

## Womens' Self Help Groups

PBRC is working with 27 Womens' Self Help Groups (SHGs) within the Kaliveli Bioregion and along the Coromandel Coast. These SHGs allow women to interact effectively with one another and take an active role in the development of the community.

### SHGs

frequently participate in exposure visits to PBRC and NEEC where they can see examples of medicinal herbal gardens, agro-forestry, an established and recently planted indigenous forest, nurseries, alternative energy in action and spirulina production, as well as a number of other resource materials and displays.

### A

major component of the work with these groups involves providing training and setting up Income Generation Projects that the women can easily develop. Training workshops are conducted for each group in the areas of:

- Organic farming principles
- TDEF
- Vermicompost production
- EM (effective micro-organisms)
- Integrated pest management
- SRI (system of rice intensification)
- Nursery training
- Spirulina production
- Tailoring
- Compressed earth block production
- Medicinal plants - herbal medicine preparation
- Health and hygiene
- Nutrition awareness
- Family planning and child care awareness
- Micro-finance initiatives
- Income Generation Programmes
- Women's empowerment

### Many

of these groups establish Kitchen Herbal Gardens and use the herbal plants for medicine preparation after attending these workshops. As a result of receiving training in these groups, community members are beginning to utilise organic farming methods on their own land and to grow crops with success. Plantation of TDEF species in their villages and setting up indigenous nurseries as IGP activities are helping to conserve the biodiversity of the region.

### PBRC

helps these groups to access government and micro-credit schemes which are of great benefit to SHGs and communities in general. Through

careful monitoring and training, PBRC staff ensure that the internal administration of the groups is well maintained and any issues are quickly addressed. Women also participate in workshops on bookkeeping, leadership and team building. Frequent meetings and evaluation by staff help to sustain these groups.

A Women's Centre has been recently constructed at Nadukuppam Field, which enables womens' SHGs to meet independently in a safe, stimulating environment. It provides them with the opportunity to expand their horizons and interact with other women and sections of the community - as well as being a hub of information and knowledge. The Centre and its activities encourage women to implement sustainable practices in the village and farming community.