



ISSN (E): 2320-3862
ISSN (P): 2394-0530
NAAS Rating 2017: 3.53
JMPS 2017; 5(4): 85-88
© 2017 JMPS
Received: 01-05-2017
Accepted: 02-06-2017

Debasmita Ghosh Dhar
West Bengal State Medicinal
Plants Board, 205, Vivekananda
Road, Kolkata, India

Paradigm of social awareness through Medicinal Plants Board: A laudable approach

Debasmita Ghosh Dhar

Abstract

Looking at the world's biodiversity record, India is strongly recognized as one of the big part of species richness with the special responses towards bouncing in medicinal plants. For this accountability, India has relatively high approaches in medicinal plants which are non-narcotic, devoid of side-effects and ultimately demanding for safeguarding health standards. Care over the spinning way of natural resources, National Medicinal Plants Board has taken vital steps to encourage its awareness among people for prompt and wonderful success. This excellent initiative came out through State Medicinal Plants Board where the funding was formally handed over to different non-government organizations (NGOs) as programmer for a more ambitious target area of work. The exciting phase unfolded with the choice of three more available medicinal species of West Bengal namely 'Haritaki', 'Bohera' and 'Bael' along their potential benefits and the whole awareness programme was entitled as '1st Phase of Haritaki, Bohera & Bael Programme'. The awareness programme featured a wide variety of people covering vast societal levels- from rural to urban, Anganwadi to Self-Help Group, students to local entities with the clutch of implementation. Amid the programmer some NGOs' performances were thriving and fabricating where others tumble and left discordant note of performance. However, the total arrangement contributed a good stead over and should be explored furthermore in coherent set of policies capturing prolific and palliative approaches towards medicinal plants of our country.

Keywords: Medicinal plants, National Medicinal Plants Board, State Medicinal Plants Board, NGO, Social awareness programme

Introduction

India, a big biodiverse country of the world, possesses great medicinal plant resources. Among 29 states, India's 4th population state West Bengal offers a vast diversity in medicinal plants. Recognizing its attractive natural resources with greenery and variation, attempts have been made by the government to provide a better life for people. In today's world, health is a big issue especially with the uprising problems in modern system of medicine instead of good practice. So, nowadays emphasis is put on traditional system of medicine. Under such circumstances, National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) gets involved and takes the pledge to spread the awareness on medicinal plants. In order to restore such initiatives, NMPB aims to distribute responsibility among different State Medicinal Plants Board (SMPB) of our country. West Bengal State Medicinal Plants Board (WBSMPB) has taken the progressive initiation on bridging the gap between the social thinking and considerable knowledge of traditional herbal remedies. A method of knitting the needles of awareness through different non-government organizations (NGOs) was chosen for obtaining fruitful feedback.

Social awareness is the consciousness of people among the society in cooperative manner through interaction, accomplished by positive changes of some activity with the aim of transition of superset social framework. It addresses the important facet of our society where public gain the up streaming knowledge of several issues in a productive manner. From my view point, awareness programmes typically rely upon the social consciousness efforts. It is critically aimed with the behavioral change of public admitted with a lasting social impact. It should be strongly affirmative and leaves an indelible impact by which people from different walks of life may get motivated and enabled to a healthy life span as their choice. Enriched discussion, proper guideline with dedicated inputs, integrative awareness methodology to all level can sensitize the public to a big length. In fact such events ideally provide basic knowledge to protect and secure our habit.

It is an acknowledged fact that Medicinal Plants Board tied the knot of relationship between

Correspondence

Debasmita Ghosh Dhar
West Bengal State Medicinal
Plants Board, 205, Vivekananda
Road, Kolkata, India Email:
debasmitabotany@gmail.com

the awareness programme and medicinal plants using dynamic landscape of consciousness which allowed strong pathways of refining and reconstructing the natural remedial practices. As a potent natural source of different bioactive compounds, medicinal plants were the promising choice of therapeutic lead for the social awareness programme. Therefore, the whole programme was amalgamated and fondly adopted just to do good and positive outcome. It is noteworthy that the programme was aimed to create awareness about medicinal plants coincide in a way that participants must acquire knowledge with its implementation. The programme was formulated with the framework of several events to facilitate and maximize the information and strategies about medicinal plants as greater and reasonable choice. The following strategies were formulated to disseminate awareness about medicinal plants (MPs):

- Providing basic information about MPs
- Aspects and clarification of MPs
- Need-based education to different area of the society
- Conducive and effective use of interest
- Decentralized economic efficiency by MPs
- Produces better and wider choices of MPs.

Materials and Methods

It was a delightful experience for me to be a part of such awareness programme as a 'Field Monitor' of WBSMPB. During this period, different social awareness programmes organized by six NGOs which were supported by WBSMPB were monitored. The details of these NGOs and their working areas during the awareness programmes have been provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Details of NGOs and working area during awareness programmes

Sl. No.	NGOs Name	District/ Working area
1	Society for Equitable Voluntary Actions (SEVA)	North 24 Parganas
2	Voice of People	South 24 Parganas
3	Khardah Public Cultural & Welfare Association (KPCWA)	Howrah and Kolkata
4	DeriachakVidyasagar Social Welfare Organisation	Purba Medinipur
5	Village Welfare Society	Paschim Medinipur
6	Dhansimla Socio-Economic Research & Development Organisation	Purulia

So, here is the exciting phase when it comes out with the choice of three more available medicinal species of West Bengal namely 'Haritaki' (*Terminalia chebula* Retz., family: Combretaceae), 'Bohera' (*Terminalia bellerica* Roxb., family: Combretaceae) and 'Bael' (*Aegle marmelos* Linn., family: Rutaceae) targeting with its appropriate use and strengthening them within our ecological framework for its adequate access to traditional health care among people. All of these three plants are extensively used in unani, ayurveda and homeopathic system as a popular traditional medicine not only in India but also in other countries of Asia and Africa. They possess different bioactive phytochemicals which reduces the chance of various health ailments. So, in today's tough period when people are facing important challenges through adaptability and side effects of chemical uses in modern medicine it's better to focus on the underlying knowledge of medicinal plants with their exposition.

As a 'Field Monitor' of this project I evaluated the activity of the programmers' i.e. the six NGOs by their performances, heart-warming participation, planning, management, interaction pattern, effective and updated awareness method, fund utilization, proximity zone etc. In this project, details of the six NGOs have been provided in Table 1. The whole awareness programme was entitled as '1st Phase of Haritaki, Bohera & Bael Programme' which again divided into four areas:

1. Training and Capacity Building programme for Anganwadi workers / helpers
2. Local Fair programme
3. School Awareness programme
4. Value Addition programme

Each NGO had organized a total of four Anganwadi Training programmes, two Local Fair, six School Awareness and four

Value Addition programmes.

Results and Discussion

During the performance analyses of the six NGOs, different parameters were evaluated such as their presentation methodology, coordinate linkage of interaction, loading of participants, display of posters in public places, efficient allocation of seedlings, maximum fund utilization etc. The fundamental vision and assessment were extensively covered the following four divisions that has been portrayed in Fig. 1.

1. Training and Capacity Building programme for Anganwadi workers / helpers

Anganwadi was a massive and crucial initiation by the Indian government in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme to fight against child starvation and undernourishment. A typical Anganwadi/ICDS centre is a part of the Indian public health-care system which provides basic health care in Indian villages. Anganwadi workers have direct connection with the home inhabitants especially from rural areas where they provide implicit and active awareness of nutrition and health education, supplementary nutrition, pre-school non-formal education etc. It also includes child education and supplementation, child and mother's nutrition requirement, contraceptive counseling and supply. Therefore, SMPB had been working in the awareness programme with the ICDS center to provide the information, application and sustainable use of MPs. They were carrying out science that helped the Anganwadi workers for better understanding of MPs' value, and in turn, Anganwadi or ICDS workers could provide this knowledge to people associated with ICDS centre.



Fig 1: Different social events organized by the six NGOs during '1st Phase of Haritaki, Bohera & Bael Programme'. A-B: Anganwadi Training, C-D: Local Fair, E-F: School Awareness, G-H: Value Addition programmes

The WBSMPB had initiated training programme with one day duration for awareness of Haritaki, Bohera and Bael plants. Six NGOs organized these programmes which were supported by WBSMPB. Each NGO structured four training programmes with participation of 20-30 Anganwadi workers or helpers. It included lectures on benefits of Haritaki, Bohera and Bael, pasting of posters, brochure distribution, training and capacity building programme and distribution of these three plants at the end of the programme. A total of six training programmes for Anganwadi workers / helpers, one from each NGO were monitored and evaluated. Among these, the programme arranged by Deriachak Vidyasagar Social Welfare Organisation was found to be most successful. Other programmers like Society for Equitable Voluntary Actions (SEVA), Khardah Public Cultural & Welfare Association (KPCWA), Dhansimla Socio-Economic Research & Development Organisation were also pleasing. But the performances made by Voice of People and Village Welfare Society were found to be unsatisfactory as compared to other NGOs.

2. Local Fair programme

The mission of the event was to highlight the medicinal properties and positive impact of Haritaki, Bohera and Bael among local people. This was a friendly event and free for all to attend. With the vision of awareness among local people about the therapeutic value of these three medicinal plants and create special events including display of posters, brochure distribution and distribution of seedlings of these plants. The WBSMPB had initiated local fair programme which was organized by the six NGOs. Among these six programmes, the programme arranged by SEVA was found to be most satisfactory. They created a supportive environment where a community of local people participated very spontaneously. The session was packed with inspiring lectures, display of posters, brochure distribution and distribution of seedlings, idea to design, implementation and economic consolidation of these three MPs. Other programmers like KPCWA, Dhansimla Socio-Economic Research & Development Organisation and Voice of People were also very satisfying whereas Village Welfare Society and Deriachak Vidyasagar Social Welfare Organisation performed well. Over all, each

and every local fair programme was very inspiring and supportive to a wide variety of people among society.

3. School Awareness programme

Haritaki, Bohera & Bael campaign programme was initiated to sensitize school students as they are the upcoming thoughtful generation of our public prosperity. These types of awareness programme among students not only alert themselves but also provide consciousness to the people around them much faster. School Awareness programme under '1st Phase of Haritaki, Bohera & Bael Programme' helped the students to improve the basic knowledge of medicinal plants highlighted with these three plants and their implementation. In this one day programme, students were afforded with curriculum which was designed to incorporate both lecture and competition. Each lecture was accompanied with a presentation by expert speakers, mostly available as Power Point, which suited with the needs of students. The curriculum was focused on pasting of posters in school and public places, planting of seedlings in school premises, distribution of seedlings to students and competition on drawing, elocution, poetry writing etc. In a good number of programmes, students participated with a positive and vibrant attitude. They participated in competitions to create art, essays or poetry depicting importance of plants specially the Haritaki, Bohera and Bael.

So, the School Awareness programme under '1st Phase of Haritaki, Bohera & Bael Programme', supported by WBSMPB were created to provide a comprehensive awareness campaign in the schools of different districts of West Bengal with the target of student engagement and provide them detail knowledge of three plants to put into action and use. Among these six programmers, SEVA and Deriachak Vidyasagar Social Welfare Organisation performed with excellence. The instance organized by SEVA was engrossed by motivating, enlightening and informative speaker followed by student interaction. The other programmer like KPCWA was also very good in their performance. But the performance made by programmers like Dhansimla Socio-Economic Research & Development Organisation, Voice of People and Village Welfare Society were really disappointing where accurate information and

student interaction were lacking.

4. Value Addition programme

Six NGOs of six different districts conducted value addition programmes for Self Help Group (SHG) members with the aim of providing theoretical knowledge of medicinal and traditional value of Haritaki, Bohera and Bael as well as their practical inputs in commercial products. These programmes were offered with an objective of professional skills and attributes that enhance the overall development of an individual and make them ready for economic independence. From this awareness engagement SHGs could have better understanding of their knowledge and apply quickly at their work places which in turn, provide them better livelihood strategies. In each event, number of participants was 15-20 persons of SHG group. The programmes were carried out by proficient faculty and experts who ensured in-depth hands-on coaching. So, in each event the participants gained technical and skilled education to develop professional ethics which

may lead to confirmed success in their future work. Actually they acquired something more than what was provided in the stereotype curriculum. Among six NGOs, SEVA and KPCWA performed outstanding. Both the NGOs were in touch with the professional experts which kept the participants prepared for the oncoming works. The other programmers like Dhansimla Socio-Economic Research & Development Organisation, Voice of People and Deriachak Vidyasagar Social Welfare Organisation were also very good in their performance. But Village Welfare Society was average in their implementation.

It was the instinct and responsibility that led me to assess the performances of the six NGOs to evaluate them by means of % score (performance score in %) which has been provided in Fig. 2. The data indicated the potential and impressive output of SEVA and KPCWA along with the failure, error, mismanagement and improper work balance of the NGOs like Village Welfare Society and Voice of People on over all performances.

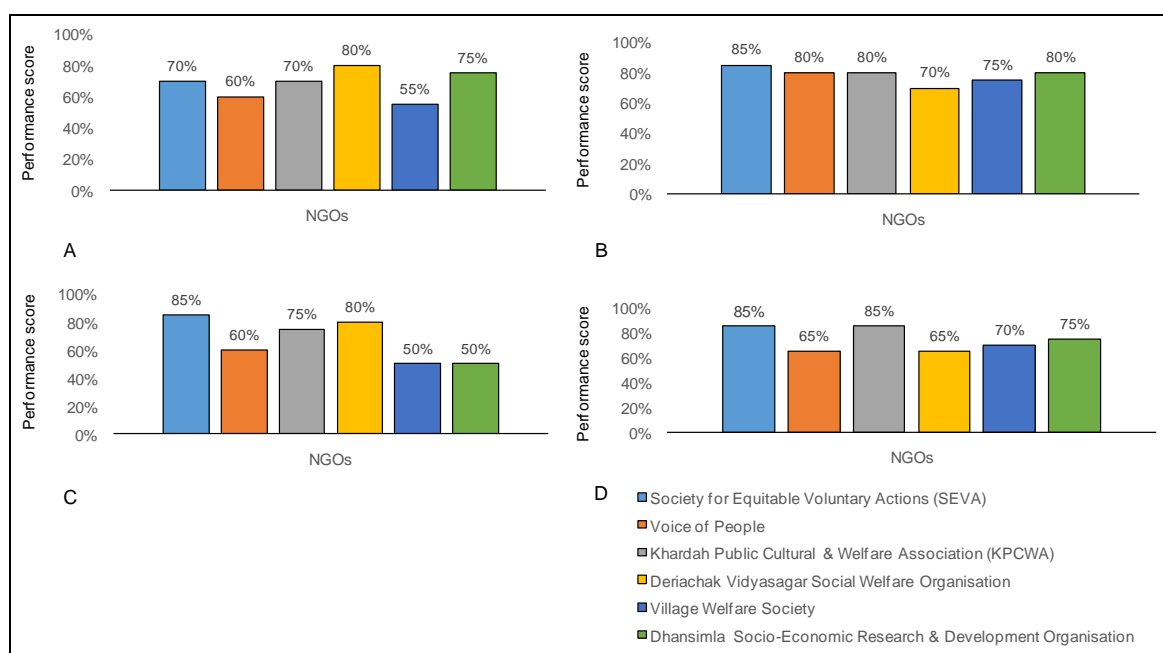


Fig 2: Performance score (%) of six NGOs during '1st Phase of Haritaki, Bohera & Bael Programme'. A: Anganwadi Training, B: Local Fair, C: School Awareness, D: Value Addition programmes

Conclusion

It was a memorable event and opportunity to serve as a 'Field Monitor' of WBSMPB to gather experience on growing awareness among widespread people of our society where Anganwadi workers accelerate basic education, local community learn medicinal literacy, students spark knowledge standards, Self Help Groups strive successful skill, collaboration meet challenges and efforts ensure efficient enclave. Though all the performance equations of six NGOs were not in accuracy but the initiatives were never confined to so-called dictionary based awareness programme. Rather it made larger connections to social advocacy in looking ways towards the approaches of medicinal plants. There were all sorts of grassroots initiatives that collectively made the wider perception of MPs for marching into action. Both National and State Medicinal Plants Board really did appropriate task to facilitate knowledge of the importance of medicinal plants either by a generalization or implication. So this type of awareness practicing must be forefront of encouraging societal agility in accordance with more diverse and positive needs.

Acknowledgements

The entire study was supported by NMPB, Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India and WBSMPB, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of West Bengal. I express my sincere gratitude to the Director, WBSMPB for his whole hearted support during the study. The Technical Officer, WBSMPB is gratefully acknowledged for cooperation. I am also thankful to Dr. Priyanka Dhar, SERB-National Post-Doctoral Fellow, CSIR-NBRI, Lucknow for copyediting of the manuscript.