

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

### Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition through Maternal, Infant, And Young Child Nutrition Support Groups: A Case of Kwale County

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**Background:** According to (KDHS 2022), 23% of children under-5 in Kwale County are stunted compared to 18% at national level. This is attributed to knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) gaps, poor dietary practices, recurrent droughts and poverty. Matuga sub county , one of the four sub counties in Kwale County has stunting rates of 25.2% and underweight rates of 12.7% (SMART Survey 2022).To address this, USAID Stawisha Pwani (USP) project initiated Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) support groups in Vyongwani CU , Matuga Subcounty.

**Objective:** This abstract highlight how MIYCN support groups can be used to improve food security.

**Methodology:** USP project trained 25 health workers and 224 community health volunteers (CHVs) on MIYCN. The trainees mapped households to identify pregnant and/or lactating women in Vyongwani CU. The CHVs formed 9 MIYCN support groups each consisting of 15 pregnant and lactating mothers. With the support of the Department of health, each MIYCN group conducted monthly meetings to give mothers health education and economic empowerment mentorships. The project engaged agricultural extension officers and social protection department to impart mothers with skills on bee keeping, gardening, small animal rearing and Income generating activities(IGAs)

**Findings:** The groups enabled timely identification of malnutrition cases and supplementation of Vitamin A and dewormers. 100% of pregnant mothers in the groups attended their Antenatal clinic visits consistently, took Iron Folic acid supplementation and had skilled delivery while 100% of the children whose mothers were in the groups breastfed exclusively for 6 months. The MICYN support groups established a community resource center. The nine groups established two demonstration beehives, three community demonstration kitchen gardens, rabbit farming, poultry and other IGAs. All the 135 mothers replicated kitchen gardens at household level while 67 mothers initiated small scale poultry farming. The women sell surplus fruits, vegetables, honey and eggs harvested from their small gardens. Mothers adopted sun drying as a method of preserving surplus vegetables.

**Conclusion:** Integration of health education and economic empowerment in MIYCN support groups has the potential to contribute to improved food security.

**Key words:** Malnutrition, Supplementation, Antenatal