

WOMEN ACTION GROUP, Tamil Nadu - India



“Nourishing Dignity”

Daily Nutritious Meals for Forgotten Elders in Pachamalai Hills, Salem, Tamil Nadu



Project Proposal to DSR Fondation, Switzerland



1. Organizational Background and Values

Women Action Group (WAG) is a **grassroot, women-led organization** working in the remote tribal region of Pachamalai Hills in Salem District, Tamil Nadu, India. Governed by **seven committed women board members**, the organization stands as a symbol of **collective strength, compassion, and community leadership**. Supported by a network of women volunteers and well-wishers, WAG has consistently worked towards **empowering marginalized women, ensuring access to education, promoting livelihood opportunities, and extending humanitarian support to vulnerable populations, especially the elderly**.

What defines WAG is not merely its programs, but its philosophy—a **deep-rooted belief that development must be inclusive, humane, and dignified**. Working in geographically isolated tribal hamlets, the organization has earned the trust of communities by being present in their **moments of distress, hunger, and abandonment**.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” –

Mahatma Gandhi

2. Context and Problem Analysis

Pachamalai Hills is home to **indigenous tribal communities** living in scattered hamlets, cut off from mainstream infrastructure, healthcare, and social security systems. While poverty affects the entire population, **the condition of elderly individuals (aged 60 and above) is particularly distressing and alarming**.

Over time, socio-economic changes have led to **a breakdown of traditional family support systems**. Younger generations migrate in search of work or gradually detach from familial responsibilities. As a result, **elderly parents—once caregivers and providers—are now abandoned, neglected, and left to survive on their own**.

The situation is marked by:

- **Severe food insecurity**, where many elderly eat only once a day
- **Nutritional deprivation**, with diets lacking protein, vitamins, and essential nutrients
- **Chronic illnesses**, worsened by malnutrition and lack of medical care
- **Emotional isolation**, leading to silent suffering and loss of dignity

According to the World Health Organization, **malnutrition in older persons increases susceptibility to disease, delays recovery, and significantly raises mortality risks.** In marginalized tribal settings like Pachamalai, these risks are magnified due to **systemic neglect and lack of targeted interventions.**

“Hunger here is not an occasional crisis—it is a daily reality that slowly erodes life.”

The elderly in these 10 hamlets are not just economically poor—they are **socially abandoned and nutritionally invisible.**

3. Field Realities: Voices from the Ground

The urgency of this project emerges from direct field observations and interactions. The following real-life cases reflect the **depth of suffering and neglect experienced by elderly individuals:**

Latha (72 years old) lives alone in a dilapidated hut. Her son migrated years ago and has never returned. **She survives on leftover rice and often drinks water to suppress hunger.** Her frail body reflects prolonged malnutrition, but what is more painful is her quiet acceptance of abandonment. She says softly, **“If I feel too hungry, I just drink water and sleep.”**

Bennydhayal (68 years old), once a labourer, now struggles to walk. His children live nearby but rarely visit. **He cooks a small quantity of rice at night and consumes it throughout the next day.** He spends most of his time sitting outside his hut, watching the road, hoping someone will come. **“Even if someone asks whether I ate, it feels like I still exist,”** he says.

Mary (75 years old) collects firewood to exchange for a handful of rice. **Nutritious food is beyond her reach.** Her body shows clear signs of weakness—sunken cheeks, trembling hands, and extreme fatigue. She shares, **“Food is no longer about taste—it is about survival.”**

These stories are not isolated. They represent **a widespread, deeply rooted crisis affecting 68 elderly individuals across 10 hamlets.**

“When hunger becomes routine, suffering becomes invisible.”

4. Project Rationale

Beneficiaries: 68 elderly men and women from 10 hamlets are our first phase beneficiaries.

Food is the most basic human necessity, yet for these elderly individuals, **it has become uncertain, insufficient, and inaccessible**. Addressing hunger is not just about feeding—it is about **restoring dignity, improving health, and reaffirming human worth**.

This project is designed as a **direct, practical, and compassionate intervention** that addresses the immediate need for nutrition while also rebuilding **emotional connection and social care**.

“Feeding the hungry is not an act of charity—it is an act of justice.”

5. Project Goal and Objectives

The overall goal of the project is to **ensure that elderly individuals in Pachamalai Hills live with dignity, adequate nutrition, and improved well-being**.

- ✓ The specific objectives are clearly defined. The project seeks to **provide one nutritious, freshly cooked meal every day to 68** elderly beneficiaries.
 - ✓ It aims to **improve their nutritional intake by ensuring access to balanced food containing protein, vitamins, and essential nutrients**.
 - ✓ At the same time, it intends to **reduce hunger-related health complications and strengthen emotional well-being by creating regular human interaction and care**.
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6. Project Description and Approach

The project proposes a **Daily Nutritious Meal Program**, carefully designed to meet the dietary needs of elderly individuals.

Each meal will be thoughtfully prepared to include:

- **Millets**, which provide sustained energy and are suitable for aging bodies
- **Rice**, as a staple food familiar to the community
- **Pulses (dal)**, ensuring protein intake
- **Seasonal vegetables**, rich in vitamins and fiber

- **Leafy greens**, addressing iron deficiency
- **One egg daily**, offering high-quality protein
- **Meat once a week**, enhancing nutritional diversity

This is not merely food—it is a scientifically balanced meal designed to restore strength, immunity, and vitality.

Meals will be prepared in a **centralized kitchen operated by WAG**, ensuring hygiene, consistency, and quality. The food will then be **carefully packed and delivered directly to each beneficiary.**

What makes this initiative unique is its **human-centered approach**. Delivery is not mechanical—it is relational. **Each visit becomes a moment of care, conversation, and emotional reassurance.**

“Sometimes, the presence of a caring person is as important as the food itself.”

7. Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy is designed to be **efficient, community-driven, and sustainable.**

Two **local women cooks** will be engaged to prepare meals daily. This not only ensures consistency in food preparation but also **creates livelihood opportunities within the community.** Two **field officers** will be responsible for distribution, beneficiary tracking, and regular interaction with the elderly.

The process will involve:

- Daily procurement and storage of fresh ingredients
- Hygienic cooking and portioning
- Timely distribution to all 10 hamlets which are within 8 to 10kilometres
- Continuous monitoring of beneficiary well-being

By involving local women, the project strengthens both service delivery and community ownership.

8. Expected Outcomes and Impact

The impact of this project extends beyond immediate hunger relief. Over a period of one year, it is expected to **significantly improve the quality of life of 68 elderly individuals**.

Regular access to nutritious meals will lead to **improved physical health, increased energy levels, and reduced vulnerability to illness**. Equally important, the consistent human interaction will **reduce feelings of loneliness and abandonment**, restoring a sense of belonging and dignity.

“A nourished body can heal—but a cared heart can live again.”

9. Sustainability and Continuity

WAG is committed to ensuring that this initiative continues beyond the initial funding period. The organization will leverage its **strong grassroots presence, community trust, and volunteer network** to mobilize additional resources.

Local contributions, small donations, and community participation will be encouraged. WAG will also utilize its **existing infrastructure, including kitchen facilities and storage space**, to minimize recurring costs.

This project is envisioned not as a one-time intervention, but as a sustainable model of community-based elderly care. We will keep trying to source support for feeding elderly healthily.

10. Budget Justification and Financial Plan

The budget has been carefully designed to ensure **maximum impact with cost efficiency**, while maintaining quality and consistency.

The daily cost of preparing and delivering meals for **68 elderly individuals** is estimated at **CHF 45 per day**, covering groceries, cooking fuel, and packaging.

Over a period of one year (365 days), the total cost for food and operations amounts to **CHF 16,425**. In addition, a modest honorarium of **CHF 2,000 per year** is allocated for four project

staff (two cooks and two field officers), who are partially volunteering their time out of commitment to the cause.

The total project cost is therefore **CHF 18,425**.

WAG and the local community will contribute resources equivalent to **CHF 1,425**, including kitchen space, storage, and volunteer support.

The total funding requested from the donor is **CHF 17,000**.

Every euro invested in this project directly translates into nourishment, care, and dignity for the elderly.

11. Monitoring and Accountability

The project will include a **robust monitoring system** to ensure transparency and effectiveness. Daily meal distribution records will be maintained, and field officers will document beneficiary conditions and feedback.

Periodic updates, including **photographs, case stories, and progress reports**, will be shared with donors to demonstrate impact and accountability.

12. Conclusion and Appeal

In the quiet hills of Pachamalai, **elderly lives are fading—not because they must, but because they are forgotten**. This project is an opportunity to change that reality.

- ✓ **It is an opportunity to prove:** You are not alone. You are not forgotten. You matter.
 - ✓ “When we feed the elderly, we honor the past, heal the present, and inspire the future.”
 - ✓ Your support can transform hunger into nourishment, neglect into care, and despair into dignity.
 - ✓ Together, let us ensure that no elder is left unseen, unfed, or unloved.
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Banking Details:

M/S WOMEN ACTION GROUP (WAG)
NO 9/142 VENGAMUDI PANCHAMALAI HILLS
GANGAVALLI SALEM Saem - 636105


FCRA ACCOUNT

We welcome you for giving us an opportunity for opening the FCRA account under the amended section 17 (1) of the Foreign Contribution (regulation) Act, 2010. Your account has been opened at New Delhi Main Branch of State Bank of India at 11 Sansad Marg, New Delhi and the other identifiers connected to this account are as under:

Account No : 40141598556 (FCRA SAVINGS ACCOUNT)
Account Open date : 17/04/2021
Branch Code : 00691
IFSC : SBIN0000691
SWIFT : SBININBB104
Address : FCRA Cell, 4th Floor, State Bank of India, New Delhi Main Branch, 11, Sansad Marg, New Delhi-110001

This is for information, please.

Yours faithfully


Chief Manager (FCRA)

**Your kind support will help us feed 68 elderly men and women belonging to
marginalized tribal community for 365 days!**

Thanks & Regards,

Yours Sincerely,

For **WOMEN ACTION GROUP**


Secretary