

Profile of
Combei Centre
Kurumbadi



January 2006

The village of Kurumbadi is beautifully situated outside Coonoor on Mettupalayam Highway. 16 Kurumba families live here. This Village Resource Centre started the 25th of April 2005.

Most of the people living in Kurumbadi work at estates, collecting clove and nutmeg. Though, seven young Kurumba women are working here, at the Combei Centre, on a daily basis. They live in Kurumbadi and nearby villages, many of them are family or were friends before. At the Village Resource Centre, NTFPs are value-added before being sold in the Green Shops of Keystone. Preparing, packing and weighing of the Last Forest products are done here. The specialities of Combei Centre are Nutmeg Pickle and Lime Marmalade. Some of the products are also sold locally in Kurumbadi and Pudukadu villages, mainly Pickles in plastic bags of 50 g, 100 g and 250 g.



Many of the women suggested that the samples they have made should also be sold. For example Nutmeg Jam, Jackfruit Jam, Mango Jam. They want to make the samples more than once, because only then it can be good.

Future plans for Combei Centre

One request from the women working at the centre is that they don't want to be dependent on the Green Shop to sell their products. There are plans of setting up a small shop near Kurumbadi, a chart on the Mettupalayam highway. This shop will be run by the Kurumbadi women and only their products will be sold, it will thus be autonomous from the Green Shop. The Forest Department has recently (Feb 2006) given their permission for this shop to open.

Packing capacity

At the Combei Centre they pack 500 bags of Amla Candy in two days. Although, they are able to pack a maximum of 1000 bags a day if all of them are doing it. 100 bottles of Pickle or Honey can be packed a day, by two persons.



Products, package size and peak season

Nellikai, Nov-Jan

Amla Candy	50g	100g		
Nellikai Jam			250g	
Nellikai Pickle			200g	350g
NMF unsalted	50g	100g		
NMF salted	50g	100g		

Lime, Apr-June & Orange, June-July

Lime Pickle	150g		350g	
Lime Marmelade		250g		
Lime & Ginger Marmelade		250g		
Orange Marmelade		250g		

Spices, Mar-May

Nutmeg		50g		
Nutmeg Candy	25g			
Nutmeg Pickle			200g	350g
Mace	25g			
Clove	25g	50g		

Honey, Apr-July, Nov-Dec

Bitter Honey	250g
Honey	250g
Hive Honey	250g
Dammer Honey	250g
Nellikai Honey	250g

Mango, May-July

Hot & Sweet Mango Pickle	480g
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LINGEE, 35 years old, is married since 18 years back and has no children. She lives in Kolikori just a few villages away. She likes working at the centre and is very good at shaking Amla Candy, but thinks everything is equally fun. Her vision of the centre is that it will become bigger, with 100-150 employees. It would be good if the women working

on the estates could work at the centre instead. Personally she wants to be known for being a good person who works well. Lingee has been working at the centre for two months now, she is filling in for Cithra who normally works at the centre but will have a baby in March.

M. SANTHI has worked here for six months. She is 20 years old and lives in Pudukadu. She has two younger brothers and one older sister. She used to collect forest products and work at an estate. Working at the centre means that she does not have to walk as much as before and that she can work inside when the weather is bad, something that she appreciates.



Her favourite tasks are packing and to make Nellikai Jam. Her picture of the centre in five years is that 10-20 people will be working regularly with even more products. She wants the Combei Centre to have their own shops in Chennai and Mumbai, where she also will work. For her personal future she wants to keep up a good health and save some money.

One thing is for sure, she doesn't want to marry or have children. Husband is trouble and having children will be expensive!



R. SANTI is 20 years old and married since two years back, she has no children. She worked at an estate, collecting clove, before she started working at the centre three months ago. Packing and weighing the products is what she finds most fun. Her dream is that the centre will have a new building with about 50 workers. She wants there to be more training and new

products. In her own life she wants to save some money and wishes for her family to be happy in their souls.

SARASWATI is 17 years old and has three sisters and five brothers. She went to school up to 8th standard and started here through Susheela. Cooking is her favourite job, especially Nellikai Jam. Her Combei Centre vision is that there will be advertising on TV and radio about the good indigenous products from Last Forest. She also thinks they should have higher



salaries. For her personal future she wants to have her own cottage and her own shop. She likes stitching and wants to have a sewing machine.



SUMITHRA is 27 years old, has been married for eight years and has no children. She is from Sholurmattam, but lives in Pudukadu now. She has worked at the centre since it opened in April 2005. Earlier she was collecting clove and nutmeg at an estate. When the centre was about to open she says Susheela called and asked if she wanted to work and that is

how she started here. She thinks the centre is good for the tribal people because Keystone is good at marketing which leads to a better price at the market. The training they get at the Combei Centre is good. Sumithra likes making pickles the most, but her special task is to do counting and writing. She says that now Kurumbas are poor and have no education. In the future she wants the centre to be bigger, 50 employees with collecting of NTFPs as well. There should also be more training.

SUSHEELA is 24 years old and joined Keystone in 1999. She started out in the Coonoor office training people from the surrounding area and continued in the Hive in Kotagiri doing packing and selling. Susheela is also a part of the IDLG group handling questions of local governance through fieldwork meetings etc. She has been in charge of Combei Centre since



start. She usually comes to Keystone office on Saturdays. Her main tasks are to train the women working here, take part of the preparation and packing of the products, purchasing, distributing salaries, counting, writing etc. When the Combei Centre shop opens she says she will be working there some, and then she will train the other women. She wants the centre to become bigger with **one more building** and a **local shop** inside, she also wants the **products to spread**, even for **export**. Her personal dream is that the Kurumba people will have a good development, both cultural and educational. Her favourite products are Honey and Nellikai Mouth Freshener.

VALLI, 17 years old, is one of the youngest girls at the Combei Centre. She has two elder brothers, is from Pudukadu village and has worked here for six months. Though, she has been hanging around the centre for a long time before that, helping out. She finds sealing most fun and she is good at cleaning. She thinks the centre can improve by more cleaning. In five years she sees a more **developed** centre. She can also imagine herself and her friends having their own **independent centre**. In the future she wants to get married, but she will discuss with her husband about continuing working.



VUJYA has worked at the centre from the start. Unfortunately she was at Keystone office when we visited Kurumbadi, why we have not been able to interview her.

