

Empowering Nutritional Awareness and Health in North Kolkata's Slums: A Community-Driven Initiative

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Introduction:

Bhavishya Sakti, a community organization, collaborated with Calcutta Rescue (CR) to address malnutrition and low nutritional awareness in eight slums across North Kolkata. The targeted areas included Bagbazar-I, Bagbazar-II, Nimtala, Bhangamath, Local Bustee, Mechuya, Jyotinagar, and Dilarjung, which were identified for high rates of poor nutritional habits and related health issues.

Purpose:

The project aimed to increase awareness about proper nutrition, emphasizing balanced diets to prevent diseases from nutritional deficiencies. The goal was to educate residents on making informed food choices and improving their health through better dietary practices.

Method:

A Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey was conducted door-to-door to assess the nutritional knowledge and health practices of residents. Topics included salt and oil intake, as well as sources of essential vitamins and minerals. Based on survey results, educational programs were created using the "SODOTO" method (See One, Do One, Teach One), which involved home visits and hands-on training to empower individuals to share their knowledge.

Results:

The survey showed significant gaps in nutritional knowledge. For example, 29.3% of respondents did not know the recommended daily salt intake, and 20.7% were unaware of appropriate oil intake. Knowledge of essential vitamins was also lacking, with 3.6% unable to identify sources of Vitamin C and 12.6% not knowing about Vitamin A. Furthermore, 78.9% did not recognize the importance of calcium and iron for women's health.

Conclusion:

The findings reveal a critical need for nutritional education in underserved communities. Bhavishya Sakti's initiatives effectively enhanced participants' understanding of nutritional needs. Continued education and community engagement are vital for combating malnutrition and diet-related health issues. Additionally, targeting pregnant women through the Mother & Child Health Department (MCH) over a vital 1000-day period is crucial for reducing nutritional deficiencies.