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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Home Gardens and Nutrition Knowledge among Households in the Urban Areas of Morogoro, Tanzania

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### Abstract

Home Gardens (HG) are an ancient agricultural practice found in many countries worldwide. In the African household (HH), the HG is an important part of the unit since it contributes to the HH food security. Nutrition education is a tool which can be used to help the HH improve their diet quality. This study aimed at improving the diet quality through nutrition education.

A nutrition survey was undertaken in Oct. 2013 targeting 40 HH having HG in an urban area in Morogoro, Tanzania. HH and HG data were collected using a semi structured questionnaire. A vegetable frequency questionnaire was used to gather information on the HH vegetable consumption. A HH 24-h recall was collected for 3 consecutive days. Focus group discussions (FGD), participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and observations were used to collect qualitative data. Nutrition education sessions were also conducted for the participants.

The results show that the major motivation for cultivating HG was the need to provide vegetables for the HH (55 %) and as an income generation activity (22.5 %). Vegetable and fruit consumption were considered very important by 90 % and 85 % of the respondents respectively. Knowledge on vitamin A and iron was scored on a scale from 0 to 8. For vitamin A, 30 % of the respondents scored 8 and 25 % scored 1. For iron, 2.5 % scored 8 and 2.5 % scored 0. A significant correlation was observed between the education level of the respondent and the knowledge score for iron ( $p = 0.004$ ), but not for vitamin A.

Preliminary FGD analysis shows that the commonly cultivated vegetables were sweet potato leaves, pumpkin leaves, okra and cassava leaves. The main reasons for cultivating these were the ease of cultivation, HH preference and a good yield through the year. Further data analysis is underway to determine associations between the variables and FGD data is being analysed using MaxQDA.

HG provides easy access to and helps increase vegetable consumption. Providing nutrition education to these families can help to improve the choice and combination of vegetables grown and consumed. This will help in improving the diet quality of the HH.

**Keywords:** Home gardens, nutrition education, vegetable consumption.