



GROW – USE – SHARE

Demonstration of a People-to-People
Social Solidarity Model in Covid Times:
Kitchen Gardening to Ensure Nutrition
Security for Vulnerable Families



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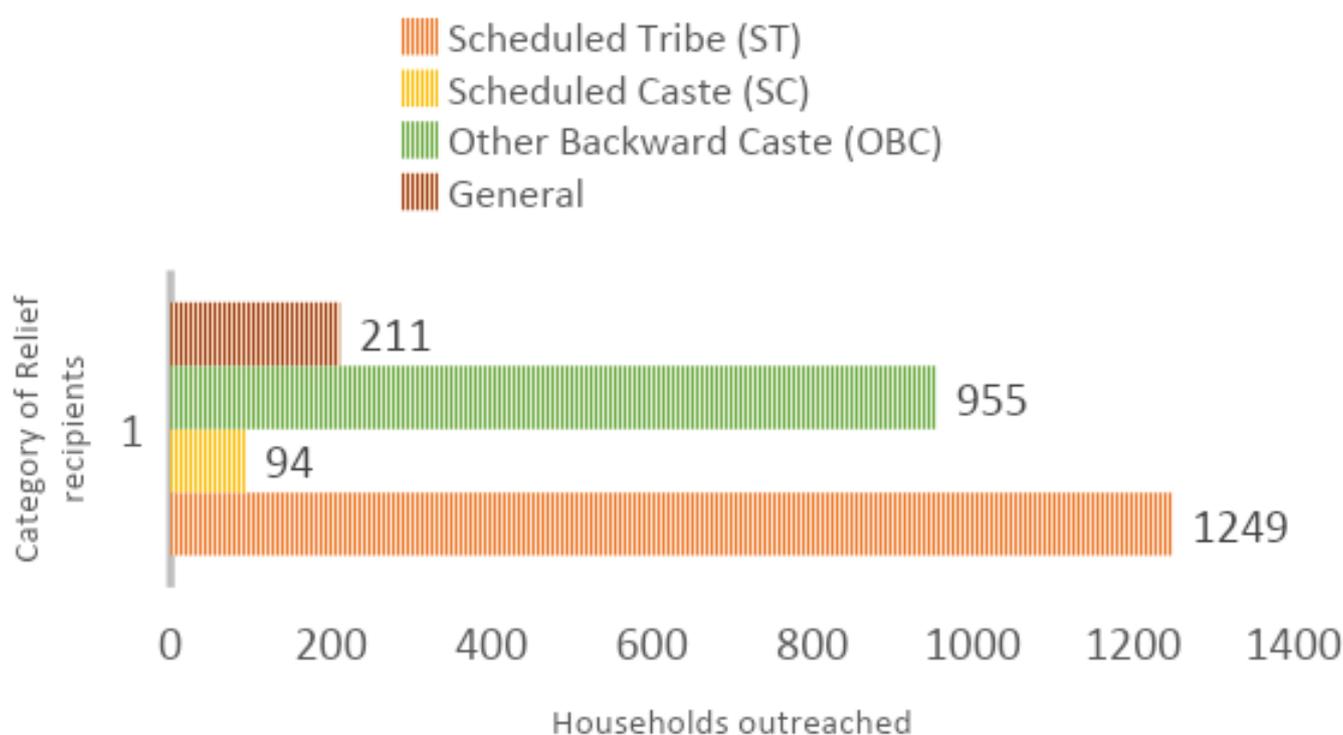
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Response to COVID-19 (RCRC) & several individuals

Addressing a key issue: Inability of vulnerable families to access basic needs of food and nutrition

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire globe. It nevertheless unfolded the most challenging health risks and economic burdens on those communities, women, men and children, who were already on the margins. The immediate effect was loss of daily wages and the inability to access basic needs of food and nutrition. Government relief alone was unable to meet household requirements. Women headed households, pregnant women, Dalits, minorities, backward castes and nomadic/denotified tribes as well as people with disabilities were clearly the most vulnerable.

Utthan's continuous contact with the communities it serves brought out that many villages did not have easy access to vegetables or quality sustainable seed varieties. Being cash strapped, most families would not prioritise vegetable purchase. The worst sufferers would be women and children, as patriarchal practices in families lead to prioritisation of others. Many landless families do not even have the option to grow vegetables.

Communities supported with kitchen garden by Category



Intervention: Kitchen garden kits were provided to 7805 families across 220+ villages of 11 blocks of Dahod, Mahisagar, Panchmahals, Bhavnagar, Bharuch districts of Gujarat. Six varieties of seeds were provided and the bio fertilizer requirement was collectively produced by women's groups/women master farmers to the furthest extent possible. The kit was apt for around 1000-1500 sq.ft. of designated land area or for land around people's homes. Locally researched and truthful seed varieties of lady's finger, cluster beans, black eyed pea, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, sponge gourd/ridged gourd were distributed under safety guidelines developed by Utthan wherein use of masks, gloves and distancing by team and village volunteers were ensured. Panchayats and village leaders were roped in with good results. The complementary efforts to ensure good practices included use of digital awareness through pamphlets, videos on package of practices and bio pesticide production by women trainers in 'sustainable agriculture practices'.

The consciousness building efforts for compassion needed during this crisis led to a commitment by 7805 families to support another 23000 families, especially those landless and/or unable to grow vegetables due to lack of land or water resources. This support nutrition security of 700 grams/ day of vegetable supplies for 2.5 months between mid-July to September'20, the quantity suffices the needs of an average family size of six. This led to cash savings of nearly Rs.3500/family for 1 cycle of support ~ 2.73 crores. In terms of material costs for the initiative, it was an approximate 18 times returns on investment made. As per our field data and monitoring, nearly 80% families have repeated gardening in the following seasons, implying continued benefits.



From the field:

“We are 25 families in Ranadhar hamlet (vadi vistar), my home is 6 kms. away from my village, Morchand. We would commonly purchase vegetables from the Ranadhar crossroad shop, 4 kms. away, which was closed due to the lockdown. Not all families grow vegetables in our hamlet and during the lockdown, we were unable to buy any. With Utthan’s support, I decided to take up kitchen gardening since I have some water available from the joint family well. We generally share vegetables with our neighbours and in this crisis only we can help each other. I will share the vegetable produce with another 3-4 families in need. Although the Panchayat organized to ensure we received our share of the announced ration relief, it did not last long. Due to the COVID crisis my husband also lost his daily wages due to closure of the diamond polishing unit he used to work at. The Unit has started functioning but it is a very crowded working space so we fear infection. Now the Kharif crop needs to be taken care of too so we both are engaged in that. We have about 0.8 acres of land, where we grow cotton, some bajri for consumption and some vegetables. Our cotton crop from last Rabi failed due to the pink bollworm and we incurred losses. We have grown some groundnut this season. Especially after this crisis, I want to grow more Bajri on my land and ensure my family’s food security.”

Bhavnaben Makwana, Ranadhar vadi vistar, Morchand village, Ghogha block, Bhavnagar district, Gujarat

[Bhavnaben has been trained in sustainable agricultural practices in the past 1.5 years. She has enthusiastically trained several other women, her willingness to share her learning’s and motivate others is commendable. She demonstrated seed sowing and application of scientific methods in vegetable cultivation to other relief recipients]



From the field:

Manjuben Mohaniya, aged 39, a marginal land holder from Vakota village, Dahod district has a 8 member family including 4 young children and her in-laws. Predominantly dependent on agricultural labour work, their livelihoods were severely affected. Post lockdown, there was no means of employment available to them. Being an active member of Vanita Shakti Mahila Sangthan, she had been part of demonstrations and learnt sustainable and organic agriculture practices. Her family owns 0.5 acre of land in Vakota village. Land is used for residential purpose as well vegetable cultivation. Sangathan chose to provide her with Kitchen Garden support in her backyard. Utthan provided vegetable seeds of lady's finger, bitter gourd, cluster beans, sponge gourd/ridged gourd, bottle gourd and black-eyed pea. Manjuben cultivated vegetables in 1200 sq ft. in her backyard. With a fully grown kitchen garden, “with monthly production of 125 kgs of different vegetables, I am happily sharing the vegetables with neighbours and families in need during the post lockdown” Manjuben chuckles. She also added that she is promoting kitchen garden plantation among her friends and relatives as she has witnessed the benefits of Kitchen garden with minimum efforts.



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- Gujarat NGO helps Distressed Families grow Kitchen Gardens during COVID-19 Pandemic to Improve their Nutritional Well-Being
- Nutrition gardens – A Promising Intervention in the post COVID Scenario
- Unique Kitchen Garden Model Helps 2000 Families in Rural Gujarat Feed 7500 Others
- Kitchen Gardens (video link)



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Utthan is a non-profit working with a mission to initiate sustainable gender sensitive, grass root processes of empowerment amongst the most vulnerable communities; through a process of inclusion, building conscientiousness, and organising around their major issues. Its intense work for nearly 40 years has been in the drought-prone coastal districts of Ahmedabad, Amreli, Bhavnagar & Kutch and the poverty-stricken tribal districts of Dahod, Panchmahals and Mahisagar.