

Indian Fish Hatchery inaugurated with AwF assistance

The following message was received in England to be given to the people attending an AwF fund-raising event in Marlow.

### **Message from the AwF beneficiaries of Tripura to the South Place Marlow Community**

The support provided by the South Place Marlow Community through the AwF to the St. Xavier's Vocational Training Centre is beginning to have a multiplying impact in this land-locked state located on the North-eastern part of India. With your support the Centre was able to help 75 farmers with fish ponds to improve their productivity by effective utilization of their resources. The knowledge-centred approach used by the Centre, instead of the material support approach, is appreciated by the farmers. Development being a complex process, the Centre has been making all-out efforts to ensure sustainability for any of the activities introduced.

Farmers are confronted with poor quality young fish ("seed") for stocking their ponds and, as a result, efforts to enhance productivity often fail. Recognising this problem, in our message to South Place Marlow last year, the Centre expressed its desire to build a hatchery to provide quality seed to the farmers. This dream has now begun to be fulfilled with the additional support received by the Centre from AwF (UK). The first phase, constructing a small Chinese hatchery, has been completed and the facility was inaugurated two days ago on July 10 2008 by Mr. Kishore Ambuly, District Magistrate and Collector of the West Tripura district.

It was the good fortune of the Centre that this visionary administrator kindly agreed to open the facilities and grace the occasion. Since the Government of Tripura has accorded the highest importance for fish production, the Collector assured all possible support to the Centre to expand its activities and reach the large number of people. Impressed with the commitment of Father K.J. Joseph, he summed up his observations as "God helps those who help others". The event was also attended by Pransinjit Bhattacharjee, Block Development Officer of Bishalgarh. Mr. Bhattacharjee, who is also a well known Bengali poet, assured all help from the block. For the St. Xavier's Centre, the support of these officers is essential and will be useful to reach a wider population.

This phase of the project aims at producing quality seed and supplying them to farmers. Species diversification to improve productivity is considered as an important approach and the project will aim at producing the seed of such fish species that will benefit farmers. Most importantly, the project will focus on providing knowledge and skills on fish seed production and fish culture to the trainees of the vocational training Centre, drawn every year from all over Tripura. As indicated in our earlier message, about 50 boys and 50 girls, who are school drop outs and unemployed youth from rural areas, are brought to the Centre to provide vocational skills. After a year long training, these trainees return to their places and engage in various activities. Seed production being a specialized activity, from among these trainees with facilities and potential, some will be selected and further support provided to build their capacity. It is anticipated that such an approach will have a far reaching impact in spreading the technique all over Tripura and thereby ensure quality seed availability in various places.

The support provided by the South Place Marlow Community to initiate aquaculture activities by the St. Xavier's Vocational Training Centre, and the continued technical support by the College of Fisheries and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research Centre, has helped to attract the attention of the right people and organizations. Besides the support provided by the District Collector in recognition of the good work of the Centre to improve their pond facility through the special program of Government of India, the Centre was recently visited by the Officers of the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India and some of the leading experts in the country. It is anticipated that all these will blossom into major programs. The initial support provided by the South Place Marlow Community has helped the Centre to found this aquaculture activity and your support will always be cherished. There are many challenges and newer opportunities to help the people. With all your guidance and good wishes, the Centre aims to embark on this task and bring peace and happiness to people.

On the occasion of the inauguration of the fish hatchery complex coinciding with the 'Fish Farmers Day 2008', we have conveyed all of the messages of good wishes that were sent by the Founder Chairman of AwF, Mr. Michael New, OBE. Father K.J. Joseph, Director of the Centre, the trainees of the Centre and the farmers have asked us to convey their heartfelt thanks to all of you in AwF and South Place Marlow and, in particular, to Michael New and his family.

Dr. M.C. Nandeeshha and Dr. B. Santhosh, AwF Volunteers