



ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY

(A State University Established by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 1985,
Accredited with 'A+' Grade by NAAC (CGPA: 3.64) in the Third Cycle,
Graded as Category- I University and Granted Autonomy by MHRD-UGC)

KARAIKUDI – 630 003, Tamil Nadu, India



1. Title of the Practice

Coastal Prosperity Initiatives of Alagappa University

2. Objectives of the Practice:

1. Empower coastal communities, especially fisherwomen, through skill development and sustainable practices.
2. Provide training in seaweed culture, ornamental fish culture, fish net making, sea grass vermicomposting, and marketing.
3. Facilitate income generation and create employment opportunities for fisher folk through creation of SHGS, facilitated by NGOs.
4. Support the establishment of self-employment units using local resources.
5. Address seafood spoilage issues and enhance seafood safety through training programs.
6. Impart training on the production of Aquatic nutraceuticals (value-added Fish Food) to maximize economic benefits.
7. Conduct coastal area clean-up programs to preserve marine ecosystems and promote environmental sustainability.

3. The Context:

The fisher folk of Thondi, who play a pivotal role in their families' well-being, often find themselves facing a myriad of challenges such as locational disadvantage, lack of support, unemployment, illiteracy, and financial and mental distress. They require continuous assistance to meet their families' daily needs and ensure the education of their children. Recognizing these challenges, Alagappa University's Department of Oceanography and Coastal Area Studies has come forward to address them since 1995.

Through a variety of skill development programs tailored to their needs, the University aims to empower them to earn sustainable incomes, thereby fulfilling their families' financial requirements and enhancing their status within their families and society. These programs equip the fisher folk with necessary skills for employment and instil a sense of confidence and independence. Moreover, by establishing strong relationships with the rural poor and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the region, the Department is committed to improving the social, economic, and educational well-being of these fisher folk, women in particular.

4. The Practice:

Alagappa University's Department of Oceanography and Coastal Area Studies has implemented several impactful practices to empower coastal communities, in the underdeveloped area of Thondi as given below:

a. Sea Weed Culture Training:

It focuses on the cultivation of seaweed, which is in high demand locally and internationally for its various by-products. The training equips participants with the skills to cultivate, harvest, and process seaweed, enabling them to tap into this lucrative market. It also educates participants on the environmental benefits of seaweed cultivation, such as its role in coastal protection and carbon sequestration.

b. Sea Grass Vermicomposting:

Sea grasses are a valuable marine resource that are often discarded as waste. The sea grass vermicomposting program teaches participants how to convert sea grass wastes into nutrient-rich compost using earthworms. This helps in waste management and also provides a sustainable source of organic fertilizer for agriculture, promoting soil health and crop productivity.

c. Beach Cleaning Program:

Alagappa University organizes regular beach cleaning programs in collaboration with local communities, NGOs, and government agencies, raising awareness about marine pollution and its impact on coastal ecosystems.

d. Training on Fish Net making:

It equips fishermen with the skills to produce high-quality fishing nets. Participants learn various techniques, including knot tying and net repairing, to ensure the durability and effectiveness of the nets. This training not only enhances the livelihoods of fishermen but also contributes to the sustainability of fishing practices in coastal areas.

e. Training program under the SANKALP scheme:

This program, held at Mandapam, Rameswaram, and Uppur in collaboration with the Fisheries Department, focused on the production of value-added fish and fish-based products for three self-help groups. The Department of Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare granted a sum of Rs. 104,500 for this program. It aimed to enhance the skills of participants in fish processing and value addition, thereby increasing their income opportunities. Participants learned techniques for producing various value-added products from fish, such as fish pickles, fish snacks, and smoked fish, which have a higher market value.

f. Other Training Programs:

The Department conducts training programs for fisher folk communities and fish handlers on personal hygiene, healthy fish handling, post-harvest fish losses, fish spoilage and contamination, conditions for bacterial growth, proper icing, packaging, and marketing strategies. These programs are crucial for reducing seafood spoilage and enhancing seafood safety, which preserves marine ecosystems and promotes environmental sustainability.

5. Evidence of Success:

Success of Alagappa University's initiatives in empowering coastal communities, particularly fisherwomen, is evident through various indicators. Firstly, there has been a noticeable improvement in the communication and leadership skills of participants. Many individuals who underwent the training programs have reported feeling more confident and assertive in their personal and professional lives.

Secondly, there has been a tangible increase in employment opportunities and income sources for the participants. Many fisherwomen who previously struggled to make ends meet have reported a significant rise in their monthly earnings, with some earning between Rs. 10,000 to Rs.12,000 per month.

Thirdly, these initiatives have led to a notable rise in the socio-economic status of the participants. Many fisher folk, who were once marginalized and economically disadvantaged have now achieved a dignified life and sustainable livelihoods.

Overall, the evidence of success lies in the transformed lives of the participants, who have not only gained valuable skills but also a newfound sense of empowerment and financial independence. These outcomes highlight the effectiveness and impact of Alagappa University's practices in uplifting coastal communities.

6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required:

The implementation of skill development programs for fisherwomen in Thondi has encountered several challenges. One major issue is the logistical difficulty of bringing fisherfolk from various locations to the University's training centre. Additionally, the extended duration of training programs often requires participants to stay away from their families, posing a hindrance to completing the training schedule.

a. Problems Encountered:

Another significant challenge faced in implementing skill development programs for fisher folk in Thondi is the lack of awareness about these training programs. Many potential beneficiaries are not aware of the availability or the benefits of such programs. This lack of awareness leads to low participation rates and limited impact on the target population. Therefore, effective strategies for creating awareness about the training programs are essential to ensure their success and reach a larger number of fisherwomen in need of skill development opportunities.

b. Resources Required:

To address these challenges effectively, several resources are essential. These include a well-equipped and furnished office for administrative purposes and a dedicated training center with adequate facilities for conducting training sessions. Allocation of more financial resources will help in engaging qualified trainers and awareness creation through publicity campaigns.