

PROMOTING IMPROVED HOUSEHOLD NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES FOR BETTER HEALTH IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Background

Since 2002, the Health Systems Trust has supported the strengthening of a household and community based child health survival and nutrition model in selected districts in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape.

Rationale

Undernourishment and poor child development is indicative of a broader household problem. Therefore the project supports the improvement of child health by focusing on strengthening the nutrition of the household and family.

Description

The project is based on a 'clinic – community – household model.' The clinic is chosen as an entry point for the demonstration gardens in order to expose as many people as possible to the idea of vegetable gardening as a strategy to address micronutrient deficiencies such as Vitamin A. Rehabilitation units targeted at undernourished clinic clients and their families serve to improve nutritional status. Sensitized clients from the clinic catchment area are then assisted to establish communal gardens and/or household gardens as a means to contributing towards improved household food availability. Community based IMCI points have also been set up to monitor child growth. The community based component aims to improve the health of the family through education on crop production, promoting health and nutrition education, and growth monitoring and promotion at community bases where children are weighed. Community based organisations are the implementing agents of the project and mobilise the awareness of communities around the nutritional and child health problems. Volunteers are recruited from the total number of villages within the clinic catchment area. The number of community based volunteers per area are allocated taking into account the total number of children under the age of 5 years, total number of households and the total number of crèches in the catchment area. Training of volunteer trainers on crop production, community IMCI, correct food preparation methods, facilitation skills and project management are conducted. A multi-sectoral team, including the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Social Development and Local Government support the CBOs in the implementation of the project.

Conclusion

The reliance on building the capacity of local human resource has provided effective support to the fight against malnutrition, poverty, hunger as well as strengthening the capacities of the local CBOs and communities to be self reliant and self-sufficient.