

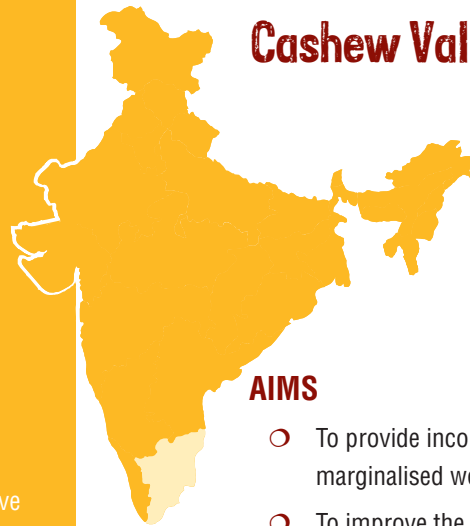
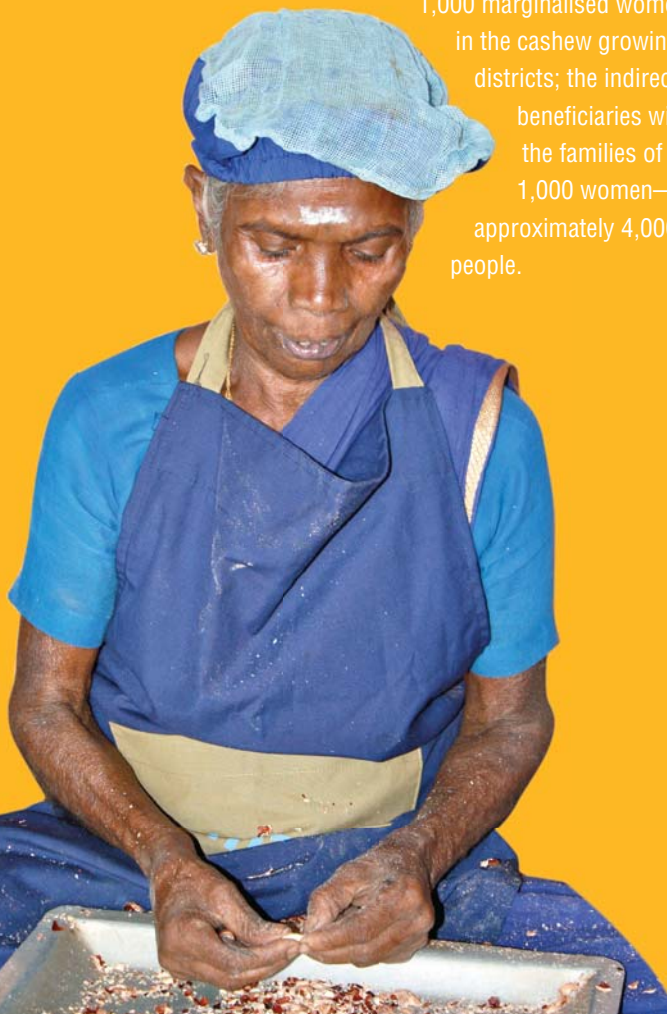


PROJECT FACT SHEET

SUMMARY

The Cashew Value Chain Initiative is a multi-country initiative funded by Walmart, which aims to empower marginalised women and improve their livelihood options and skills in the two coastal cashew-growing districts of Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu. The project is part of CARE's wider Tsunami Response Programme and targets women in some of the worst affected regions, many of whom are heads of their households as they lost their husbands in the Tsunami, and all of whom are deeply susceptible to poverty. CARE has facilitated the creation of a women-owned and operated community based institution to provide more equitable and consistent incomes to 1,000 women in the cashew farming and processing sectors. The project has followed an integrated approach, provisioning decent livelihood options as well as facilities for participants to learn and improve their functional literacy skills, and also providing access to insurance services to better enable them to cope with hardships. The direct project beneficiaries are the

1,000 marginalised women in the cashew growing districts; the indirect beneficiaries will be the families of these 1,000 women—approximately 4,000 people.



Cashew Value Chain Initiative

Sponsored by Walmart

Location: Tamil Nadu

AIMS

- To provide income earning opportunities to 1,000 marginalised women in the cashew value chain
- To improve the functional literacy and numeric skills of women involved in the cashew processing sector, and other women within the community
- To improve women's awareness of reproductive health, human rights, and entitlements
- To create a member-owned and managed Processors' Federation (an approach that has already been tested and proven in other CARE interventions), where groups of women farmers and processors come together for the sake of collective procurement, institution building, advocacy, access to credit and savings opportunities, development of customised insurance products, and technical and business development

STATISTICS

- 55 percent of the women involved are in the economically active age group of 35-45 yrs. This is also the age where they have relatively grown up children and so fewer restrictions on mobility, giving them greater opportunities to benefit from economic participation.
- 60 percent are Dalit women
- 41 percent are women who head their households
- 68 percent of the women are illiterate



SPECIFICS

With leverages of land, buildings, and machinery amounting to Rs. 6.3 million, fully operational and equipped cashew processing centres have been established at four locations: two at Nagapattinam and Cuddalore district. Satellite centres have also been established in the target villages to enable those women who cannot work at the main centres to still work regularly.

CARE, along with the implementing partners, facilitated the organisation of 1,000 women into 100 groups—now registered as Producer's Companies—which facilitate functioning across the three processing units established.

The women were trained in various aspects of cashew processing, ranging from the processing itself, to areas of hygiene and quality of production. Efficiency and standards have steadily increased as the women improve their style, dexterity, and knowledge.

Marketing tie-ups have been established with five local agencies so the supply of raw nuts, the buy-back of processed nuts, and a service fee is assured.

With constant support from the Department of Horticulture, and the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), the pilot production of reduced chemical cashews has moved forward with a group of farmers in Nagapattinam. The target farmers were trained in agricultural techniques where very little chemicals are used. All the target farmers have a vermi-compost unit which they can access, and natural manure is being used for the low-chemical cultivation areas.

As well as technical training for a new livelihood, CARE has also enabled women to improve their knowledge and education:

- Learning centres have been established across the target villages based on the need. So far 580 women have graduated to literacy under the Education for Livelihood programme and 70 percent of them are part of the Cashew Producers' company

- More than 800 women and adolescent girls now have a raised awareness of issues of health, hygiene, and pre and post-natal care, and are also now aware of entitlements related to health that they can access
- The women are made aware of government entitlements they are eligible for, as well as how to interpret and fill out forms and read the newspapers
- Micro-insurance has been promoted among all participants in the project as well as among other village residents in and around the project area. Innovative methods to spread awareness have resulted in 90 percent of the women engaged in the cashew processing units now being covered by micro-insurance

Taking the project forward

CARE has identified areas and aims for the project to enhance productivity and scale-up engagement in the cashew value chain:

- Develop the project area as a hub for cashew production and processing
- Optimise learning on reduced chemical production cashews
- Expand work to include small-scale individual processors with a focus on improvements in technology, productivity, and quality
- Strengthen market access, focusing on packaging, branding, and diversification of the product range and market reach
- Institution strengthening to facilitate leverage assistance from banks such as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and IDBI Bank



CASE STUDIES

"I am a Dalit woman supporting a family with children and elderly. Working as a labourer, I could not even earn Rs. 50 a day to feed my family. When a satellite centre was set up in our village, I curiously enquired about the activities taking place, and was happy to be included in the work going on. I now work at the satellite centre on a full-time basis and my income has increased by 60 percent, which allows me to take much better care of my family."

Gomathy, Sembodai village, Nagapattinam district

"Being illiterate and unskilled, shifting between agricultural and construction labour seemed my lot in life after my husband's death and I could never make ends meet in our household. I was thrilled to be able to participate in the cashew unit, where we were trained in cashew processing. I am now able to shell more than 27 kilograms of boiled nuts and 98 percent of them remain whole. This new skill is something I cherish and wish to make the best use of in the future."

Parameswari, Vetakaranirrupu village, Nagapattinam district