

Practical Session in Basic Business Counseling for Women, Trincomalee
Success Story: Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise

A training programme in *Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise* was planned in co-operation with the Rural Women's Development Society, the Department of Agriculture and the District Chamber of Commerce in Trincomalee. This programme began in April 2010 and targetted rural women entrepreneurs to increase their skills and capacity in entrepreneurialism and modern farming techniques.

Ms. Subaskaran Rajani, a 44 year old mother of two children from Kumpurupitty Village in Trincomalee has been displaced by the civil conflict for much of her life, but was able to return home to Kumpurupitty in August 2009 accompanied by her husband, Mother and Father.

Upon returning home, Rajani had no plan to improve her life. It has been hard for many displaced persons to pick their lives back up after the conflict ended in May 2009. Many are in fear of returned conflict as has been so frequently the case in the past. The adjustment to the new norm is not an easy one. Unfortunately the adjustment has been extremely difficult for Rajani's husband who now suffers from mental depression. Rajani's nine year old child has also returned injured and often incurs medical expenses.

Rajani now lives in a basic clay hut with her husband, two children, Mother and Father and has a few acres of land. Since the conflict, Rajani has struggled to provide a basic subsistence living for her family with a few odd jobs as an agricultural labourer approximately 10 days per month earning an income of Rs. 7,500 (USD\$66) per month. Rajani's fight for the economic wellbeing of her family was not an easy one and this was recognised by the Women's Rural Development Society who recommended her for the project's training in *Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise*. "I was quite happy when [I] saw my name in the selected participants list ... really, I am fighting to get income to manage my family's cost of living."

After successful completion of *the Fruit Farming as a Business Enterprise* training programme,



Rajani gained skills in modern farming techniques and increased entrepreneurial capacity. Rajani has become an entrepreneur who continues to learn new skills through the support of UNIDO's activities. As a successful beneficiary Rajani also supports others in the cultivation of their papaya through knowledge transfer exercises.

During the training Rajani received papaya seedlings and fertilizers to start her farm, now enabling her to earn an additional monthly income of Rs.6,000 (USD\$53) for a total of Rs.13,500 (\$119). In an innovative manner, Rajani has decided to grow green gram between her papaya trees to fetch additional income.

When asked about her current situation, Rajani informed that "we are ok now. I am gradually increasing my earning through [cultivating] papaya. I have no doubt it will give my family income [for] at least 2 1/2 years. I plan to plant more papaya at my land, [and] if possible get lease of other lands. She further added with a soft smile, "you know my husband is also ok now, and he is doing a job as unskilled labour."