



Good Practice Story Title: Community-based Tourism: a protagonism of “shellfish woman” from Aver-o-Mar, Sirinhaém, PE, Brazil.

Destination: Sirinhaém / Pernambuco

Country: Brazil

Submitting Organization: Despartment of Tourism of Sirinhaém

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

With an estimated population of 37,596 people (IBGE, 2022), the municipality of Sirinhaém in Pernambuco is located in a region with a strong presence of environmental protection areas, such as the Guadalupe Environmental Protection Area (APA Guadalupe) and the Sirinhaém River estuary. Among the highlights are Santo Aleixo Island, natural pools, clay baths, springs, waterfalls, historic churches, and an attractive rural area with old sugar mills. A relevant aspect is Community-Based Tourism, promoted by the *shellfish woman* group from the community of Aver o Mar. These women offer an immersive tourist experience, allowing visitors to learn about the life stories of the *shellfish woman* s and the local gastronomic heritage. During the mangrove visit, tourists can participate in collecting crustaceans and learn how to prepare and taste traditional recipes. This approach values the local culture and contributes to the region’s sustainability. It’s a way to experience the authenticity of the community and support responsible tourism practices.



Summary of Good Practice Story:

The harvesting of mussels, oysters, and crabs in Sirinhaém, Pernambuco, is a traditional activity that has been passed down through generations. This practice primarily takes place in the fishing community of Aver o Mar, significantly contributing to the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental representation of the region.

It is important to highlight that the female shellfish woman (known as '*shellfish woman*') are descendants of slaves and quilombolas from the neighbouring municipality of Sirinhaém. From birth, they have been immersed in the world of shellfish, learning from their parents and relatives. This ancestral connection has sparked their interest in valorising this activity through tourism, effectively turning the mangrove ecosystem into a local gastronomic heritage.

The involvement of shellfish woman in promoting Community-Based Tourism is crucial for the region's sustainability. By offering immersive experiences to visitors, they not only share knowledge about crustacean collection and traditional recipe preparation but also preserve the local culture and environment. This approach contributes to the appreciation of local traditions and raises awareness about the importance of preserving coastal ecosystems and mangroves."

The shellfish woman commitment to sustainable practices ensures that their cultural heritage thrives while safeguarding the delicate balance of the natural environment. Through their efforts, visitors can engage in an authentic and educational experience that celebrates both tradition and ecological consciousness.

Issues faced:

With low recognition of the work of the shellfish woman, limited community involvement in tourism, and a lack of female leadership, along with threats to the local tradition of the activity and mangrove preservation, the movement in defence of the shellfish woman in Sirinhaém began in 1994 with the creation of the Aver o Mar Residents' Association. Under female leadership, led by Dona Lia and other shellfish woman from the community, the association became active and officially registered with crucial support from the local government. The results achieved by the Residents' Association for the benefit of the community in 2020 inspired the shellfish woman to establish their own shellfish woman Association, aiming to advocate for the category's interests and promote female empowerment in the region. Currently, the association comprises approximately 20 members.

It is essential to emphasize the need for greater synergy between the shellfish woman's activity and other sectors, such as tourism, education, the environment, and culture. In this context, the group focused on enhancing the socio-economic value of mussel production. Previously, commercialization occurred without proper organization, resulting in low prices for the products. Through integrated actions with tourism and the gastronomic heritage of mussels, the shellfish woman managed to add value to their products, offering more refined items.

One of the most significant initiatives was the proposal for Community-Based Tourism in the Aver o Mar community. This proposal involved creating a trail through the mangrove areas, providing a unique tourist experience and strengthening the shellfish woman's sense of belonging to local natural and cultural resources. Additionally, the group established partnerships with the newly inaugurated Hotel Sesc, local government, the





Negralinda Institute of Recife, Senac, Sebrae, and private enterprises. These collaborations provided courses and resources to further strengthen mussel-related activities and promote sustainable development in the region.

Solution:

The socio-economic valorisation of the shellfish woman activity in Sirinhaém, Pernambuco, has become a priority for the women of the Aver o Mar community. To achieve this goal, the group of shellfish woman sought strategic partnerships and implemented significant actions:

Suape Incentiva and Sebrae: The shellfish woman collaborated with these institutions to strengthen the economic activity. Specific courses were offered to enhance production and management skills, empowering them to tackle market challenges.

Partnership with Hotel SESC Guadalupe: Since the hotel's construction phase, there has been ongoing dialogue with the community to ensure that the project considers mangrove conservation. The mangrove is vital for the survival of local families, as fishing is their primary livelihood. Maintaining mangrove cleanliness was a crucial factor during public hearings regarding the hotel establishment.

Community Benefits: Hotel SESC committed to the community by providing significant benefits. These included constructing a sports court for community use, prioritizing the hiring of residents to work at the hotel, and organizing a Saturday market. At the market, regional products such as aratu empadas, cocada (a coconut sweet), other sweets, and handicrafts are sold, promoting local gastronomic production.

TBC Trail: In partnership with SESC and the local government, the community offers the Community-Based Tourism (TBC) Trail. This trail provides a unique experience, allowing visitors to explore the region's natural and cultural resources. The shellfish woman's tireless work was recognized and valued through this initiative.

These actions directly benefit 20 women from the Aver o Mar community and neighbouring areas, strengthening the local economy, and promoting sustainability.

By fostering community engagement, sustainable practices, and economic empowerment, the shellfish woman is not only preserving their cultural heritage but also contributing to the long-term well-being of their environment.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

The social mobilization of the shellfish gatherers from the Aver o Mar community in Sirinhaém, Pernambuco, played a key role in pursuing the group's goals. These women, fostering female leadership, advocated for the appreciation of their activities with the support of renowned institutions, such as the Negralinda Institute of Recife, which has been active in the community for two years.

The actions of the Negralinda Institute were crucial. Through offered courses, the shellfish gatherers learned shellfish processing techniques, food handling safety, and the preparation of diverse dishes.



This training aimed to promote the gastronomic heritage of the region, bringing visibility to the shellfish gatherers' production outcomes. The support of Sebrae/PE and the Sirinhaém City Hall was also critical in this process.

As a result of these initiatives, the Sirinhaém Shellfish Gatherers' Route emerged. This route offers a tour along the Maria Assú River, guided by the shellfish gatherers and local conductors. During the tour, visitors have the opportunity to experience the four seasons related to fishing: shellfish, sururu, oyster, and aratu. Each station is represented by a shellfish gatherer, who demonstrates how they harvest their produce from the mangrove.

At the end of the trail, participants have a unique gastronomic experience, tasting dishes prepared with products harvested from the mangrove. Additionally, there is a discussion circle with the shellfish gatherers, providing a cultural immersion into the life stories of these women.

It is important to highlight that the trail is part of the local reception, specifically aimed at groups from the Sesc Hotel, educational tourism, and the elderly. The tour lasts one hour and is offered to groups of 50 to 70 people, with an approximate cost of thirty-five reais per tourist. All proceeds are divided among the shellfish gatherers involved in the action.

These actions are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting gender equality (SDG 05), decent work and economic growth (SDG 08), sustainable cities and responsible consumption (SDG 11), preservation of aquatic (SDG 14) and terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15), and partnerships for the implementation of these goals (SDG 17).

Achievements and Results:

The actions of the shellfish gatherers from the Aver o Mar community in Sirinhaém, Pernambuco, are truly inspiring and demonstrate the power of association and community-based tourism. Let's explore some of the notable aspects of this movement:

Shellfish Gatherers Association and Female Empowerment:

The establishment of the Shellfish Gatherers Association was a crucial step in strengthening the sector and uniting the women of the community. This unity allowed them to work together to promote their activities and interests. Female empowerment became evident as the shellfish gatherers organized, sought partnerships, and took the lead in advocating for the appreciation of their activities.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT):

Implementing CBT was a strategic choice for the sustainable development of the destination. This approach involved the local community, allowing visitors to experience the authenticity of the region.

The gastronomy workshops, led by Chef Negralinda, were fundamental. They explored the gastronomic richness of the mangrove, creating diverse dishes such as aratu pie and aratu lasagna.

Strengthening Local Gastronomy:

Local gastronomy gained prominence, especially with the Aratu Lasagna, which won first place in the Mangrove Gastronomy and Community-Based Tourism project in partnership with the Negralinda Institute.



Participation in the SESC Guadalupe fair, where dishes made with aratu, sururu, oyster, and small shellfish are presented, contributed to the visibility of these products.

Social and Economic Benefits:

The achievement of a project budgeted at R\$ 60,000 for the acquisition of boats benefited families dependent on fishing. This strengthened the local economy and improved working conditions.

The inclusion of the shellfish gatherers in the Straw Hat Program demonstrated the importance of recognizing and supporting fishermen, even in a context originally aimed at farmers.

Partnerships and Recognition:

Collaboration with the Rural University of Pernambuco and the Pastoral da Pesca brought tangible benefits, such as donations of protective materials and support for specific projects.

The visibility of CBT in Sirinhaém resonated regionally, highlighting the social, economic, cultural, and environmental aspects of the territory.

Innovation and Future Planning:

The creation of a gastronomic space at the Association's headquarters, focused on products such as shellfish, sururu, oyster, aratu, fish, and shrimp, is a promising initiative.

The exchange with the Food Landscape Project in Areia/PB will allow the shellfish gatherers to learn from other communities and replicate good practices.

Sustainability and Creativity:

The use of oyster shells for crafts and the use of coconut shells to serve broths during the trail demonstrate creativity and concern for sustainability.

The shellfish gatherers of Aver o Mar are true agents of change, promoting local development with respect for culture, the environment, and gender equality.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

It's inspiring to see how the shellfish gatherers play a crucial role in female empowerment and the valorization of the fishing activity in Sirinhaém. Let's highlight some important points:

Female Empowerment:

The active participation of the shellfish gatherers in defending their activities demonstrates the power of female empowerment. They have united, sought improvements, and gained recognition for their category.

Belonging to the place and connection with the fishing activity are fundamental. These women have a deep bond with the mangrove and the sea, and this relationship drives their commitment to improving and valuing the work they perform.

Strategic Partnerships:

Partnerships with the local tourism trade are essential. They help to value the work of the shellfish gatherers and recognize the richness of the region.



These collaborations also generate employment and income opportunities, benefiting not just the shellfish gatherers but the entire community.

Recognition and Sustainable Development:

Recognizing the fishing activity as an integral part of the local culture is fundamental. This contributes to the preservation of the environment and the sustainable development of the region.

The willpower of the shellfish gatherers to improve and gain recognition is admirable. They are true agents of change, promoting a responsible and conscious approach.

The shellfish gatherers of Sirinhaém are an inspiring example of how collective work, determination, and partnerships can transform a traditional activity into a source of pride, sustainability, and prosperity.

Recognitions and Additional References

Food Landscapes

[Experiências turísticas buscam valorizar comunidades de marisqueiras e povos tradicionais - Portal Embrapa](#)

Experience Tourism

[Turismo de experiência em comunidades marisqueiras \(nuestraamerica.com.br\)](#)

[Trilha de turismo em comunidades de pescadores de mariscos promove mais renda para as marisqueiras de Pernambuco | Nordeste Rural](#)

Negralinda Institute

[Home \(institutonegralinda.org.br\)](#)

Sesc pamphlet with the Rote of Shelfish woman

[ROTA-DAS-MARISQUEIRAS.pdf \(sesc-ce.com.br\)](#)

Training course in partnership with the city hall

[Prefeitura de Sirinhaém | Cuidando das pessoas \(sirinhaem.pe.gov.br\)](#)





