

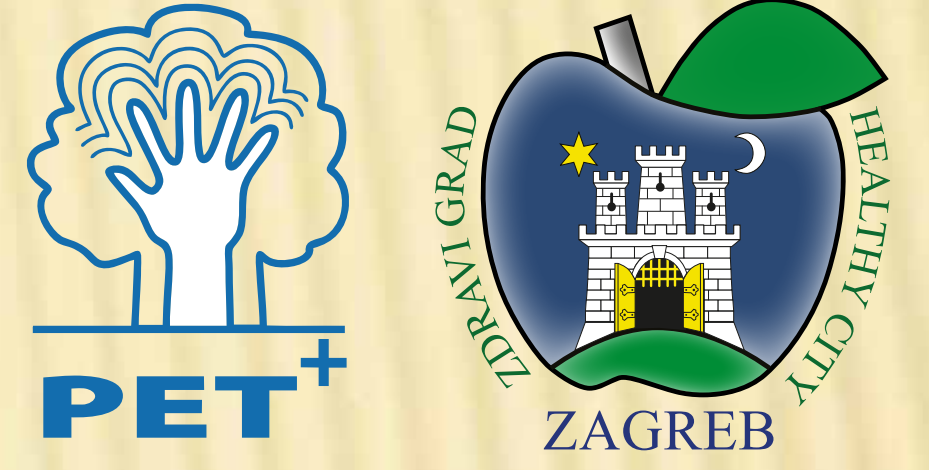
Healthy Eco Life

Community prevention programme for primary school children



Jelena Balabanić Mavrović, MS; Marija Jurčević, MA; Diana Mihok, MD;

Jane Forshaw, MS; Peter Kirby, MS; Marjan Savnik MS



Association NET+ Udruga PET+ /Eco centre pz (Croatia)

Institute for Public Health “Dr.Andrija Štampar” (Croatia) / Coram Life Education (UK) / For Better World (SLO)

Introduction

Healthy Eco Life educational programme was created as a part of Healthy Eco Life project, a pilot project co-funded by Executive Agency for Health and Consumers in 2010 /2011 implemented in Croatia, Slovenia and United Kingdom.

Basic idea of Healthy Eco Life was promotion of healthy life styles among school children in urban areas of Zagreb (Croatia) and Maribor (Slovenia) by connecting the promotion of health with raising awareness on ecology and environment.

This was to be achieved through development and implementation of education programme which combined workshops in class with practical lessons in nature, on ecological farms. The main premise of the project was to put urban child into rural context, to experience the natural environment and to observe and participate in gardening activities, in care for domestic animals and in preparation of healthy food.

Project activities included:

- review of best practices in health promotion to children and youth in Europe countries,
- an overview of EU legislative regarding health/environmental policies,
- creation of innovative health promotion programme for primary school children (9-10 years old) in member state country (Slovenia) and candidate country (Croatia),
- pilot implementation of Healthy Eco Life programme with more than 700 children in Slovenia and Croatia.



Materials and methods

Healthy Eco Life programme was delivered in form of 4 interactive classroom-workshops and one day visit to eco-farms. It covered 4 themes: healthy diet, environmental protection, physical activity and emotional health.

The main part of evaluation survey was conducted with 180 Croatian children, 89 Slovenian children and 15 teachers. Children also conducted healthy tasks whose frequency they reported in form of healthy habits-posters. Although children reported multiple implementations of healthy tasks, research included data of only 1 conducted task on each theme.

Improved behavior - data gathered through questionnaire and posters of Healthy habits (Zagreb; statistical significant $p < 0,01$)

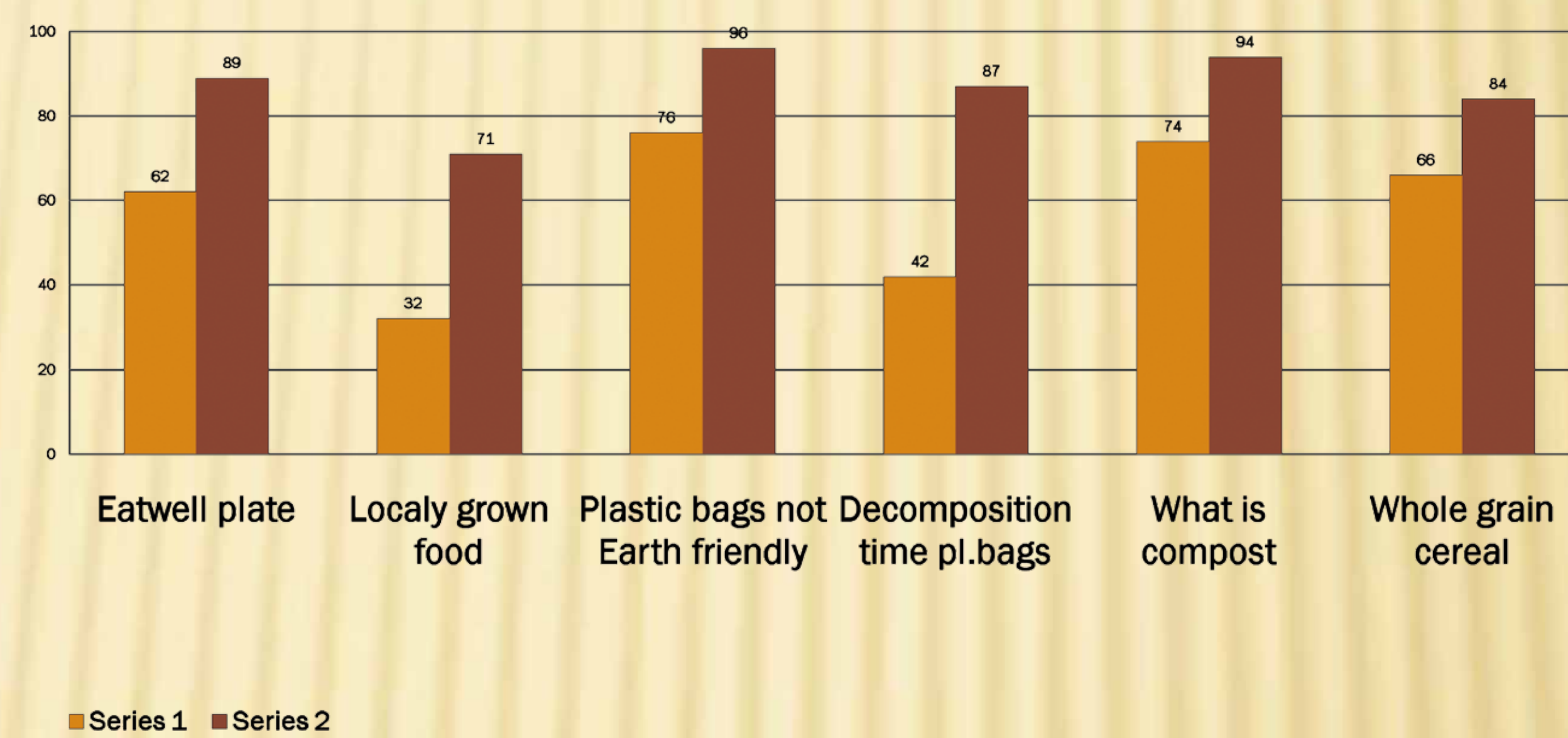
1. At the beginning the third of children tried only cow's milk, at the end of workshop Healthy Eco Life 89% of children included in program have tried cow, goat, rice, soya milk
2. Replace sweets / chips with fruit 94%
3. Doing sports (1/2 hour daily) 94%
4. Emotional health / relaxing 78%
5. Using cloth bags in shopping 85%

Results

Results showed statistically significant improvement of children's knowledge in the area of environmental dimension of health and healthy eating. In Croatian sample (180 children) statistically significant improvement of children's knowledge was registered in following variables: after participating in HEEL workshops, children recognize Eatwell plate significantly often (62% Survey 1; 89% Survey 2); children know the advantages of locally grown food (32% S1; 71% S2); children are aware of the fact that plastic bags are harmful for the environment (76% S1; 96% S2); children know the time range needed for decomposition of the plastic bag (42% S1; 97% S2); children understand what is compost (74% S1; 97% S2); children recognize the description of a wholegrain (66% S1; 84 % S2).

Further, children self-reported advance in adoption of everyday healthy habits, meaning that they once or more exchanged sweets/chips with fruits, practiced sports for 30 min a day, practiced relaxation exercise before sleep and used personalized cotton bag instead of plastic bag. This was measured by interactive posters of healthy habits.

Children knowledge before and after Healthy Eco Life programme



Improved attitudes (Zagreb; statistical significant $p < 0,01$) sample: 180 students, January - May 2011 After attending Healthy Eco Life workshops, children expressed more positive attitudes towards:

1. Eating fruits
2. Eating vegetables
3. Cooking
4. Sports activities
5. Visiting farm
6. Importance of ecology



Conclusion

Project Healthy Eco Life has reached its main objectives. It fostered adoption of healthy life styles among Croatian and Slovenian children, through development and implementation of innovative educational programme of interactive workshops in schools and on farms.

After participation in HEEL programme children showed statistically significant shift in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour important for healthy living.

School teachers recognized benefits of introduction of practical methodology into educational process, all of them wanting to be a part of future Healthy Eco Life follow up projects and more than half of them recommended that Healthy Eco Life becomes integral part of school curricula (others suggested school-in-the-nature programme and extracurricular activities).



References

1. Final Evaluation Report Healthy Eco Life, Institute for Public Health „Dr.Andrija Štampar“, 2011.

Acknowledgments

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Contact Information

www.healthy-eco-life.com
www.petplus.com
mavrovic.jelena@gmail.com

