

Project summary

Project	Intervention among the Prawn Peeling Women Workers of Coastal Kerala
Intervention area	In Kerala the coastal belt of Alapuzha District is the major processing and export zone of shrimps/prawns. Prawn peeling is the first step in the processing of prawns. Peeling sheds are located in and around the Pattanakkadu Block in Alapuzha District, where the density of peeling women workers is very high: around 40,000 women workers are living and working in this area.
Problems of the area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Labor exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cheep women labor (low wages) - Unorganized workers - Physical exploitation - Unstable employment opportunity depends up on the availability of shrimps/ prawns 2. Health problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous work and sitting on the wet floor creates health problems (see picture) - Skin diseases (especially on hands) - The conditions and working atmosphere of the workers are unhygienic and risky 3. Livelihood problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water pollution - Lack of safe drinking water - Lack of agricultural operations and land resource management - Lack of subsidiary income sources and savings - Educational backwardness and high rates of dropouts from school - exploitation by the moneylenders 4. Un-highlighted sector and problems. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of linkages with development actors and. - Lack of proper awareness about own situation - Issue was not highlighted to the mainstream
Possible solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlight the issue in the mainstream ▪ Sensitize and organize the community ▪ Develop and implement viable action plan for the sustainability of the community ▪ Identify natural and local resources and its utilisation ▪ Increased participation in grama sabha (local government) and ensure benefits through PRIs (Panchayat Raj Institutions) ▪ Start alternative income generation programs for women ▪ Awareness creation for sustainable development.
Previous involvement of INFACT	INFACT is one of the pioneering organizations tackling these problems, and seeking sustainable and viable solutions. As such, INFACT has taken measures for the welfare and empowerment of the unorganized prawn-peeling women workers in this sector.



	<p>Highlighting the issues:</p> <p>1. Study and Report</p> <p>INFACT has conducted a study on the economic situation of the area and came out with a study report on November 1991, which has been disseminated to different developmental actors like PRI's, NGO's, Government Institutions related to fisheries sector.</p> <p>2. Documentary film</p> <p>INFACT produced a documentary film named "Peeled in the Process" in the year 1991. It made a tremendous effect to highlight an un-highlighted issue among rest of the world. It also envisaged the attention of social and developmental actors to this sector.</p> <p>Organising and sensitisation activities:</p> <p>1. Formation of Mahila Samajams</p> <p>2. Initiating Credit Unions</p> <p>3. Formation of Self Helping Groups (SHGs)</p> <p>4. Women's empowerment forum</p> <p>The process of organizing and sensitizing the prawn peeling women workers was initiated by INFACT. The formation of Mahila Samajams (women groups) and Credit unions were the first initiatives during the years from 1994. At present, we are initiating Self Help Groups. Through the SHGs, sustainable livelihood programmes and sustainable health improvement activities will be promoted. We are in the process of initiating a Women's empowerment forum namely, Vanitha Vikasana Vedi, to monitor their own activities.</p>
<p>Next activities planned</p>	<p>1. Livelihood support programs: Most of the families are holding less than 10 cents of land where they can plant spices. For example, vanilla can be effectively cultivated in these fragmented lands. The promotion of vanilla as an intercrop for subsidiary income the people has just been initiated.</p> <p>2. Sustainable health improvement activities: Most of the family members are suffering health problems. Introducing a sustainable health packages for the workers is an alternative strategy to improve their life standard and health. We promote the cultivation and consumption of medicinal plants through a package of practices. Also, INFACT wants to promote the possibility of marketing the value added products from different medicinal plants (e.g. Arrow root, a medicinal root effective against many diseases).</p>
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<p>Pictures</p>	<p>Prawn peeling woman at work</p> <p>Working conditions in a prawn peeling factory</p> <p>Skin diseases due to the peeling activities</p> <p>One of the improvements of the project: the introduction of tables for women with back ache problems.</p>	   
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