



The Community Kitchen program is giving Shenul and her mother Minu a glimmer of optimism

Minu Kavindya, 23 years old pregnant woman lives in Weerapura village with her 5-year-old child Shenul. Shenul attends the Weerapura village preschool. The current economic crisis in Sri Lanka has severely impacted Shenul's family. Minu although pregnant used to skip meals, eat less food, or eat the same menu regularly with only one dish—rice and Dal—because of the rising cost of food and the scarcity of some food items. She received advice from the Public Health Midwife multiple times about eating enough nutrient-rich food. But Minu was unable to come up with a solution.

Shenul's weight was 10.9 kg and he was identified as severely underweight in August this year by the Public Health Midwife (PHM) of the area. He is in an orange zone which denotes severe underweight that can result in malnutrition per the Child Health and Development record.

The Community Kitchen program which started in August 2022 is a component of the Child Fund Sri Lanka's Community Response Hub initiative in Weerapura. It started supporting Minu and Shenul. The community kitchen program's weekly feeding sessions are held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Minu and her child can now receive nutritional food (one main meal) for twelve days a month. Shenul has gained weight as a result, and his current weight is 12.7 kg.

Minu says, "ChildFund Sri Lanka's Community Kitchen initiative has helped my child eat a healthy meal, therefore improving his weight. I feel financially supported because the program provides for my meals three days a week. I now know about the various food menus that can be made with ingredients that are readily available, locally. At home, I've also attempted a couple of menus. Additionally, I play with my child more because it benefits his brain development. I'm also pleased to participate in the lead mothers' health and hygiene training sessions during the community kitchen program."

During the community cooking activities, Minu and Shenul participate in the toy-making sessions run by the local youth using supplies that are locally available.

The program makes Minu and Shenul feel happy and supported despite Sri Lanka's current economic crisis.