



## PROJECT FACT SHEET

### SUMMARY

The Crab Fattening Project was launched in September 2008 as part of CARE's Tsunami Response Programme. It aims to provide a new source of livelihood to communities previously dependent on the fishing industry which was largely destroyed by the Tsunami in 2004. The project primarily targets two groups: the inland fishing community, which is traditionally dependent on brackish water fishing and the Irula, a Scheduled Tribe living in Kalaingar Nagar of the Cuddalore district, who are marginalised and thus very susceptible to poverty. As the Irula had been dependent upon backwater fishing and ancillary industries for survival, when the Tsunami hit in 2004, they were left vulnerable and with no means of ensuring reliable incomes. The Tsunami not only destroyed their fishing nets and boats, but also tainted the backwaters with salt water, resulting in poor catches. The CARE project provides the capacity to build crab pens for fattening and rearing local mud crabs in the areas of shallow water near the shoreline where the worst affected villages are found. The project generates rapid and sustainable profits due to both the high local and international demand for the fattened crabs, and also the rapidity of the turnover.

It has thus secured stable incomes and development for communities who were left with nothing.



## Crab Fattening

Location: Tamil Nadu

### AIMS

The project is a community-driven development activity which aims:

- To augment the economic capacities and skills of vulnerable populations in coastal areas
- To diversify their livelihood opportunities and choices
- To provide sustainable incomes and livelihoods

### SPECIFICS

CARE identified seven Self-Help Groups (SHG) in five target villages in Killai (MGR Thittu, Kalaingar Nagar, Muxhukuthurai, Singarakuppam, and MGR Nagar) in which there were 104 economically marginalised women beneficiaries.

CARE provided 50 percent of the funding for the project and the rest came from partnerships with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and local bank loans.



CARE has mobilised technical support from Aqua Foundation of India, Chennai and Central Institute for Brackish Water and Aquaculture (CIBA) through which 12 days of practical training has been provided to 60 project beneficiaries. SHGs have also benefitted from continuous hand-holding, free of charge, from these organisations. In addition, project staff has received five days of intensive training for effective monitoring and support.

CARE has facilitated marketing tie-ups with potential marketing agencies and accelerated buy back arrangements and continuous supply of crabs for sustainable production.

## PROCESS

- *Sycalla serrata*, or mud crabs, are procured mostly from local vendors but sometimes from as far away as Chennai.
- Project beneficiaries share responsibilities such as procurement (of water crabs and feed), feeding, growth monitoring, watch and ward, harvesting, sale, etc. on a rotation basis.
- The SHGs purchase crabs weighing approximately 400 grams at a cost of Rs. 180 (\$3.75). The capacity for crab rearing is also being developed so that the SHGs can generate their own stock.
- The crabs are placed in netted areas and fed intensively for 25-30 days. They gain approximately 150-200 gms. of weight and a fattened crab's weight at harvest is between 600 gms and 1.5 kgs.

- The fattened crabs are sold for between Rs. 460 and 500 (\$9-10) to fixed vendors. This process has an earning potential of Rs. 120-140 per 1kg. of crab, once costs have been deducted.

## OUTCOMES

So far, each SHG has completed 10-12 cycles and reaped an average yield of 90-120 kgs. of crab meat per cycle.

After making the bank loan repayments, the SHG members are putting the surplus profit into savings to provide a safety net for internal loans in case of emergencies.

Project beneficiaries have been engaged as faculty to provide technical guidance and help in crab pen construction which have earned them more than Rs.60,000 (\$1225).

A Crab Fattening Women's Federation has been formed and strengthened to support the SHGs in the procurement of raw materials, and the monitoring and updating of rates. It also acts as a useful liaison between all stakeholders involved in the project.

The project met with such success that the second phase was inaugurated in December 2009 to supplement the capacities of the Women's Federation, to support and supply any required services to the SHGs, and to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Crab fattening has been well recognised as an income generating activity by government departments, funding agencies and the Commissionerate for Fisheries. Special funds have been sanctioned for 500 beneficiaries of the coastal districts of Ramnad and Nagapattinam.

## CASE STUDY

*Jaya, a member of the Irula tribal community in the Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu, lost her livelihood in December 2004 when the Tsunami destroyed her fishing net and boat. No longer able to work as a prawn catcher, she and her family members were left facing poverty and unemployment.*

*The CARE Crab Fattening project provided welcome relief and enabled Jaya to rebuild her livelihood, gain self-respect, and support her family. The Rajiv Gandhi Women SHG of which Jaya is a member, received Rs. 1,65,000 from CARE along with an ADB grant and a bank loan. This enabled members to construct two crab pens, one for fattening and one for rearing. This can fatten 400 and rear 240 crabs at any one time. Jaya became actively involved in the Crab Fattening project, taking on a range of responsibilities from procuring the feed, grading the crabs, and carrying out routine management.*

*At present Jaya is earning a minimum of Rs. 1,800-2,000 (\$40-45) per month from her SHG. She feels proud that she has succeeded in adapting to a new livelihood, has escaped from the clutches of moneylenders, and has earned respect. She says, "Crab fattening has rescued my life from the challenges posed from my community. Now I am very happy..." She now feels empowered to take decisions on par with her husband and is also able offer support to her SHG, family, and friends. She believes that without CARE and the Crab Fattening Project, this positive change in her life would not have been possible.*

