted growth.

In addition to small children, antenatal and postnatal mothers, are also at risk. A few years ago, in rural India, women were the last to eat what was left by male family members. Pregnant women and young mothers were particularly affected because they did not receive adequate nutrition before or after the delivery. In the past, expectant mothers were advised to eat as little as possible to avoid complications, and postnatal mothers were advised to eat only rice and chili for 40 days after giving birth. The consequence were undernutrition, malnutrition, and anemia, for women and also for children. Finally, persons suffering from chronic sickness and seniors who lack family support are also at risk.

There are many small children who will not be able to reach their full potential if they are not adequately fed. This will negatively affect their development, studies, and definitely, the chance of breaking the cycle of poverty and have a better future.

Project Goal

The aim of this project is to contribute to reduction of morbidity and to improve the health status of vulnerable groups hailing from poor rural communities with low socio-economic background severely affected by recurring droughts.

Project Description

To address this problem, Vicente Ferrer Foundation USA (VFF USA) provides supplementary nutrition to children (1-5 years), pregnant women, new mothers, the chronically ill, and seniors who lack family support.

This nutrition project will take place in the Lingala area of Andhra Pradesh state, India. The beneficiaries are 768 persons spread across 27 villages and include:

- 388 children under 5 years old,
- 132 antenatal/postnatal mothers, and
- 248 seniors and chronically ill people

These numbers will change during the life of the project because children who reach 5 years of age will become ineligible, while newly registered pregnant mothers and newly born children will be added to the list of eligible persons.

The project provides the following supplementary nutrition during 12 months:

- A boiled egg on alternate days.
- A nutritious protein beverage made of a ragi (cereal) powder and jaggery (brown sugar) every day except on Sundays.
- Black-eyed beans and green grams two days per week.

Eggs make a valuable contribution to a healthy, balanced diet as they provide protein, vitamin A, and other vitamins and minerals. Ragi contains calcium, and it is high in protein but very low in carbohydrates, which is a healthy choice for children.

Community Health Workers trained by RDT are in charge of distributing the food. They also record periodically the height and weight of the children, as well as hemoglobin and blood pressure of antenatal mothers, and are able to detect risk pregnancies, anemia or other abnormalities.

This program has the additional goal of improving knowledge and awareness about the importance of nutrition, personal hygiene, immunization, and institutional delivery. RDT's Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (Health Organizers) visit each nutrition center and provide health education to mothers.

Impact

Our nutrition program has a very positive impact on improving these women's and children's health. It reduces children morbidity through nutrition and contributes to their development and success in education.

RDT started the nutritional program in 2000. Through the years, they have witnessed how the program has increased children's life span. From April 2018 to March 2019, RDT provided 46,897 people with nutritional support.

Would you like to help? You can support our project directly on the web www.vffusa.org or contact us for more information at: info@vffusa.org or at (202) 798-5269.

Thank you for your generosity and kindness!



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