

International Year of Biodiversity in Mauritius - 2010

Celebrations by the GEF Small Grants Programme- UNDP

Launching of project “Cultivation and Propagation of Medicinal Plants” by Association Pour L’Education des Enfants Defavorisés (Association for Education of Vulnerable Children, APEDED) by the Resident Representative, UNDP, Mrs. Leyla Tegmo- Reddy on 17 May 2010 at the seat of the organisation, Paul Baillache Street, Chemin Grenier, Mauritius. This project was launched on the occasion of the 2010 International Biodiversity Day and embodied the very essence of the 2010 theme which was “Biodiversity for Development and Poverty Alleviation”.

Brief on project

The project was initiated in order to help poor women from low-income families overcome financial challenges. “Secret Grand-Mère”, (Grandma’ Secrets) are some 15 herbal teas prepared from medicinal plants by 20 mothers of disadvantaged children who are given free pre-primary education by the Non-Governmental Organisation, APEDED. These mothers received support from the UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme in Mauritius to cultivate, dehydrate, package, and market for the first time a Mauritian brand of different local medicinal and herbal teas which are sold in supermarkets and fairs. A small nursery was set up on the roof of their pre-primary school and a dehydrator and other packaging equipment were provided. A full fledged training package was provided that covered an extensive array of challenges such as: understanding, cultivating and caring of the medicinal plants, careful selection of leaves, dehydration techniques as well as packaging and marketing. The income is shared amongst these mothers. This project was also co-financed by the British High Commission, and received technical support from the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit of the Ministry of Agro-Industry in Mauritius.

Apart from the medicinal and herbal teas, these women now sell seedlings and plants as well. The project enabled the 20 mothers to earn a livelihood, thereby contributing to the overall household budget, and allowing them to have the necessary fund for their children's school materials. Through this project these women have been empowered in several ways. They can now proudly speak of their project to the media.

Another objective of the project was to revive the use of medicinal plants and motivate people to use traditional medicinal plants for relief of certain illnesses. Useful information and anecdotes were gathered from the elderly in the village. The fact that people are progressively becoming more health conscious and seem to be increasingly aware of the beneficial effects of medicinal plants and traditional cures is an encouraging sign and bodes well for the success of this project. This helps in preserving the very sensitive biodiversity of the island. It is to be noted that following this project many parents have taken the initiative for the setting up of medicinal corners in their own gardens.

This project has been financed to the tune of US \$ 25,397.49 by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme. The GEF Small Grants Programme is a corporate programme of the GEF that is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and which funds and actively supports non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) working towards climate change abatement, conservation of biodiversity, protection of

international waters, reduction of the impact of persistent organic pollutants and prevention of land degradation while generating sustainable livelihoods.

Since the launching of this project the women of APEDED have been approached by several organizations to replicate their project. and have been invited to present their products at the following fairs/forum/business opportunities:

- a) World Food Day Exhibition organized by the Ministry of Agro-Industry in Mauritius
- b) World Food Day Exhibition organized by the Commission of Agriculture in Rodrigues island
- c) 9th Africa Growth and Opportunity Act Forum held in August 2010 in Washington. (Unfortunately they could not participate for lack of funds to support the air-ticket and accommodation)
- d) Commission of Health in Rodrigues island which wants to replicate the initiative with their local medicinal plants



Secret Grand-Mère herbal teas



UNDP Resident Representative, Mrs Leyla Tegmo- Reddy launching the project



Plate unveiled on the occasion of International Biodiversity Day 2010



Beneficiaries of the project, together with the Representative of the British High Commission, the UNDP Resident Representative ((3rd and 4th person from the left respectively) and the National Coordinator of the GEF Small Grants Programme UNDP in Mauritius (first person on the right)



Visitors in the nursery funded by the GEF Small Grants Programme - UNDP