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**Solar power empowers
Solar-powered fish driers
are now being used by
some fisherwomen's
groups in Tamil Nadu, India**
This article by Veeraraghav
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In Chennai's fishermen's colonies, a solar-powered fish drier has brought in a revolution driving more and more women into scientific food processing and providing many a means for livelihood. It was a project that started in tsunami-hit Cuddalore district and now Chennai city has its own solar fish drier.

Karuvadu dried fish is a delicacy that 70-year-old Thangapapa has been making all her life. She buys fish and puts them on the sands to dry them out. It takes a full sunny day, sometimes two, for the fish to dry out. And it's unhygienic. But now all that's changed with the arrival of a new solar fish drier.

"If we put it for drying outside, then we will have to have five people guarding the fish. Crows and dogs will eat the fish. Now, we just have to put it in the drier and in four hours it's done. It's cleaner and more hygienic," says Thangappa. She says with the solar drier she can make double the amount of *karuvadu* in the same time. She just has to put fish in these trays and put it in the drier powered by solar energy. She's now part of a self-help group and they got the drier, which costs Rs250,000 (US\$5,000 or so), with the help of an NGO. And it's attracted more women in this fishing colony to join Thangapapa.

Says Janani, another fisherwoman, "I was unemployed earlier. Now with this machine, I have also started helping out. This means a source of income for me and we now want to put this fish in packets and sell them."

The project was first set up in the tsunami-hit Cuddalore district, where it has been implemented successfully. And now the company which makes the drier and some NGOs are planning to install more such machines in the city's fishing colonies.