

From Ruin to Reconstruction Building a Long Term Livelihoods Strategy

CARE India Tsunami Response Program

Kammavari Cheruvu, a name implying “a place of the high castes”, lies at the tail end of the Krishna River in Machlipatnam Mandal of Krishna District in Andhra Pradesh. Although its name suggests privilege, this community was overlooked during Tsunami relief operations, despite the destruction caused by the mega disaster of December 2004. A majority of the residents of Kammavari Cheruvu had been engaged in agriculture for several decades and the Tsunami led to damage of vital resources for the livelihoods of these people, resulting in high levels of migration in search of work.

CARE India intervened in this situation and mobilized the community to engage in the desalination and removal of silt from 43 acres of agricultural land and the cleaning of 24 canals and drains. This rejuvenated their main source of irrigation and provided space for agriculture, which had been their primary occupation. A Community Water and Sanitation program also provided the community members with an opportunity to bring about changes in their health and hygiene situation. To encourage the rehabilitation of livelihoods lost as a result of the Tsunami, CARE India, in partnership with NGO CRASA, organized vulnerable women into Self Help Groups and provided them with dairy cattle, along with insurance for the animals and the capacity to maintain and use these animals productively. Because of the presence of dairy cattle in Kammavari Cheruvu, two cooperative dairy milk lines began to function and set up their collection points here.



B. Krishna Kumari poses with the dairy animal she has procured – through which her livelihood has been revived

During the course of the two years since this project was implemented, two cattle have died and insurance has been claimed for them – this reclaimed amount has been utilized to purchase new cattle and production has continued at a profitable level. Community members also continue to engage in agriculture, either on their own land or as laborers. Several members of the community who migrated soon after the Tsunami have returned, having heard of the improved situation. The Self Help Groups are operating well and their savings have been used for

the benefit of the community, to assist members in need.

Following the success of dairy farming in Kammavari Cheruvu, and the diversification of livelihoods that resulted, a long term dairy project has been planned. The reach of this initiative will be six villages in Machlipatnam Mandal, and will involve several crucial components – capacity building for effective production and cattle management, fodder development to support cattle rearing, feed shops for easy access to supplementary feed, para-veterinary care for animals and to facilitate reproduction, and efficient marketing of milk in order to enhance quality and obtain fair prices for producers. Central to this long term reconstruction of livelihoods, as with all CARE India TRP initiatives, is community organization and participation. The community has been involved in the process right from the conception of the project and will take charge of important elements of the project. Milk Producers’ Cooperatives have been established in every village and are now functioning to facilitate effective services to the milk producers in coordination with NGO CRASA, veterinary department, private dairies and village groups. A Village Development Committee is functional with keen members, and individuals like Haribabu, a Para-veterinarian in Kammavari Cheruvu, have played a vital role in the reconstruction of livelihoods through facilitating support from diverse stakeholders.



Women of Kammavari Cheruvu during interaction with CARE India & NGO staff

Kammavari Cheruvu now stands tall to exhibit how sincere efforts to restore ruined livelihoods after disaster and the acceptance of alternate livelihood activities can bring about transformation in communities. This community has formed the base for CRASA and CARE India to envisage a long term project, with much further reach, which will bring benefit to many more communities like this one.

Although the Tsunami brought devastation, the residents of Kammavari Cheruvu have demonstrated that all was not lost and have shown the courage to rebuild not only their livelihoods, but their community and their lives.