

#KyariToKitchen

TRAINING URBAN VULNERABLE WOMEN TO FARM



About Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group

We are a registered non-profit organization dedicated to achieving inclusive, sustainable, and equitable growth for all. Our objective is to make consumption more responsible and less taxing on the environment and the underprivileged. We conduct research, advocate for, and assist various stakeholders in transitioning from a linear to a circular economy and away from unsustainable consumerism. We combat air pollution by conducting research, strengthening capacity, and making science and policy more accessible to the public. In all our efforts, vulnerable populations—the poor, the marginalized, children, and women—will remain in the forefront of our attention.

#KyariToKitchen

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Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group is an independent, non-profit, non-government organisation working in the field of sustainability and environmental justice for the past twenty years. Our aim is to ensure that consumption is responsible and mindful such that it doesn't impact the environment and the marginalised. Chintan has won several national and international recognition over the years for its work, including the U.S. Innovation Award by the former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, the United Nations Climate Solutions Award in 2015, and the FICCI Women Icon Award by the President of India in 2018..

Kyari to Kitchen was made possible by Give India

CAN
YOU
FARM
IN
A
SLUM?

STORY OF FOUR WOMEN IN BASTIS

MASHUDA, 43 YEARS



Ms. Mashuda segregates waste at a godown in Mahipalpur. She contributes Rs. 5000 to a total household income of Rs. 12000 per month. With six children, including two sons and four daughters, meeting basic expenses is difficult.

MANBHAWTI, 28 YEARS



Working as a daily wage labour at Panch Mandir Shahbad Dairy takes a toll on Manbhawti's health. She earns Rs. 100 to 150 per day, but often feels sick and tired. Sometimes she is bedridden from pain in the joints or food poisoning. Her health is a big setback both at work and at home.

ACROSS DELHI

POONAM, 35 YEARS

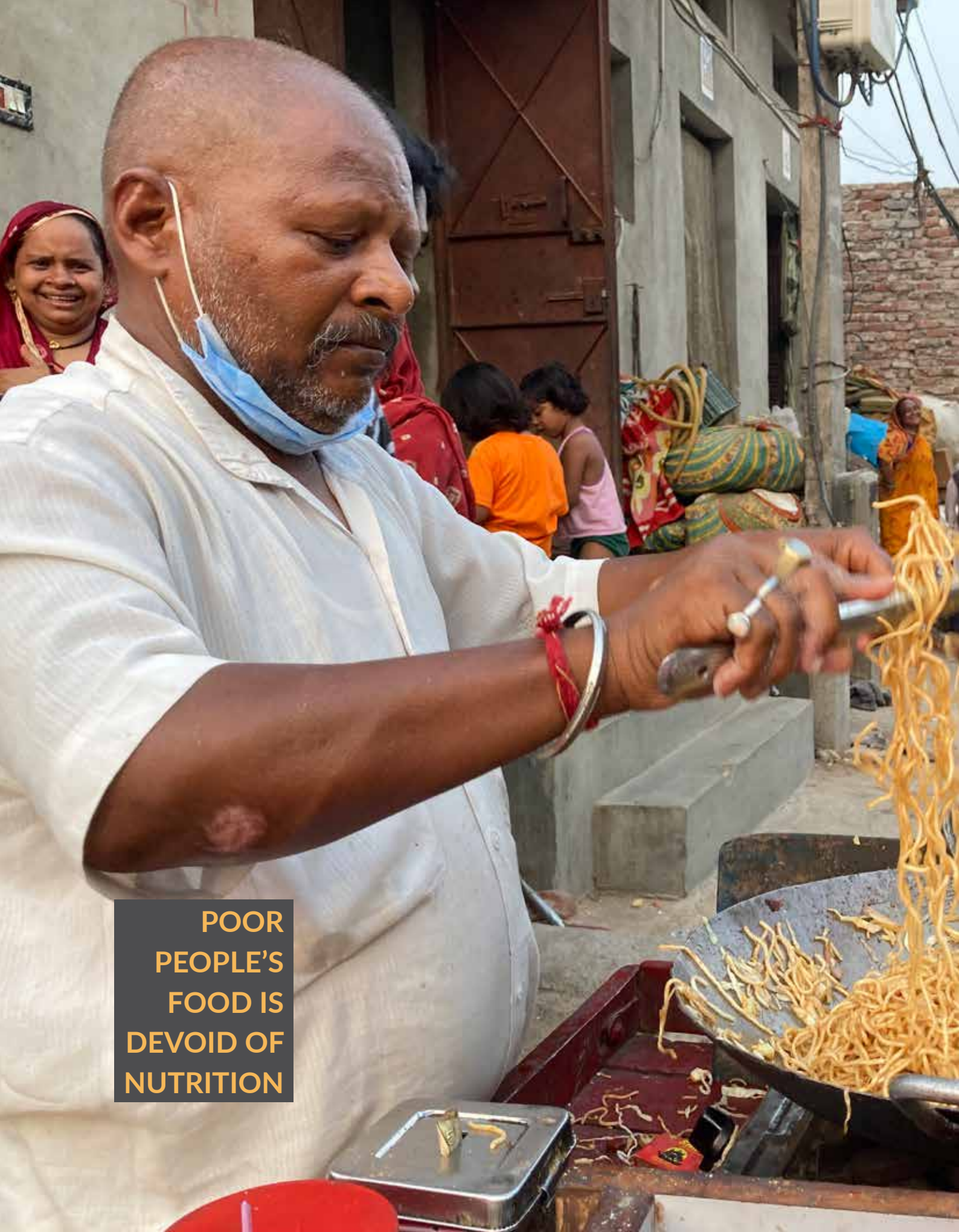


Originally from Bhagalpur, Bihar, Poonam has been living in the slums of Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi for more than 22 years. Her family includes her husband Umesh, 40, two sons and a daughter. Umesh earns Rs. 15000 per month from working at construction sites, but unfortunately, half of it goes towards treatments for thyroid disease. This leaves very little for household expenses.

SAVITA, 38 YEARS



Savita lives in Ambedkar Basti, RK Puram, Delhi, with her two sons and husband Inder Pal, 40, who migrated to Delhi 23 years ago from a village called Phulat, near Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. Like many migrants, he struggled to find employment and the family was struck with extreme financial hardship during the pandemic. Now, he works as a caretaker at a gym in Palam, earning about Rs. 10000 per month. But this is not enough for a family of four. His commute to work alone costs Rs. 150-200 by bus and rickshaw. As cost of living continues to soar, making ends meet is a challenge.

A man with a beard and a blue face mask hanging from his ear is cooking long, thin noodles in a large metal pan. He is wearing a white shirt and a red string bracelet. In the background, a woman in a red sari is smiling, and two children, one in an orange shirt and one in a pink shirt, are standing near a large metal door. The scene is set in a narrow alleyway with a brick wall and a utility box visible in the background.

**POOR
PEOPLE'S
FOOD IS
DEVOID OF
NUTRITION**

A PROPOSAL

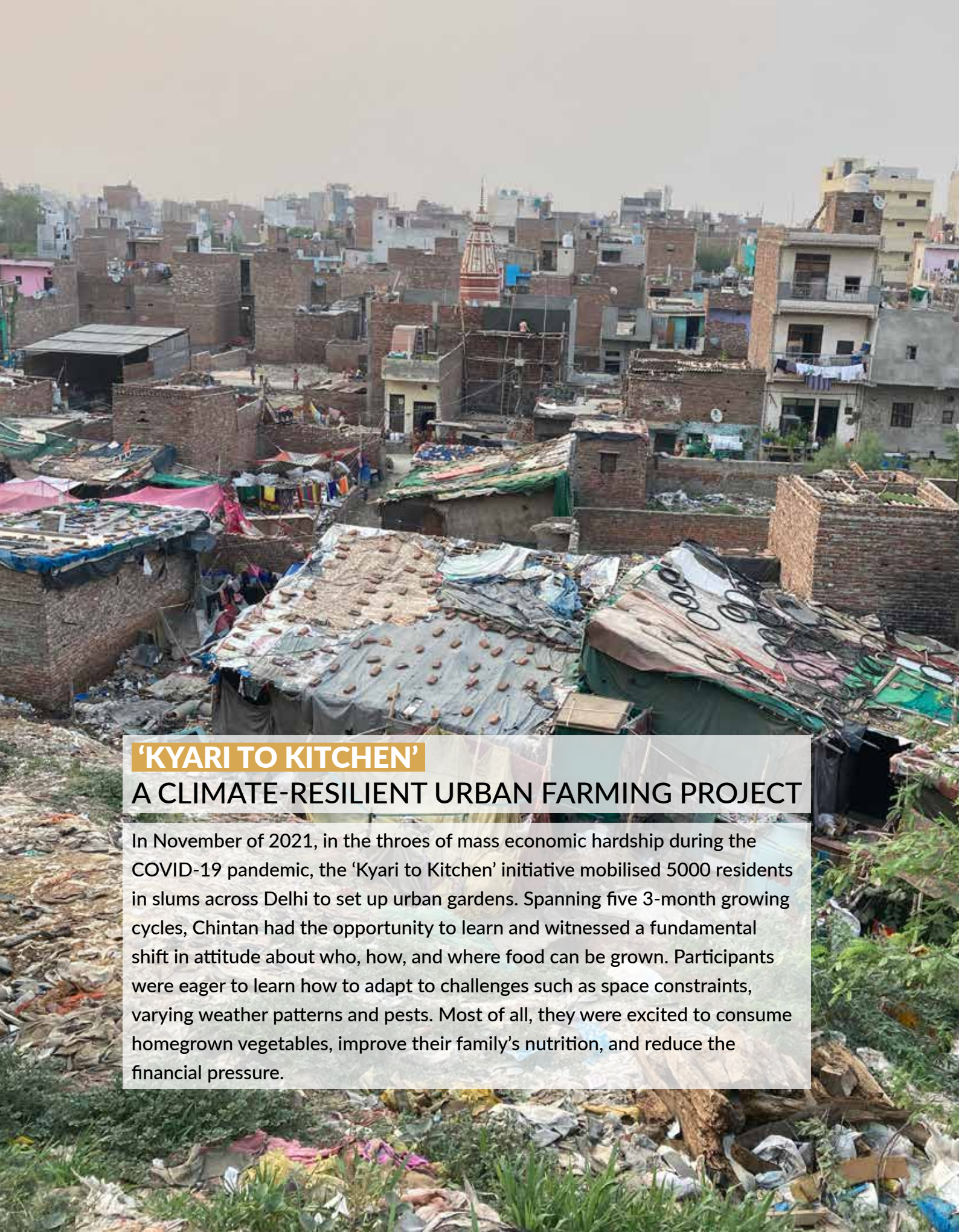
NUTRITION SECURITY FOR URBAN VULNERABLE WOMEN

About 90% of the workforce in India is part of the informal sector. Many of them are migrants, living in slums. The four women Mashuda, Manbhawti, Poonam and Savita all live in crowded bastis spread across Delhi. In a survey of 5000 women from these slums, an overwhelming 79% reported a perception that men need more food than women. Women and girls face the fallout of this perception, often eating leftovers and food lacking in nutrition.

Research on malnutrition conducted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare draws a clear link between micronutrient deficiencies and diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Over the years of working with marginalised communities such as waste pickers and women, Chintan has heard stories of financial hardship and food scarcity over and over again. Even if there is food, it is often bereft of nutrition. Inequitable access to nutrition based on class and gender is glaring, making the urban poor, especially women, most vulnerable to malnutrition and health issues.

In the face of abject poverty and inequality, it is helpful to conjure the sentiments of empowerment and skill-building in the popular saying: 'If you give a woman a fish, you feed her for a day. If you teach a woman to fish, you feed her for a lifetime.' Setting up gardens in the narrow lanes of slums is exactly this. Urban farming has the potential to push back against the onslaught of packaged food. Although touted as cheap and easy-to-cook, the health cost of bad food cannot be ignored.

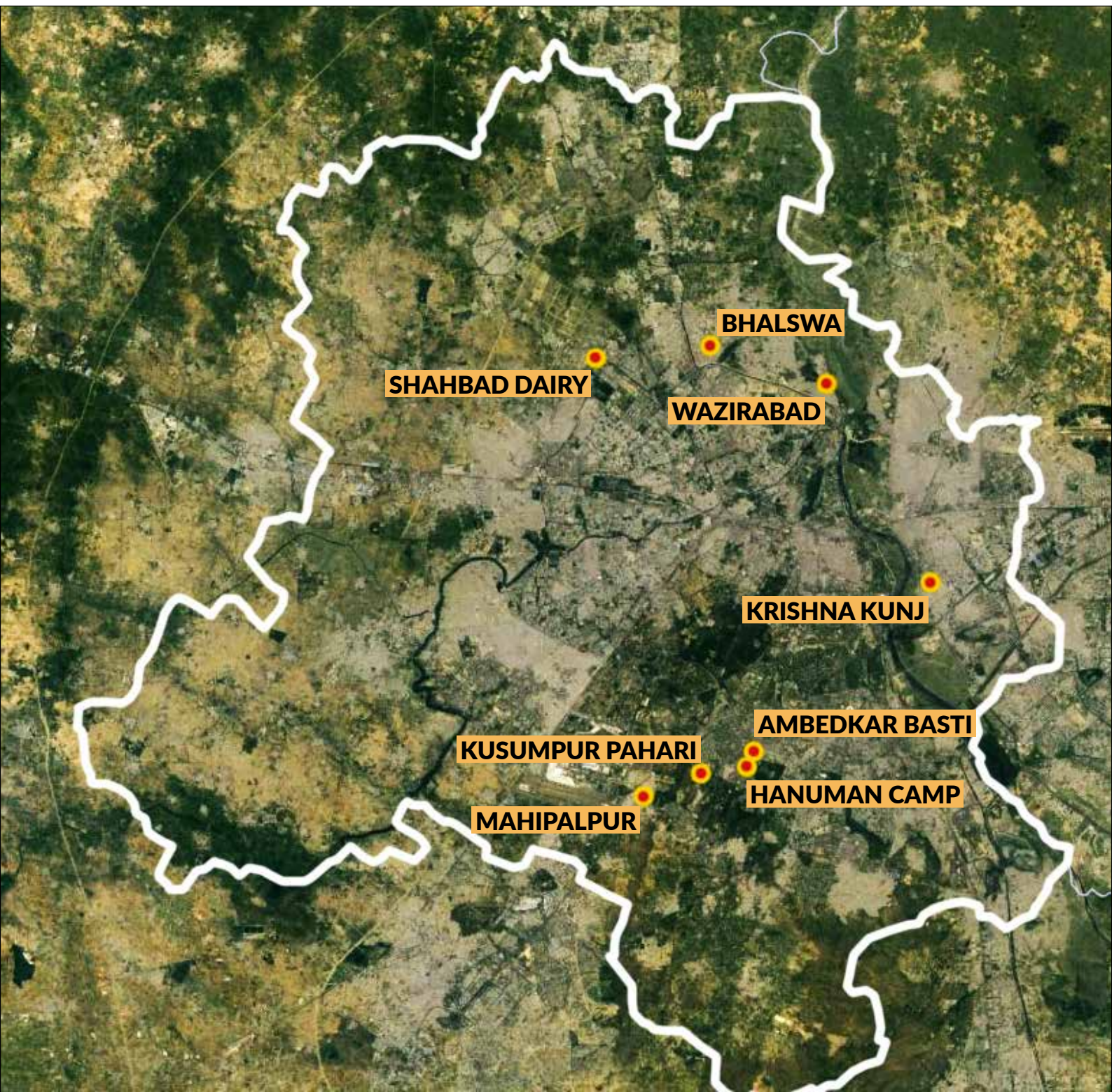
As climate change continues to wreak havoc on agriculture and food prices rise, the need for resilience is only getting greater. Extreme events such as the Covid lockdown open our eyes to existing inequalities. For example, only 15% of poor households received the one kg of pulses promised in April 2020 under the Centre's COVID-19 welfare package. What if more people among the urban poor could grow their own food and reduce dependence on markets? What if the most marginalised communities had more agency in their access to nutrition?



'KYARI TO KITCHEN'

A CLIMATE-RESILIENT URBAN FARMING PROJECT

In November of 2021, in the throes of mass economic hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'Kyari to Kitchen' initiative mobilised 5000 residents in slums across Delhi to set up urban gardens. Spanning five 3-month growing cycles, Chintan had the opportunity to learn and witnessed a fundamental shift in attitude about who, how, and where food can be grown. Participants were eager to learn how to adapt to challenges such as space constraints, varying weather patterns and pests. Most of all, they were excited to consume homegrown vegetables, improve their family's nutrition, and reduce the financial pressure.



BHALSWA



MAHIPALPUR



HANUMAN CAMP



SHAHBAD DAIRY



WAZIRABAD



AMBEDKAR BASTI



KUSUMPUR PAHARI



KRISHNA KUNJ



KICKSTARTING THE PROJECT

Chintan led the project with a robust team including a project coordinator, 2 trainers, 4 dedicated coordinators and 20 facilitators from the project area, providing handholding at each step. Two local farmers were brought on board to train participants. After all, growing food is a science, and attempting agriculture in an urban slum landscape is an entirely different scenario from rural fields, requiring adaptation and resourceful thinking.

Gathering a team took much effort and patience, as many external agencies were hesitant to do work in far-flung, remote slums, perceived to be unsanitary and dangerous. Finding a nutritionist to consult with was even more challenging, as it was of utmost importance that they were knowledgeable of affordable recipes and sensitive to the limited access to ingredients in poor households.

The 18-month duration of the program allowed the time for five 3-month growing cycles and a fruitful learning curve. A growing cycle is measured by the time it takes from sowing seeds to harvesting the produce. In each cycle, beneficiaries were able to work with the team to find solutions to any

problems they faced. Lessons learned could be applied to the next growing cycle. Many even experimented with growing plants in addition to the seeds initially provided. Women had savvy solutions to the lack of space, and used items such as jars, plastic bottles and buckets that they upcycled from their waste picker jobs for planting.

Participants were asked what they wanted to grow and eat. This was factored into the plan, along with feasibility, since agriculture is eco-region specific. Master farmers helped identify high-nutrition and easy-to-grow vegetables suited to Delhi: Malabar spinach, red amaranth, spinach, and creepers such as lauki and bitter gourd. Considering the prevalence of iron deficiency among women, planting green leafy vegetables was a priority. Spinach was selected as the first crop, since it is hardy and would have multiple growing cycles over the project duration. Choosing crops that have a short growing cycle was important, as the fast turnout would mean more frequent access to nutritious vegetables, thus making a larger impact on the weekly nutrition profile of families.

BASELINE SURVEY

With the goal of increasing equitable access to nutrition, the 'Kyari to Kitchen' team had to get to know the beneficiaries and understand their lived realities when it comes to food habits and nutrition profile. Baseline surveys were conducted in two phases using questionnaires, covering all 5000 beneficiaries. They provided insight into people's

food intake and spending habits on food, and revealed gaps in nutrition and knowledge. It turns out that poor people have learned bad urban habits such as wasteful consumption and throwing out nutrient-dense peels. The findings reinforced Chintan's belief that inequitable access to nutrition is a form of violence and discrimination against women and the poor. Grassroots action to improve nutrition security was the need of the hour. The survey also gave crucial cues as to how to go about training.

In addition to the initial farmer's training, which broke down the basics of planting, facilitators visited houses door-to-door, using informational posters in Hindi with simple images and graphics.

**79% OF THE
WOMEN SURVEYED
BELIEVE MEN NEED
MORE FOOD
THAN WOMEN**

MIGRATION AND FOOD



A majority of slum dwellers in Delhi are migrants from eastern states of India such as Bihar and West Bengal. Although agricultural livelihoods are just one generation away, migrating creates a huge loss of ancestral wisdom surrounding food and farming practices. Often, grains and vegetables they used to have access to at a cheap rate in their villages are not produced locally and expensive to procure. Over time, food traditions are lost and new tastes and habits develop to cope with urban bad food. 'Kyari to Kitchen' attempts to address gaps in knowledge and nutrition through appropriate re-skilling and training.

FINDINGS

GENDERED FOOD HABIT

91% of women spend Rs 2000 to Rs 8000 per month on food, a significant portion of their household income

43% of women don't eat fruit or eat less than the recommended amount.

79% of the women buy fruits in the evening, indicating that they buy the un-sold fruit at lower prices

* The percentage of women eating green leafy vegetables is negligible

80% of women reported eating eggs and animal protein, only around 7% had consumed it in the last 3 days

NUTRITION KNOW-HOW

43% of the women believed that there is no need to wash a vegetable if you will cook it properly

75% believed that food, once cooked, can be left outside without spoiling.

less than **45%** agreed that the use of an iron Kadai improves the iron content of food

more than **80%** agreed that worms also reduced the body's capacity to absorb nutrition.

66% of people discard the peels of potatoes.



ANAEMIA: A WARNING

- **53%** of women of reproductive age are anemic.
- **54%** of adolescent girls are anemic.
- Children from the age of 6-59 months have **58%** prevalence of anemia.
- Pregnant and lactating women have **50%** and **58%** prevalence of anemia respectively.

From a survey conducted by National Health Mission, under Poshan Abhiyan and National Family Health Survey 4

HEALTH SURVEY AND SCREENING

Chintan initiated a health survey with the aim of identifying risk factors for diseases in people without symptoms. The survey was designed to find out the nutritional and health status of women beneficiaries, including their physical, social, and mental health. A baseline health check-up was conducted in July of 2022 at all 8 project sites with 358 women aged 18-61 that participated in the health survey. The examination was done in collaboration with Lifeline Laboratory, a renowned laboratory in South Delhi. Blood samples were collected to determine levels of complete blood count (CBC), Iron, Vitamin

B12, and Vitamin D. Other factors such as Body Mass Index (BMI), height and weight were also recorded. The objective of these tests was to screen for diseases, nutritional deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, allergic or urine infection, and common issues accompanying malnutrition such as anaemia. The goal was early detection and understanding the health of beneficiaries. Apart from providing revelatory health data and statistics, the survey and check-up also provided a glimpse into health concerns of beneficiaries and the resources and healthcare systems available to the community.



HEALTH REPORT

BAD NEWS:

55% of the women beneficiaries had low haemoglobin

67% came under the category of obese

96% of the women had vitamin D deficiencies

GOOD NEWS:

only **23%** of women had low iron levels, which could be partly due to the use of iron kadhai

15% had insufficient B12



SCIENCE OF FARMING IN A CONCRETE JUNGLE

Growing food in urban slums demands adaptation and thinking on one's feet. Planting requires science and planning. Seeds and manure were distributed every three months, and crops were carefully selected based on changing seasons.

5 GROWING CYCLES

1: Pumpkin, Ridge Gourd, Bottle Gourd, Bitter Gourd, Spinach, Red Amaranth, Malabar Spinach

2: Spinach, Red Amaranth, Malabar Spinach, Chilli, Cucumber

3: Spinach, Red Amaranth, Malabar Spinach, Bitter Gourd

4: Spinach, Mustard, Fenugreek, Chenopodium Album, Beans

5: Spinach, Malabar Spinach, Red Amaranth, Cucumber and Chilli

It was also important to choose crops that would be resilient in extreme climate scenarios such as drought or flooding. In the hot summer months, Chintan realised that plants would need protection from the harsh sun. So, green mesh was distributed to provide shade. 'Kyari to Kitchen' had to be dynamic and respond to the variables and challenges that arose along the way.



WHAT TO
GROW.
HOW TO
GROW.
WHERE TO
GROW.
INNOVATION
IS THE KEY



MICROGREENS

Green leafy vegetables such as spinach and amaranth can be harvested just a week after germination. The baby leaves are referred to as microgreens and are packed with nutrition. Participants were very satisfied with microgreens. In addition to growing them for consumption, there is a possibility of providing market linkages to sell them commercially. With such a short growing cycle, they have a potential to provide both nutrition and supplementary income.

PROVIDING MATERIAL INPUTS

Chintan made field visits to zero in on rooftop and other open spaces for planting. The soil in Delhi is not exceptional for growing. Slums are often located near landfills or otherwise toxic land. And obviously, there is a dearth of space. So, planting in pots and using a mix of mud and manure was the best approach to set up home gardens.

The distribution of material inputs was carried out systematically. Urban farming kits included four pots, two kilograms of organic manure, green cloth for shade, and one trowel with seeds of pumpkin, ridge gourd, bottle gourd, spinach, red amaranth and Malabar spinach. Once materials were distributed, regular visits were made to monitor progress.



HOW TO FARM IN A SLUM

Training was an integral part of 'Kyari to Kitchen', as tending to plants is not exactly a hobby of the poor. Sessions covered the basics of plant care, such as the need for air, sunlight and water, correct proportions of soil and manure and upkeep such as weeding. External market inputs were avoided, to keep costs low and keep plants chemical free. Participants were even taught non-chemical hacks such as preparing homemade pesticide: a concoction of onion and garlic water. After all, growing food in a concrete jungle requires resourcefulness.



**WITHIN WEEKS
OF PLANTING,
THESE WOMEN
DEBUNK OUR
NOTION THAT
WE NEED
LARGE FIELDS
TO GROW
FOOD. WE CAN
THANK THEIR
GARDENS FOR
REDUCING THE
URBAN HEAT
ISLAND EFFECT**

**LET'S FOLLOW
UP WITH THEM...**



MASHUDA

Ms. Mashuda was part of the first planting season of 'Kyari to Kitchen'. She planted eight vegetables in pots: spinach, chili, green and red amaranth, cucumber, Malabar spinach, ridge gourd and bottle gourd. As you can imagine, space is a constraint in Mahipalpur and one has to be crafty. Ms. Mashuda upcycled items like bottles and jars from her waste segregation job to plant more seeds. When she saw that the chili and spinach plants dried up and had yellow leaves, she adapted, by shifting the pots to shade. Watering the plants every morning and evening has become a part of her daily

routine. She is eager to continue growing food and says that the homegrown vegetables taste much better than ones from the market. She is aware that they are chemical-free and more nutritious. Her family enjoyed half a kilogram of ridge gourd in two tasty preparations: stuffed and chutney forms.



MANBHAWTI

Part of 'Kyari to Kitchen' since November 2021, Manbhawti followed advice from the nutritionist and believes that her health has improved since growing and eating fresh vegetables. She is more active and there are no complaints of weakness or frequent illness.

**PRESENTING
A NEW BAND**

With easy access to spinach, Malabar spinach, red amaranth, ridge gourd, bitter gourd and chilis, she is able to save money and increase the nutrient density of staples such as flour and potatoes. She even uses the peels of vegetables.



POONAM

Poonam planted extra crops like coriander and garlic in addition to the spinach, beans, fenugreek, mustard, and amaranth seeds she was given. The homegrown produce has taken significant financial strain off her family, as they no longer rely on her husband's income for vegetables. She prepares dishes like poi ka saag (Malabar spinach), rice with spinach and

daal with spinach. To combat infestation, she has made a mixture of garlic and onion water, which she sprinkles on the decomposing leaves and frequently plucks out. She often moves her plants to protect them from excess sunlight and uses the nets provided. She encourages her relatives and neighbours to plant at home and exclaims with pride "I prepare half a kilogramme of spinach sprouts within just 4 days, enough for 4 people to consume at once".



SAVITA

Savita was always interested in gardening, despite the lack of resources to pursue it. In 2022, she received pots, seeds and

training as part of the 'Kyari to Kitchen' initiative. One of her biggest setbacks was major flooding in her neighbourhood during monsoon. The plants that she was growing on the ground kept getting swept away and she eventually had to move them to the terrace. The stairs to the terrace are narrow and shifting big pots was no small feat. She has harvested 1.5 to 2 kgs of produce each season.

Now, she is growing spinach, fenugreek, mustard, bathuwa and green beans. The family consumes homegrown vegetables about thrice a week, mixed with potatoes, daal, or even in paranthas, for a new taste. She believes that her children are more energetic and fall sick less often since they started this nutritious diet. She even manages to share surplus produce with her neighbours. Her neighbour Rani Devi, 36 commented, "The vegetables produced at home taste much better than the ones bought from the market. The difference is huge."

OF GREEN REVOLUTIONARIES



SLUMS MAY BE LOCATED ON DEGRADED AND TOXIC LAND. BUT FARMING IS STILL POSSIBLE



WHAT HAPPENS AFTER HARVEST?

**NUTRITION
IS FOR ALL.
EXPERIMENTING
WITH COOKING
IS NOT JUST
FOR THE RICH.**

Chintan realised that part of the re-skilling necessary for migrant communities is knowing what to do with vegetables once they are harvested. So, in April of 2022, three cooking classes were conducted at Wazirabad, Krishna Kunj, and Hanuman Camp RK Puram, with 100 women in each location, totalling 300 participants. Over the duration of the project, a total of 46 cooking workshops were conducted with 5000 participating women. Classes covered the basics of cooking from washing vegetables thoroughly before

cutting and cooking, to using peels that are often discarded but high in nutrients. Women were taught two recipes using the vegetables they grew and given tips like reducing oil and avoiding overcooking. The goal was to address some of the gaps in knowledge of nutrition revealed in the baseline surveys. The cooking classes also added an element of creativity and empowerment, so that women could take pride in their homegrown harvest and share new preparations with their families.

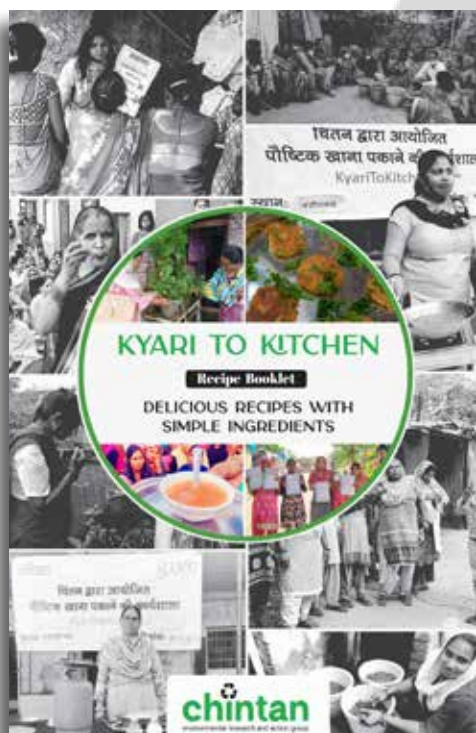




RIGHT TO COOKBOOK

Chintan created a recipe book in collaboration with a nutritionist. From soups and snacks, to full meals and desserts, the recipes emphasize nutrition, simplicity and accessibility of ingredients. The recipes also explore ways to prepare vegetables that beneficiaries are growing. The recipes cover traditional Indian cooking and have precious bits of folk wisdom surrounding food, such as using the different parts of plants and minimising waste. One doesn't need to be rich to enjoy cooking or get creative in the kitchen.

GUIDE TO GOOD FOOD



FENUGREEK LEAVES SOUP

This Fenugreek Leaves Soup is perfect for anyone, especially for people with low blood sugar or high cholesterol levels. It's loaded with iron and magnesium, and helps with appetite control, heartburn and inflammation.

Total Time: 30-35 Minutes • Serves 4 •
Difficulty: Medium

INGREDIENTS

250 gm Fenugreek Leaves (Methi) • 2
Tomatoes • 6 Cloves of Garlic • Powdered
Black Pepper • 2 Teaspoon Fenugreek Seeds
• 4 Cup of Water • 1 Medium Onion • 1
Tablespoon Mustard Oil • Salt

DIRECTIONS

1. To prepare this nutritious recipe, start by taking the onion, garlic cloves and tomatoes and washing them under running water. Use a clean chopping board to finely chop the vegetables and keep them aside.
2. Take a pan, put it over medium flame and proceed to heat the mustard oil in it. When the oil is hot enough, add the Fenugreek seeds and chopped garlic to it and sauté them together.
3. Then, add the chopped onion, fenugreek leaves and tomatoes to the pan and stir-fry them for a couple of minutes till it turns slightly golden. Add water along with salt and pepper to taste and wait till it starts boiling.
4. Finally, turn down the flame and cook for about 20 minutes, till the vegetables are cooked. Pour lemon juice over it and mix.
5. Transfer the soup to a bowl and serve hot!

BITTER GOURD CHIPS

These crispy bitter gourd chips are so tasty and are not really bitter. After you taste these chips, you'll like bitter gourd at least in this form and keep on munching one by one.

Total Time: 35 Minutes • Serves 4 •

Difficulty: Medium

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Bitter Gourd • Rice Flour • 1 tbsp. Besan
- ¾ tbsp. Corn Flour (Optional) • 1 tsp. Coriander Powder • ½ tsp. Cumin Powder • ½ tsp. Fennel • ¼ tsp. Raw Mango Powder
- 1 tsp. Red Chilli Powder • ½ tsp. Turmeric Powder • Salt • Oil

DIRECTIONS

1. To make bitter gourd chips, start by washing and drying the bitter gourd thoroughly. Cut off both the ends and start cutting the bitter gourd into thin slices.
2. Now put the bitter gourd slices, rice flour, gram flour, corn flour, coriander powder, cumin powder, fennel, raw mango, red chilli powder, turmeric powder and salt in a bowl.
3. Add a little water and mix everything well. Put oil in a pan and after it heats up, add bitter gourd slices one by one. 4. Fry the bitter gourd from both the sides till it becomes crispy. Take it out of the oil and put it on a paper towel to remove excess oil.
5. Serve the bitter gourd chips along with tea for an evening snack.

COOKED RIDGE GOURD PEEL

Ridge gourd is loaded with nutrients such as dietary fiber, vitamin C, zinc, thiamin, iron and magnesium and so is its peel. Comparatively the peel is richer in dietary fiber than the gourd itself.

Total Time: 30-40 Minutes • Serves 2 •

Difficulty: Medium

INGREDIENTS

- 1 or ½ Cup Ridge Gourd Peels • 1 Cup Cold Water • 2 tbsp. Mustard Oil • 1 tsp. Cumin • 1 tsp. Mustard Seeds • Salt • Turmeric • Chilli Powder • ½ Medium Tomato

DIRECTIONS

1. Peel the skin of the ridge gourd and cut it into small pieces. Wash the peels with cold water and put two spoons of mustard oil and one spoon of cumin and mustard seeds in a pan.
2. Let them cook on high flame and then add the ridge gourd peels and cover the pan with a lid until the vegetable becomes soft.
3. Add salt, turmeric powder, red chilli and a piece of green chilli according to your taste.
4. Put 3 tbsp. of water in it and let the peels cook on medium flame for 5 minutes.
5. Add the half chopped tomato and cook on low flame for another 5 minutes.
6. Now the vegetables are ready. Take it out in a bowl and garnish it with green coriander and serve.

... and more

For monitoring and evaluation of the project, it was important to assess not only the delivery of resources like seeds, tools, and manure, but also the personal experience of the beneficiaries, including their overall satisfaction level. Participants gave feedback on different aspects of the program, using ratings from 1 to 5, with 1 signifying the lowest level of satisfaction. The 20 facilitators covered 1000 houses in a week, with each facilitator taking on 50 houses a day. About 80% of total beneficiaries were monitored.

In order to effectively measure the impact of growing food on nutrition and health, a follow-up health exam was initiated in April of 2023. Findings are currently in the process of being documented.

KEEPING AN EYE



LESSONS



As expected, growing food in urban slums poses unique issues that a typical farmer growing on fields would not encounter. Access to water is limited, provided by tankers or available only twice a day. Over 60% of the women work at the project sites, so participating in trainings or caring for the plants was often juggled with work responsibilities and household chores.

While participants were extremely satisfied with the material inputs and training, there was disappointment about failure of plants such as cucumber and lauki. Despite not fruiting, the lauki creepers yielded leaves, and these were consumed, keeping in mind the goal of increasing intake of green leafy vegetables.

MEET POONAM DEVI, 27 YEARS OLD

Poonam resides in Vineet Dharamkata, Mahipalpur, Delhi with her husband Rajesh, 34, and two daughters. Mostly a homemaker, she makes a little money each month from sewing clothes. She was eager to participate in 'Kyari to Kitchen' and thought growing vegetables could be an extra income. A week after planting, she saw that the seeds did not germinate and became disheartened. She promptly contacted community volunteer Ms. Nutan Devi and together they were able to identify the problem: the buckets she had used for planting did not have a hole for water drainage. She rectified the issue, re-planted and was relieved to see growth in just a week.



WAY FORWARD

As the project was coming to an end, it was important to ensure that growing food would not also abruptly stop. Chintan identified 16 champion women amongst the beneficiaries, 2 in each location, that could help keep the project alive. Apart from improving women's access to nutrition and health, Chintan wanted to nurture leadership that would sustain the work.

It was worth considering how to scale up to include more beneficiaries and even replicate the project elsewhere.

Over the course of the 18 months, with experience under their belt and success in creating home gardens, participants felt a sense of pride. The champion women were selected for their exceptional success, skill and enthusiasm

levels. Amidst thousands of budding urban farmers, they stood out as leaders that would continue the work of facilitators. They would not only act as a 'first line of defence' for community members in the face of challenges while growing, but also help sustain interest in growing food. They would act as a liaison between beneficiaries and the Chintan team.



MEET **REKHA**, 42 YEARS OLD

Residing in Murgah Mandi, Bhalswa, Delhi, Rekha joined 'Kyari to Kitchen' as a facilitator in January of 2022. She was one of the beneficiaries of the pilot urban farming project Chintan undertook at Bhalswa. During that time, she asked questions, showed enthusiasm and an inclination to experiment with planting beyond the scope of the project. She grew tomatoes, eggplant, garlic, okra, and more. Although this experience gave her technical skills, she was unsure about going door-to-door and talking to other women, which was a prerequisite of the job of facilitator.

She said, "being a housewife for last 23 years, I was not confident to move around and convince others about planting. Also, monitoring was challenging". She now covers approximately 50 houses each day and is able to record data, click photos and share them on a WhatsApp group. The gardens in her area are lush and she has built a rapport with her community and peer facilitators. She earns Rs 3500 a month doing work she both enjoys and believes in.



KYARI TO KITCHEN WHAT WAS DONE

CHINTAN ORGANISED **143** FARMER TRAININGS,
46 COOKING WORKSHOPS, **DAILY**
MONITORING VISITS (EACH FACILITATOR
COVERED **50** HOUSES PER DAY) COVERING
5000 BENEFICIARIES AND **16** WOMEN
CHAMPIONS SELECTED

KYARI TO KITCHEN WHAT IT TAKES

1 PROJECT COORDINATOR, **4** COORDINATORS,
2 FARMERS, **2** TRAINERS, **1** NUTRITIONIST,
20 FACILITATORS AMONG BENEFICIARIES
(WORKED FOR CHINTAN), **16** CHAMPION
WOMEN (ONLY SUPPORTED ON THE GROUND)



'KYARI TO KITCHEN' ADDRESSES FOLLOWING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



AFTERWORD

Kyari to Kitchen is based on insights gleaned from several years of work on the ground with vulnerable communities. Exactly how vulnerable they were became clear during COVID, where they depended on charity for a simple meal. Poor nutrition and negative health impact of seemingly cheaper food is a challenge in many parts of the country. Gender inequity runs deep, as women and girls eat last and least, even believing they need less food than men.

As climate change wreaks havoc on agriculture across India and food prices rise, nutritious food will continue to be out of the reach for the poor. Gendered inequity and need for nutritional security and resilience led Chintan to conceptualize the Kyari to Kitchen Initiative. We asked ourselves : Why can't women farm in a slum?

Implementing the project was a learning journey. Thousands of new farmers-all women-upended what was an elite, hipster term in urban India. Most were able to harvest between 2 to 3 substantial servings of greens every week. The interaction with farmers from the Yamuna river bed opened their minds to the possibility of farming outside their villages, building their self-confidence. Cooking workshops and creating recipes built a culture of everyday nutrition. Kyari to Kitchen demonstrates the possibility of climate adaptation and nutritional security for the urban poor, especially women. It also demonstrates how green pockets can be developed across Indian cities, reducing the heat island effect. For these reasons, as India innovates to fight climate change using its own resources, such a project holds out hope for millions, if scaled up.

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