



caritas
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From the Asia Desk

We are pleased to present the first newsletter of 2011. This time we focus our food security projects in India and see that despite the country's economic success, the benefits are unequally distributed among states and population groups. Large swathes of the rural population still struggle to lead a dignified life on their farm incomes. Caritas Belgium, with its local diocesan partners in India, endeavours to improve the situation. Special attention is given to strengthening communities and enabling them to adequately access the various government support schemes that exist. The focus on empowering people to advocate for their rights and access government support has proved to be successful and is used in most development related projects funded by Caritas Belgium.

The same approach (empowering communities to access government services) is used in southern Thailand to help people increase their livelihood, and to establish a better understanding between communities and government. It is hoped that expanding livelihood options and improving relations between local governments and local communities will help reduce tensions and contribute to bringing an end to the conflict.

The newsletter also provides an update on the disaster risk reduction activities that are still under way in several of the villages in Andhra Pradesh affected by the 2004 tsunami. Most of the activities in the project focus on increasing the attention given by local governments to the issues related to disaster risk reduction and livelihoods that are important to these local communities. The presence of Caritas in these villages clearly demonstrates our long term grassroots involvement. We are indeed present before, during and long after disasters.

As always, feedback is welcome.

Who we are

Created in 1945, by the Belgium Episcopal Conference, Caritas International Belgium became an independent association in 1948. Since assisting European victims and reuniting families torn apart by the Second World War, the organization's first goal, Caritas International Belgium has gradually become more active internationally and assisting refugees and migrants remains a main focus of our work. Today, Caritas International Belgium supports more than 100 different partner organisations in over 30 countries with not only initial emergency relief but also post-crisis recovery, reconstruction and development. The majority of our partner groups and organizations are in Africa but, we're active in Asia as well. In Asia, we've been helping citizens rebuild their lives after disasters. The last years, the main contribution of Caritas International Belgium went to:

- **floods** in India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan;
- **earthquakes** in India (Gujarat, Kashmir) in Pakistan and Indonesia
- **man-made disasters** in Thailand (Burmese refugees) and Sri Lanka
- **the tsunami** in Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Thailand.

Caritas International Belgium has developed long-term relationships with Caritas India and Caritas Sri Lanka. For instance, in Sri Lanka, Caritas International Belgium has been supporting peace projects in the north and east and developed a project to assist the most vulnerable in improving their livelihood security in the tea estates.

Caritas International Belgium's project funding is generated through fundraising efforts in Belgium and also from different donor agencies and budget lines such as: Echo, the European Union, the Belgian Government, the Belgian Survival Fund, Fedasil, and others.

Our vision and mission

Our vision

We strive towards a world of peace, solidarity and justice in which there are no more victims of wars, disasters and poverty.

Everyone, wherever they are in the world, is entitled to a life with dignity and to enjoy his fundamental rights. Access to food, drinking water, medical care, education, work and housing should be guaranteed for everyone.

Solidarity and subsidiarity are necessary for our work. No country or organization can solve everything on its own. Only by working together can sustainable solutions be found.

Our mission

Caritas International supports victims of war, disasters and poverty and helps migrants, in cooperation with the national and international networks to which we belong.

We execute our mission without distinction in race, nationality or sex, nor in political, religious or philosophical beliefs.

In accordance with the message of the gospel, Caritas International helps the vulnerable so that they can take responsibility for their own development.

During an intervention following a crisis we provide fast and effective aid. Afterwards we continue with rehabilitation and development projects thus creating opportunities for aid recipients to develop their own self sufficiency

In Belgium, Caritas International organizes reception and accompaniment of migrants and defends the rights of refugees. We provide individual social and legal assistance. On the basis of our experiences, we elaborate points of view and lobby the authorities about ways to improve policies regarding asylum and migration.

Today, Caritas International Belgium supports more than 100 different partner organizations in over 30 countries with not only initial emergency relief but also post-crisis recovery, reconstruction and development.

Improvement of access to sustainable livelihood government support systems for conflict-affected sub-districts in southern Thailand

The project is managed by the Diocesan Social Action Center of Suratthani (DISAC), Takuapa, and covers the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani in southern Thailand. It is funded mainly by the European Commission. The overall goal is "to facilitate the involvement of local non-state actors and local authorities in contributing to poverty alleviation within the context of enhancing efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in the provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala in Thailand". The specific objective is to "improve access to adequate sustainable livelihood government support systems for nine conflict-affected sub-districts in southern Thailand". Women are the prime beneficiaries of village-related activities delivered by the women's volunteer network. Although small-scale income-generating activities are available, women are often unable to travel freely, and thus access these opportunities. The project supports women to set up income-generating activities in their homes. The self-help groups (SHGs) that benefited from the activities consist mostly of Muslims, but in some cases are a mix of Buddhists and Muslims. To date, the project has developed extensive outreach to 73

SHGs and 45 youth groups across 42 villages in three provinces. The SHGs carry out a wide range of different activities, and each faces its own particular challenges. Some groups are presented briefly below:

- **The Women's Savings Self-Help Group in Dusongyor sub-district** has seven members and was set up before the project started in the area. The group produces cakes, Thai sweets and bread. The members formed the SHG in their free time and received financial support from the government (through the sub-district office) amounting to 10,000 THB per year. With this government support, they bought an oven. The funding from the project was used to purchase tools and equipment (blending machine, plastic bags and plastic sealing machine). One of the members owns the building. Goods are packaged in plastic bags and taken to different markets. Currently members work approximately three and a half hours, two days a week.
- **The Samai Anajak Women's Self-Help Group of Bang Nak sub-district** was launched in March 2010 and has eight members. It produces Thai Sweets. The group was

trained by a teacher from a government vocational school. The members work five half-days per week. The project supported the SHG with tools and equipment (total value: 21,200 THB) and financial support. This group received no support from the government.

- **The Self-Help Group (Mushroom Plantation) of Bunnang sarens sub-district** produces mushrooms. There are seven members (four adults and three young people) in the group, which was set up in 2010. Initially, each person contributed 300 THB to start activities. After building the shed in which production takes place, they attended five days of training. If the group registers with the government they can access financial support of 10,000 to 20,000 THB. The group is planning to register and submit a proposal to extend the building. There are 70 young people in the community and the group would like more young people to join. The SHG received the following support through the project: training in mushroom growing (3,000 THB); construction of the shed for mushroom cultivation (materials: 30,000 THB).
- **The Fried Coconut Self-Help Group of Kotabaroo sub-district** was established in November 2009 and has 10 members. It was set up with government support as a socio-economic project. Initially the group produced sweets but the price of raw materials was too high and they were unable to make any profit. With the support of the project, they changed their activities to focus on the production of fried coconut. Of the profits made, 80 percent is distributed to members, 10 percent goes to the mosque and 10 percent is channelled into investments. The project supported this SHG with the purchase of a grinding machine, small tools and equipment (project funding amounted to 28,250 THB for all tools, equipment and raw materials).
- **The Manora Beads and Gift Item Group of Yupho sub-district** was set up in December 2010 and has 12 members (including two elderly people). The group makes bead products. Gift items are made to order, for example to celebrate a marriage, graduation or Saint Valentine's Day. Group



Image: Training Youth (Rubber Seedlings Moo 8 Dusongyour Narathiwat)

members spend two to three hours a day, two days a week, on beadwork. The project supported this SHG with training and the purchase of equipment (30,000 THB). The trainer has become a member of the group.

- **The Detergent Making Self-Help Group of Bang Kao sub-district** was founded in November 2009 and has 45 members. It started with savings and providing support in the following situations: (i) delivery of baby (covering costs up to 500 THB); (ii) sickness and hospital visit (up to 100 THB per night); (iii) funeral (covering costs up to 2,000 THB; 3,000 THB if membership of group exceeds 3 years); and (iv) assistance to members over the age of 60 amounting to 200 THB per month. Members contribute 30 THB per month and there is a 40,000 THB reserve capital. The group produces 350 bottles of detergent, shampoo and liquid soap per week. Bottles are sold for 10 and 20 THB. Members buy and sell the products to people in the village. All members work and market the detergent part-time. Support received included various raw materials and equipment (for a total value of 26,200 THB).

The main challenge of the project will be to scale up these activities.



Images (L-R):

SHG (Fried Roti Group Moo 1 Yupo Muang, Yala)

Training Youth (Chicken Farm at Moo 8 Samor Dusongyour Narathiwas)

SHG (The Traditional Married of Women Group - Rusamilae, Muang, Pattani)

Follow-up Business Support to Youth (Fish Farm Moo 3 Kotabaroo Raman, Yala)

Follow-up Business Support to Youth (Fish Farm Moo 4 Kotabaroo Raman, Yala)

Training Youth (Chicken Farm at Moo 8 Samor Dusongyour Narathiwas)

Training Youth (Chicken Farm at Moo 5 Gorlum Yarang Pattani)



Community-Managed Disaster Risk Reduction in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh



Images: Strengthening the TFC

The Diocese of Nellore Social Service Society (DNSSS) (serving the districts of Prakasam and Nellore) has a vast coastline covering 160 miles, which is home to 87 coastal villages. The tsunami of 26 December 2004 affected 45 of these coastal villages. The Diocese of Nellore Social Service Society (DNSSS) assisted these fishing communities with a multiple relief and rehabilitation package. A community-based disaster preparedness programme (CBDP) was introduced in 50 villages in 2005 and continues to date. Communities have been reinforced with knowledge of how to mitigate natural disasters; capacities in lobbying and advocacy; awareness of managing mangroves; strengthening of their task force committees (TFCs); formation of a diocesan-level cultural team and delivery of awareness campaigns to members of the panchayath raj institutions. As a result of the programme:

- People are well aware of what needs to be done when disaster strikes and the level of vulnerability in the disaster-prone villages has decreased substantially.
- The 50 villages included in the CBDP have 50 task force committees, constituting a 1,500-strong team of people with the knowledge and techniques needed to respond to disasters. They are instrumental in collaborating with government departments in

the relief and rehabilitation of their villages. They are called upon by the Government Officials for Rescue Operations whenever the surrounding areas are affected by floods or cyclones.

- Each of the villages participating in the CBDP programme has its own contingency plan, which has been approved by the panchayath. It is a key tool to guide the TFC and the community in the event of a disaster.
- Each CBDP village has a Disaster Management Coordinator who is able to negotiate with the government departments.
- Each village is part of the "Fistful of Rice" programme, through which villagers have learned to save grain. The communities now have rice stocks amounting to 1,653kg and a total bank balance of Rs 211,533/- derived from the sale of surplus grain. This is a village emergency fund generated by the community to be used in an emergency.
- The CBDP has improved organization within the communities and increased the confidence and leadership skills of community members.
- The programme has built up strong women's groups at different levels who, as a cohesive group, take up village-level development activities.

The story of Kartangari Srinivasulu, Task Force Committee Member

My name is Kartangari Srinivasulu and I am twenty-six years of age. In my village there are a number of young people like me who were all my friends and I knew each one of them. Before the introduction of community-based disaster preparedness (CBDP) in my village, there was no unity among the youth and no one cared about the development of the village. The worst part of everything was whenever there was a calamity like a cyclone, we all were very disorganized and suffered catastrophic losses – deaths, loss of cattle and damaged houses, boats, and nets. After the adoption of our village as one of the Caritas India CBDP villages we formed our Task Force Committee (TFC) and I was made a member of the committee. All the six committees of five members each were given the required training. We have a TFC meeting every month and every member is given a clear explanation of his/her roles and responsibilities in the different committees. The six committees are: 1] task force rescue teams; 2] warning committee; 3] rescue and evacuation team; 4] shelter management committee; 5] first aid committee; and 6] "fistful of rice" committee. Since the adoption of CBDP in our village, we have twice experienced cyclones but there were no losses during them, even though one was a severe cyclone (Ogni). This was mainly because of the training we (the TFC) had been given on CBDP, which meant that we went through all the required preparations to mitigate the impact of the cyclone. During these emergencies we used the rice we collected under the "fistful of rice" scheme to feed everyone in our village. It does not end there, of course, but we can proudly say we have established better unity than before. We use this to identify issues in our village, discuss them and come to conclusions about the proper way to resolve them. Today we are well versed in our rights, know about new government schemes and are ready to approach the government for access to them. I am proud and happy that we are a CBDP village. I am confident that one day I will raise the efficiency of our TFC and our village will receive the appreciation of our government for the best TFC.

Facilitating Agricultural Regeneration Measures (FARM) in Amravati, Maharashtra

The project in Amravati diocese, Facilitating Agricultural Regeneration Measures (FARM), includes advocacy and networking training. During the project period (two years), 29 advocacy and networking training sessions were held. This training was much in demand (and needed) as networking with government offices and NGOs generated benefits for people, who were then able to solve their own village problems. These advocacy and lobbying activities were supplemented by several 'supporting' training sessions. The Amravati Diocesan Social Development Society (or Jeevan Vikas Sanstha) staff organised street plays about the Maharashtra Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MREGS). Jeevan Vikas Sanstha also conducted training on gender (e.g. raising awareness of issues such as gender

equality, the 'Save the Girl Child' campaign, the present status of women in society). Several training sessions on legal aid and rights were held (covering topics such as the right to information act, relevant legal cases, certificates required for various purposes and benefits, rights of the individual, fundamental rights). To raise awareness, the Amravati Diocesan Social Development Society or Jeevan Vikas Sanstha organised celebrations to mark important events such as Human Rights Day, International Women's Day, Children's Day, World AIDS Day, World Environment Day and National Youth Day.

Alongside these activities, Jeevan Vikas Sanstha organised 'linkage meetings' between government departments and farmers. Various problems faced by tribal people regarding health,

education, government schemes and MREGS planning and implementation were discussed at these meetings. As a result of these discussions, several government department schemes were implemented in the project villages. Through the MREGS scheme:

- 723 people living in our FARM project villages had employment during the pre monsoon season
- 3 farmers accessed irrigation machines/well construction schemes
- 4 farmers received financial support for house construction
- 1 farmer received health insurance support.

With the collaboration of the relevant government and revenue departments, Jeevan Vikas Sanstha organised applications for caste certificates, resulting in 724 people being given caste certificates. For tribal communities in India, caste certificates are extremely important in proving that they belong to the socially and economically disadvantaged communities and are essential to access any scheme or benefit run by the Government.

Through these empowerment activities, local communities gained access not only to various government schemes but also to MREGS work. They have started to claim their rights, such as proper implementation of the forest act, access to drinking water and electricity.

The project has had a visible impact on the economic situation of the communities. Better farm production resulting from increased groundwater availability, a longer crop year and an extension in the area of agricultural land under cultivation, have led to greater purchasing power. This, in turn, has led to a reduction in malnutrition and an overall improvement in the health situation.

Equally (or even more) important is the change in the mindset of communities, who are now more inclined towards self-improvement and self-dependency.



Image: Water Retention Structures

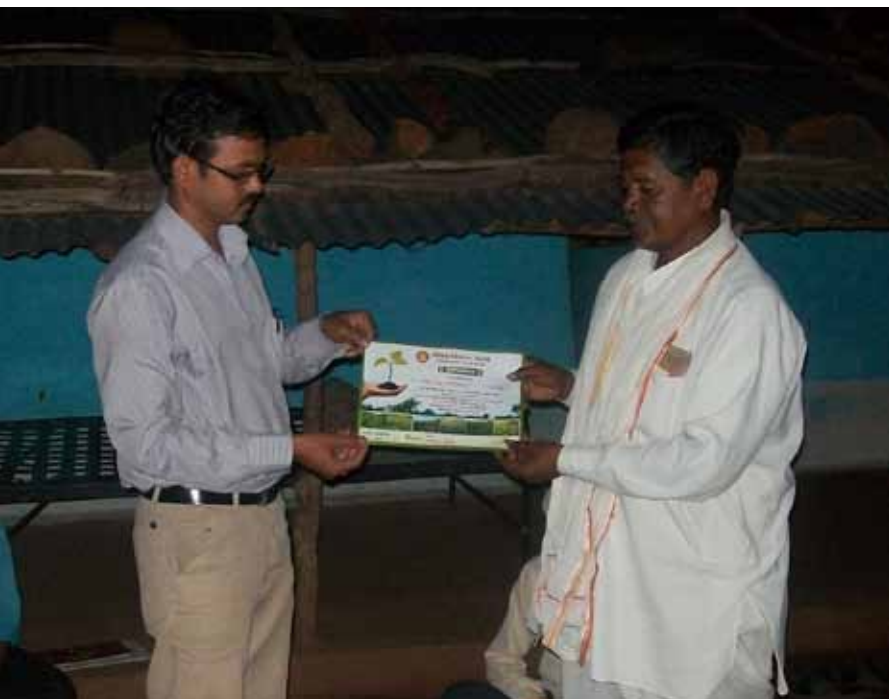


Image: Certificate of Training

The story of Manohar Kale

Manohar Kale participates in FARM activities. He lives in the village of Kulangana Budurk where he possesses an acre of land. As part of the project, he switched over to organic farming practices. Previously he used genetically modified (GM) seeds, which were very high in price but only a small quantity of seeds was required for farming. Costs of other inputs were also high. When Manohar Kale switched to organic farming he used only indigenous/traditional varieties of seeds. The prices of these indigenous/traditional varieties of seeds are low, although more seeds are required. GM seeds are sold in the market by multinational seed companies but traditional varieties of seeds are bought from farming families of the area. The material costs of organic farming are low due to the fact that there is little or no dependency on the market. Organic manure and organic pesticides are prepared by the farmers themselves. Labour costs such as weeding and harrowing are lower as a result of the use of local varieties of seeds, organic manure, organic pesticides, etc.

Comparison of farm yields before and after use of land treatment and organic farming practices

	BEFORE	AFTER
<i>Land situation</i>	Without any type of land treatment	Following land treatment such as use of farm bunds
<i>Name of the crop</i>	Wheat	Wheat
<i>Seed required</i>	20 kg	30 kg
<i>Seed cost</i>	Rs. 1500/-	Rs. 600/-
<i>Manure type</i>	Chemical	Organic
<i>Manure cost</i>	Rs. 1000/-	Rs. 400/-
<i>Pesticide type</i>	Chemical	Organic
<i>Pesticide cost</i>	Rs. 750/-	Rs. 200/-
<i>Total material cost of the crop</i>	Rs. 3250/-	Rs. 1200/-
<i>Total labour cost of the crop</i>	Rs. 2000/-	Rs. 1100/-
<i>Total production cost of the crop</i>	Rs. 5250/-	Rs. 2300/-
<i>Quantity of crop produced in quintal (100 kg)</i>	6 quintal	9 quintal
<i>Market price of the total produced crop</i>	Rs. 6600/-	Rs. 9900/-
<i>Total profit in amount</i>	Profit of Rs.1350/-	Profit of Rs. 7600/-

Food Security in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh

Caritas Belgium, with its implementing partner, Lodi Multipurpose Social Service Society of Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, supports a food security project in 60 villages. The main goal of the project is to ensure food security and to empower the community through sustainable rural livelihood systems. Over 65 per cent of the target population is constituted by landless agricultural labourers living below the poverty line. The remaining 35 per cent are small scale, marginal farmers. In the project area, over 45 per cent of the beneficiary families are in debt. They have taken out loans from microfinance institutions and/or moneylenders at high interest rates and find it difficult to repay these debts. Approximately 40 per cent of the women in the target group have no source of secondary income. Almost 45 per cent of the farmers do not have sufficient agricultural production to cover their home consumption.

The project has made good progress during the last six months. The results include:

- 122 women embarked on livelihood

programmes and increased their secondary source of income to their families.

- 70 members received additional income and economic support for their family after participating in training in tailoring.
- 19 self help groups gained access to a revolving fund of Rs. 950,000 for 135 group members through linkage programmes.

In addition, linkage meetings between government officials and village representatives enabled the project to successfully lobby various government departments to achieve results such as the following:

- 2 villages were equipped with transportation and electricity facilities (Parsha Thanda and Keerya Thanda villages in Khanapur Mandal).
- 14 women group members received Rs.145,000 for the construction of houses under Indiramma (Integrated Novel Development in Rural Areas and Model Municipal Areas).
- 8 farmers received pipelines, together with

816 pipes worth Rs.700, for a total cost of Rs.301,920, with a 50 per cent subsidy.

- 5 farmers received Taiwan Spray pumps worth Rs.47,750 with a 50 per cent subsidy.
- 64 marginalized farmers received BT Neeraja cotton seeds worth Rs.59,520 with a 50 per cent subsidy.
- 245 farmers introduced organic farming methods of cultivation on their land.
- 35 acres of dry land were brought under cultivation by marginal farmers.
- 145 farmers are now successfully cultivating traditional food crops in order to produce quality seeds for future crops.
- 145 farmers were trained in making a cost-effect analysis of cultivation through sustainable agriculture practices.

Additional benefits achieved through the programme and included:

- 52 children who had dropped out of school re-enrolled.
- 1 child marriage was prevented and the parents were offered counselling.



Images: Food Security in India



Food Security in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

The Food Security Programme, which supports communities through capacity development and access to resources, is implemented by the Diocese of Nellore Social Service Society (DNSSS) in the villages of Mutholi Nagar and Pabbuleti Palli. Both of the villages are inhabited by the socially excluded dalit communities. The population of Mutholi Nagar is 3,210 and that of Pabbuleti Palli is 3,100. The area is reeling from the consequences of a long, drawn out and severe drought. The project aims to empower these vulnerable people so that they feel confident to approach the Government and other

organizations to ask, demand and achieve what is theirs by law. DNSSS has contributed to the development of these disadvantaged sections of society. The results achieved by lobbying include:

- **80 acres of land for 40 families** (2 acres per family) has been sanctioned to the people of Mutholi Nagar by the Government. Though sanctioned, the title deeds (patta) to the land have not yet been issued. The people are united and are determined to persevere until they secure the patta. They regularly visit the Mandal revenue and development offices to request the issue

of the deeds. Because local officers had not responded positively, the people met the finance minister when he visited the district to explain their situation and requested his assistance in solving the land problem. The minister called upon the district collector to resolve the issue promptly. After a meeting between the people and the collector, the process is developing at a better pace.

- **40 acres of land** was sanctioned to 20 families of Pabbuleti Palli who are now in possession of the land and the patta, and can therefore legally make use of the land.

Water and sanitation in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh



Image: Rain Water Storage Pond

Rural areas in Warangal district are mainly dependent on groundwater as a source of drinking water. Nearly 70 per cent of the population depends on open wells and bore wells. Tap water (piped water) is used by 24 per cent of households to meet domestic and drinking water needs. Nearly 90 per cent of rural households collect water from community sources. Almost 70 per cent of rural households report having secure access to drinking water. As a result of severe drought and the depletion of groundwater, existing water sources have dried up and gaining access to drinking water has become a challenge for many villages, especially in summer.

The project, which is supported by the Flemish Government, selected 20 tribal villages (1,505 households with a total of 8,144 people) in Devaruppula Mandal, Warangal district, where access to safe drinking water and sanitation remains a serious problem. The data collected from the project villages showed that for these villages the main drinking water sources are bore wells and hand pumps. Out of 65 hand pumps, only 17 are functioning. In addition, out of the 275 agricultural and drinking water open wells, 166 open wells are not in use because of the lack of water. There are only five small ponds in the areas, which have also dried up and only provide water in the rainy season.

In the project area, sanitation facilities are very poor. Out of 1,505 families, only 57 families (4 per cent) have individual toilets while the rest must use open fields. Given the poor sanitation facilities, communicable and water borne diseases affect most people in the project villages. There is also no proper drainage system to dispose of water from the households. Most discard waste water in their backyard, street or open drains. The stagnant water fosters the spread of disease, bad odours and mosquito breeding.

Caritas International Belgium and Wannakam, supported with funds from the Flemish Government, have developed a project to address these issues. To date, the following has been achieved:

- **Through the promotion and dissemination of information and educational materials** such as pamphlets, awareness was raised in 20 project villages where people were motivated and able to improve their knowledge of proper water, health, hygiene and sanitation management.
- **Village water and sanitation committees** were formed in the 20 project villages; 178 village water and sanitation committee members gained an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in implementing the project and of how to solve problems related to water, health, hygiene and sanitation in the 20 villages.
- **50 youth members and 77 women leaders** increased their knowledge of water, health, hygiene and sanitation management.
- **100 village water and sanitation committee members** acquired knowledge of rooftop rainwater harvesting and water harvesting systems.
- **15 existing hand pumps** were repaired with platforms in 12 villages; 250 families benefited and were able to solve their drinking water problems.
- **5 new rainwater storage ponds** were constructed in 5 villages and 18 farmers benefited directly from the improved irrigation sources; 67 farmers will benefit indirectly from the improvement of existing bore wells through rainwater storage ponds.
- **7,500 tractor-loads of silt** were removed from the community irrigation tank; 180 farmers from 8 villages benefited by applying the silt over 520 acres of agricultural land.

The desiltation programme will also improve the storage of water in irrigation tanks and additional land will be irrigated with the increased supply of water. With the application of silt in the agricultural fields, it is anticipated that soil nutrients will be increased and farmers will be able to reduce expenditure on chemical fertilizers and at the same time expect better income and yields from their land. The removal of silt from irrigation tanks is also expected to recharge the surrounding bore wells and open wells, allowing more land to be cultivated.

Image: A Village Water and Sanitation Committee Training on Water Harvesting



Small enterprise development, Tamil Nadu

The small enterprise development project started in June 2010 in Tiruvallur District. Using various Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, the Madras Social Service Society (MSSS) learned that the local community lacked: (i) the skills to identify and utilize the available resources, (ii) access to opportunities to learn new skills, (iii) contacts with resource agencies/institutions, and (iv) marketing facilities and opportunities.

The project was aimed at improving the economic and social status of the community through innovative and viable income generation activities. This goal was to be achieved through the promotion of entrepreneurial skills and the introduction of the cooperative concept into the project area. The main activities and results are described below.

Under the Entrepreneur Development Programme training was conducted for 120 candidates. The training, given by certified trainers of the Tamil Nadu Government, taught participants to develop different microenterprises. The importance of good market studies was stressed. More than 49 micro income generating activities are currently taken up by the participants. The participants also benefited from different exhibitions and sale events that were organized for self-help groups (SHGs). As a result, regular market access is assured and there has been an increase in regular savings by SHGs. Participants also gained access to credit from Pudupet bank. Review meetings were conducted regularly for entrepreneurs who had embarked on income generation activities. Their learning and best practices were documented and made available to others so that they could improve their performance.

The project staff developed a tool that was used to select 10 SHGs (out of a total of 15) that would receive a contribution from a revolving fund. The revolving fund was distributed in November 2010. Each SHG was given Rs.25,000. The SHGs selected the members who could use this fund for their income generating activities. The average membership per SHG is 16 persons. The Government of India limits the number of SHG members to between 12 and 20.

The SHGs of Kannur Panchayat have developed a sense of leadership and self-discipline. Now they actively participate in Grama Sabha meetings, voice their rights and are involved in decision-making. These activities inspired the SHG members of Kannur Panchayat to increase their knowledge of the different types of resources available in the area and of how to use them to ensure their food security. This trend in the Panchayat will help improve the livelihoods of women.

Images:

A Small Scale Entrepreneur

At Work



South Asia Farmers' Conference, Nepal

The South Asia Farmers' Conference was held in August 2011 at Dhulikhel Lodge Resort, one hour's drive from Kathmandu, Nepal. Caritas Asia and Caritas Nepal organized the programme for 17 farmers and 13 officers from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, the Caritas Asia Secretariat and the host country Nepal.

During the conference, farmers reported that climate change has become one of their main challenges. One farmer from Bangladesh, Mr Parial, told the conference that, for example,

at times when they need water, they have no rainfall; on the other hand, when they do not need water, they can have so much rainfall that it causes severe flooding. One Sri Lankan farmer, Ms. Randeni, said that the climate is changing in such a way that crop-growing seasons and patterns have to be altered. The conference provided an opportunity for farmers to share information about their farming techniques and experiences and to learn from their counterparts engaged in farming in other countries.



Image: The Participants of the Farmer's Conference, Nepal

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