

## **Establishment of small fish farms for achieving MDGs in Madagascar.**

Prospective fish farm operators from Madagascar and eight other countries journeyed to Ponchatoula, Louisiana to combat poverty by learning how to establish fish farms in their home countries. “Teach a man how to fish...” was the theme of the four-day Fish Farming and Aquaculture Institute. Content of the training program included discussion on farm location, financial resources, site preparation, environmental conditions, governmental regulations, transportation, and market demands.

The participants received hands-on experience at the Til-Tech Aquafarm located in nearby Robert, Louisiana where owner, Stephen W. Abernathy, shared the wisdom of his more than 15 years experience in raising tilapia for farm production and shipping tilapia fingerlings throughout the world. Participants removed eggs from female fish, transferred and sorted fish stock in tanks, prepared fingerlings for shipment and learned the behavior patterns of tilapia fish. They also learned many technical requirements of breeding and raising fish for market such as water quality, aeration, water movement and transfer, and environmental conditions necessary to raise healthy fish for market.

The owner of the Aquafarm also encouraged future fish farmers to build relationships with a nearby university and its professors as he has with faculty such as Dr. John A. Hargreaves, a world known expert in aquaculture, who was among those to speak at the institute. When participants had the opportunity to share their plans for next steps during the closing session, each gave a sound plan of action that shows a true commitment to reducing poverty and bringing sustainable development with an income source for local residents.

This event was sponsored by the Infopoverty Institute of the University of Oklahoma and its partner The Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication (OCCAM) based in Milan, Italy. Both organizations have been active within the United Nations working to reduce poverty through sustainable development.

The institute on fish farming was founded by Dr. Steffens, Executive Director of the Infopoverty Institute. He and his staff recognized the potential of fish farming to supplement diets through travels in the Caribbean. Dr. Steffens is a strong proponent of sustainable development and hopes attendees will use their newly gained knowledge to establish small locally run fish farms to supply an additional source of protein and income to residents in rural low-income villages. He considers this as one way to contribute to achieving the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals of reducing the world’s hunger rate by half by the year 2015.

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