

Empowering fisherwomen by generating additional income from the cultivation of Aloe vera (Phase 2)



Harvesting Aloe vera, Puttalam, Sri Lanka © K. Ekaratne

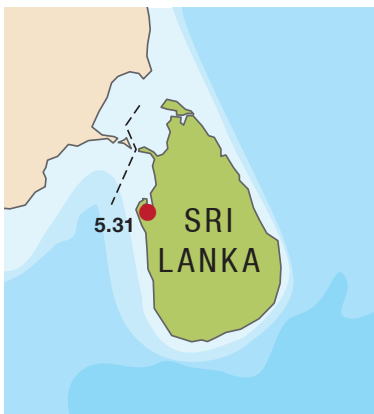
hold incomes, the local NGO Marine and Coastal Resources Conservation Foundation (MCRCF) proposed introducing household cultivation of Aloe vera (*Aloe vera*, known locally as *komarika*). To ensure the sustainability of this activity, MCRCF sought to establish strong market linkages with businesses demanding Aloe vera products.

Target beneficiaries

Fifteen fisher families.

Outputs

- ▶ Training of 15 fisher families, especially the women, in cultivating Aloe vera.
- ▶ Provision of plants and necessary tools to the families. About 575 Aloe vera plants were given to each family.
- ▶ The establishment of a buy-back system operated by MCRCF.
- ▶ Provision of water pumps to ten fishing families for garden watering.
- ▶ Construction of two tube wells.
- ▶ Installation of two drip irrigation systems.
- ▶ Provision of an improved income-generating activity for 15 fishing families.



LOCATION

Puttalam, Sri Lanka

PRIORITY POWS

- Sustainable Livelihoods

DURATION

Five months from July to November 2009

MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$4,386

Objectives

This project had four main objectives:

- ❶ to reduce pressure on Bar Reef and its associated marine and coastal resources;
- ❷ to increase the income of poor coastal householders;
- ❸ to empower women; and
- ❹ to stimulate income generation

Background

The coastal community of Kudawa village faces the dual challenge of declining natural resources and an increasing cost of living. To compensate, community members have been intensifying their use of coastal resources, leading to accelerated degradation of the coastal ecosystem and declining biodiversity. Urgent action is needed to introduce alternative means of generating income, ideally ones that are cost-effective and environmentally friendly. To this end of reducing poverty and increasing house-

Accomplishments and challenges

The project built up trust in the community, strengthening relationships between people through closer integration and collaborative action. Fisher families gained self-confidence from earning a supplementary income. They spent less time at sea and more time on land helping with cultivation.

The project transformed 1.6 hectares of bare land into a productive Aloe vera plot. It increased the number of home gardens

with water pumps. The participating families improved their skills in record keeping and maintaining their gardens. Market linkages were established with Janet Ayurveda, a leading cosmetics company in Sri Lanka.

Challenges

One drawback is that the fishing families who have converted to cultivating Aloe vera are finding that demand is currently low. Also, knowledge about Aloe vera cultivation is generally lacking among other fishing families.

Contributions to cross-cutting themes

Gender equality

Although it targeted entire families, the project's focus was on empowering women economically.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Lessons learned

Participating in developing an alternative livelihood strengthened the self-confidence of community members. Once they saw how easy, cheap and profitable Aloe vera cultivation can be, they became interested in trying it themselves. Now that they have more experience of the business of cultivation, they remain positive about its benefits and are prepared to continue their work.

Despite the current weakness of demand, the future looks promising as market linkages have been formed and an Aloe vera cultivator's society set up under the guidance of MCRCF, which is also giving free advice to cultivators.

The success of this project has led other community members to start cultivating Aloe vera of their own accord.

“Since my first Aloe vera harvest in December 2009, I have deposited US\$304 in my two daughters’ savings bank account.”

– DEEPIKA ENAT EDIRISINGE
PROJECT BENEFICIARY,
ANAWASALA, KALPITIYA