



PHOTO & CAPTION

Returning to the Sea



Photo: USAID/Kristen Kelleher

A fishing boat repaired by USAID and armed with a restored motor awaits launching in Tirumallivasal, on India's southern shores. This was one of the first crafts in the ocean after the tsunami decimated Tirumallivasal.

Fishermen celebrated the sound of engines running and boats in the water.

Devastated by the December 2004 tsunami, the south Indian coastal village of Tirumallivasal has begun to recover, as its 10,000 residents rebuild and return to their livelihoods.

After the disaster, USAID response teams helped construct a temporary settlement with 525 units, including a daycare center, TV rooms, a community hall and health and police posts. They also provided volleyball nets, cricket bats and jump ropes to create positive outlets for children who had experienced severe trauma and longed for their former homesteads and communities.

A third of Tirumallivasal's 10,000 residents are fishing families that trawl for fish for their own

tables and for local markets. After the tsunami ravaged their boats and supplies, hundreds of fishing families lost their income — and thus their purchasing power — and could no longer supply fish to markets, dragging down the local economy. It was vital to get fishermen back to work as quickly as possible, both to restore family income and revitalize the larger economy.

USAID engaged a local mechanic — who the villagers trusted and who charged reduced rates for services — to repair motors on damaged fishing boats. USAID also distributed nets and gear to families that had lost them.

On February 18, fishermen celebrated the sound of engines running and boats in the water, and launched their crafts that afternoon. With USAID support, Tirumallivasal was one of the first Indian fishing villages affected by the tsunami to show signs of recovery, and of once again becoming a thriving community.