



Report on Capacity Building Programme



Organized by

**EIACP Programme Centre Resource Partner on
Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Improvement
ICFRE - Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding
(Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education)
Coimbatore – 641 002**

Capacity Building Programmes organized by ICFRE-IFGTB EIACP PC RP

As part of Mission LiFE, the EIACP (Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building, and Livelihood Programme) Programme Centre at the ICFRE - Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore organized two batches of Capacity Building Programme on Wealth Out of Waste to the Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees at Mandapam Camp, Rameshwaram from 25.11.2025 to 28.11.2025. A total of 52 Tamil Refugees participated in the Capacity Building Programme. These trainings were designed to empower the participants with practical skills to enhance their livelihood opportunities and promote sustainable practices. The participants face restrictions on freedom of movement, job opportunities, education and financial activities. Considering the specialized nature of this group, the programmes were conducted with careful attention to their social, economic, and environmental constraints, such as limited access to resources, restricted mobility, and the need for livelihood options suitable within camp conditions. The training modules were customized to ensure relevance, feasibility, and immediate applicability in their unique living environment. Entry to the camp required special permission from the Secretariat, Chennai and it is not permitted to general public and media without authorization.

Inauguration:

The inauguration of the capacity building programmes on Wealth Out of Waste was held on 25th November 2025. The programme began with the registration of trainees, who represented a specialized and vulnerable community with unique socio-economic constraints. Following the registration of the trainees, Dr T. Vamadevan, Information Officer, EIACP welcomed the gathering and gave an overview of the training. He emphasized the need for the participants to adhere prescribed guidelines throughout the programme, particularly in view of the camp's restricted environment, limited resources, and the necessity for discipline during hands-on sessions. Dr T. Vamadevan highlighted that these measures were essential for ensuring safety, orderliness, and effective learning. Dr. S. Vigneswaran, Senior Programme Officer, ICFRE-IFGTB EIACP during his inaugural address highlighted the importance of sustainable craft-based livelihoods and the role of Mission LiFE in empowering vulnerable communities. Dr Vigneswaran emphasised that transforming waste into useful and marketable products not only fosters environmental responsibility but also creates new avenues for income generation. Shri Kalaimamani V. Umapathy, International Craft Instructor, provided an outline of the hands-on training schedule and emphasized how waste materials can be transformed into value-added products with market potential. He also gave an insight about the market potential for such eco-friendly craft items, encouraging participants to develop creativity and precision in their work. Shri Balakrishnan, RI, Mandapam Sri Lankan Tamil Rehabilitation Camp, during his special address appreciated ICFRE-IFGTB's initiative in reaching out to the refugee community with skill-oriented programmes that align with both environmental and

livelihood

needs.

Shri S. Sundararajan, Office Superintendent (Retd.), ICFRE-IFGTB, delivered the vote of thanks. He expressed gratitude to all dignitaries, trainers, facilitators, and participants for their support and interest. Group photo was taken after the inauguration.





Training Activities

The Participants were engaged in the various hands-on sessions led by Kalaimamani V. Umapathy and his team. The training covered:

- Identification of reusable waste materials
- Techniques for crafting utility and decorative products
- Demonstrations on weaving, shaping, and finishing
- Practical sessions spread across two full training days

Kalaimamani V. Umapathy and his team, taught a wide range of innovative techniques to transform locally available waste materials into both functional and decorative craft products. Shri S. Santhosh and Shri G. Manikandan demonstrated the complete process of utilizing coconut-based wastes—such as coconut shells, stem fibers, and husk materials—by teaching the trainees how to clean, soften, cut, carve, smoothen, and polish them into attractive items like bowls, ladles, pen stands, candle holders, keychains, small containers, and decorative showpieces. They also introduced creative ways of using maize covers and dried maize sticks, converting them into beautiful floral bouquets, wall décor items, table centrepieces, and miniature craft models with high aesthetic appeal. They also used the wood waste powder to make the products strong enough to handle. After the demonstrations the trainees were divided into three teams under the leadership of Kalaimamani V. Umapathy, Shri G. Manikandan and Shri S. Santhosh. All the team members were provided with various materials.

The trainees showed exceptional interest and learned the techniques very well, quickly adapting to the step-by-step procedures demonstrated by the trainers. They practiced each activity with dedication—right from material selection, drying, and preparation to shaping, joining, weaving, colouring, and finishing. Many participants produced products that reflected neat workmanship, symmetry, and strong attention to detail. They also displayed impressive creativity by experimenting with natural colours, combining different waste materials, and trying new design concepts suggested by the trainers.

The training not only enhanced their crafting skills but also boosted their confidence and problem-solving abilities. Participants worked collaboratively, helped one another during intricate processes, and developed good teamwork and coordination. Several trainees took initiative to create additional designs beyond the instructed models, showing strong motivation and eagerness to learn more. The sessions also taught them essential value-addition skills such as surface

finishing, eco-friendly decoration techniques, and simple packaging ideas that can enhance the market value of the products.



Overall, the trainees produced a wide variety of high-quality items using coconut waste, maize covers, and sticks, proving their ability to convert waste into wealth with minimal resources. The training helped them understand the livelihood potential of these eco-friendly crafts, and many expressed confidence that they could continue making such products independently and possibly generate income in the future. The following eco-friendly and value-added products were creatively crafted by the trainees using coconut shells, coconut stems, maize covers, sticks, paper, and other reusable materials:

- Decorative bullock carts
- Ancient agricultural sculptures
- Miniature bicycles made from sticks and maize fibres
- Paper dolls and traditional figurines
- Bird nests using coconut shells and natural fibres
- Idols depicting ancient people and traditional agricultural practices
- Bulls and cows in traditional farming activities
- Flower bouquets and wall hangings from maize covers
- Table décor pieces crafted from coconut shells
- Handcrafted lamp stands and tealight holders

The diversity and quality of these products clearly demonstrated the trainees' creativity, attention to detail, and ability to transform simple waste materials into beautiful and functional craft items with high aesthetic and market value.





Exhibition

An exhibition was organized at the Mandapam Sri Lankan Tamil Rehabilitation Camp to showcase the wide range of eco-friendly products crafted by the trainees during the Capacity Building Programme. The exhibition was inaugurated by Ms. V. Shanthi ,Special Deputy Collector, Mandapam, Sri Lankan Tamil Rehabilitation Camp, The exhibition featured an impressive collection of handmade items created from coconut shells, coconut stems, maize covers, sticks, paper, and other reusable materials. Products such as decorative bullock carts, agricultural sculptures, miniature bicycles, paper dolls, coconut shell nests, village models, flower arrangements, vessels, utility items, and various artistic creations were neatly arranged for viewing.

The exhibition provided a platform for the trainees to proudly present their newly acquired skills, creativity, and craftsmanship. Visitors, officials, and dignitaries appreciated the quality, precision, and originality of the products. Many expressed surprise at how simple waste materials could be transformed into aesthetically appealing and functional items. The exhibition not only boosted the confidence of the trainees but also emphasized the potential for income generation through eco-friendly craft-making. Overall, the event highlighted the success of the training programme and reinforced the value of promoting sustainable livelihoods among the refugee community.





Valedictory Function

The Valedictory Function of the Capacity Building Programme on Wealth out of Waste was held on 28th November 2025 at the Mandapam Sri Lankan Tamil Rehabilitation Camp. Dr. T. Vamadevan, Information Officer, EIACP, ICFRE-IFGTB, delivered the Welcome Address, appreciating the participants' enthusiasm and commitment. Dr. Rekha R. Warriar, Scientist G & Coordinator, EIACP, delivered the Special Address, highlighting the significance of sustainable practices and the role of such programmes in empowering vulnerable communities. She also emphasized the importance of continuing skill-based initiatives that promote environmental responsibility while creating new livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups. In addition, she appreciated the dedication of the trainees and encouraged them to utilize their newfound skills to develop eco-friendly products that could contribute to both personal income generation and environmental conservation. The Valedictory Address was delivered by Ms. V. Shanthi, Special Deputy Collector, who commended the trainees for their hard work, creativity, and dedication, and encouraged them to continue practicing the skills learned for livelihood enhancement. Feedback from the trainees were recorded for the betterment of the training in the future, where many trainees expressed their satisfaction with the training, noting the usefulness of the skills gained and

the confidence it had given them to explore new livelihood opportunities. Kalaimamani V. Umamathy, the international craft instructor, delivered the concluding Remarks, appreciating the trainees' efforts and reaffirming the potential of waste-to-wealth crafts as a sustainable income source. Certificates to all participants were distributed, marking the successful completion of the programme. The event concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks delivered by Shri S. Sundararajan, Office Superintendent (Retd.), ICFRE-IFGTB, who expressed gratitude to all dignitaries, trainers, officials, and participants for contributing to the success of the programme.









Uniqueness of the training:

1. Refugee Experience

- **Sense of Inclusion:** For many refugees, this was the first time they were formally invited into a national environmental capacity-building program. It gave them dignity and recognition beyond their camp identity.
- **Hands-on Learning:** The activities like eco-friendly livelihood skills allowed them to see immediate results.
- **Community Bonding:** Shared exercises fostered solidarity, with participants supporting each other across age divides.

2. Instructor Experience

- **Adaptive Teaching:** Instructors had to innovate with low-resource methods—participatory discussions, and peer-to-peer demonstrations—since camp infrastructure was limited.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** They learned to balance technical content with empathy tailoring sessions to refugees' lived realities.
- **Personal Fulfillment:** The instructors described the training as transformative for themselves, seeing resilience and creativity flourish in constrained conditions.

- **Capacity Building:** It was not just teaching, but co-learning—refugees contributed local knowledge (e.g., traditional skills) that enriched the sessions.

3. EIACP's Perspective

- **Innovation in Outreach:** This was the first time EIACP extended its mandate into refugee contexts, blending environmental awareness with livelihood support.
- **Policy Significance:** It demonstrated that capacity-building can be inclusive, reaching marginalized groups while aligning with sustainability goals.
- **Scalable Model:** The pilot created a template for replication in other camps or vulnerable communities, emphasizing eco-conscious livelihoods.
- **Acceptability of the products:** The products created (almost 150 in number) has received wide appreciation and provides scope for small-scale camp based pilot projects.

Limitations

- Camp facilities are basic, often lacking dedicated training halls, reliable electricity, or digital connectivity.
- Space constraints make it difficult to host large groups or interactive sessions.
- As refugees, they lack full rights to property ownership or formal business registration.

Overall Experience of the First-of-its-Kind EIACP Training for Refugees

It was a three-way transformation: a **moment of dignity, resilience, and innovation**, where refugees gained hope, instructors discovered new depths of empathy, and EIACP expanded its vision of inclusive sustainability.

The Government permits basic livelihood activities inside camps to reduce dependency on aid, with initiatives typically being small-scale, low-investment, and community-driven. Refugees have limited scope for formal employment; however, camp-based livelihood options such as tailoring, handicrafts, skill training, and eco-friendly enterprises are allowed under government oversight. Any expansion of these opportunities depends on permissions from the authorities and alignment with rehabilitation policies. Thus, livelihood enhancement in Mandapam Camp is possible but restricted to government-approved, small-scale activities that respect refugee regulations and are framed as rehabilitation support rather than formal employment.