

Kulaluk Mud Crab Farm

*Our Vision to Economic Independence and Employment and Educational
Opportunities for our Community.*

An evaluation of Gwalwa Daraniki Enterprises
Mud Crab Farm Employment Program.

How effective is the delivery of the Employment Program?

A report by

Sharon Hewitt

Curtin University

Perth WA

2/10/2006

*“Our Vision to economic independence and
employment and educational opportunities
for our Community”*



*An Evaluation of Gwalwa Daraniki Enterprises
Mud Crab Farm Employment Program*

“How effective is the delivery of the Employment Program”

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To meet course requirements of
3rd year Project
Bachelor of Applied Science
Indigenous Community Management & Development
Curtin University, Perth WA

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2/10/2006

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*with comments added
by Dr W. B. Day
Consulting
Anthropologist
1/7/09*

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Gwalwa Daraniki Association for allowing me to undertake this Evaluation. A very special thank you to Helen Secretary, Chairperson of the Association because without her approval and support of this project it would not have been possible.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge all the key stakeholders who agreed to be on the Critical Reference Group for their commitment, support and willingness to assist and provide me with valuable information throughout the Evaluation.

The Critical Reference Group member being Dr Bob Rose and Phil Elsegood of Tropical Aquaculture, Rob Manley of OIPC, Leyland Campbell of Charles Darwin University, and four of the participants of Mud Crab Farm employment program Tim, Jackie, Serena and Sylvan.

Thirdly, I would like to acknowledge all the participants of the Mud Crab Farm Employment Program who gave me an insight into their community and work environment and provided valuable information towards the Evaluation.

And finally, I would like to thank my tutor Jason Elsegood for his direction and support throughout the evaluation and for introducing me to the Larrakia people of the Gwalwa Daraniki Association. *(Nothing to do with 1,600 Larrakia Nation)* ?

Executive Summary

This evaluation study was undertaken at the Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) Mud Crab Farm located on the Kulaluk Community Special Purpose Land Lease at Coconut Grove, Darwin. The program that was evaluated was the GDA Mud Crab Farm Employment program.

*Crab
Lease ?*

The aspects of the employment program that were evaluated were the employment, education and training and mentoring components. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify any barriers or challenges that may be impeding the progress of the program. The evaluation focus question is "How effective is the delivery of the Gwalwa Daraniki Mud Crab Farm Employment program?"

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The technique used to collect the data was the qualitative method through recorded interviews and completed questionnaires, observations and policy documents were also used to validate the data collected. Using the qualitative method enabled the evaluator to draw on people's feelings and thoughts about their experience on how the program was being delivered. The sample group used for this evaluation was stakeholders who work closely with the farm management to deliver the program to participants.

The major barrier that was identified was the lack of support from government agencies with adequate funding for essential infrastructure and award wages for participants. This support is crucial to enable the employment program to operate to its full potential and generate revenue for the community and the farm.

Although, GDA lacks the capacity to manage a successful mud crab farm on their own they have developed the appropriate management structures with a board of directors and their project managers Tropical Aquaculture Australia to ensure management of the employment program.

!

The following recommendations have been proposed:

1. Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) and Mud Crab Farm management board to negotiate with government agencies on a regular basis in relation to Capital Funding for essential infrastructure for the mud crab farm.
2. GDA and mud crab farm management board to employ qualified staff to assist the farm manager with the day to day operations of the mud crab farm.
3. Adequate consultation and dialogue between the Farm Manager and participants be implemented in relation to farm and study processes.
4. GDA to negotiate employment agreements with participants of the employment program both administrative and aquaculture to establish roles and responsibilities of both parties.

5. GDA to request further financial and governance training for administrative participants to ensure adequate managing and monitoring of finances of the project.
6. GDA and mud crab farm management board to negotiate with funding agencies for award training wages for participants of employment program by early 2007.
7. GDA and mud crab farm management board in consultation with participants to review employment conditions and develop and implement strategies to improve these services by early 2007.
8. Adequate consultation between Farm Manager, Course Coordinator and participants to develop and implement a structured study plan including mentoring to enhance learning outcomes for participants by early 2007.

The Gwalwa Daraniki Mud Crab Farm employment program is still in its early stages of development and still experiencing a lot of teething problems. Aquaculture farming for Indigenous people is a relatively new concept and because of the educational and technical skills required it will continue to be fairly challenging for the participants of the program.

*Broke
by 2007*

The Mud Crab farm in its current form is purely a livelihood project and until adequate funding is provided and the technical skills of the participants develop it may be some time before the farm generates sufficient revenue for the community.

1. Introduction

1.1 Objective

To gauge how effective is the delivery of the Gwalwa Daraniki Mud Crab Farm employment program and to identify barriers and challenges that maybe impeding its progress.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to gauge how effective the delivery of the employment program is and to identify any barriers, concerns, issues and possible constraints that may be hindering its progress. In addition, the evaluation will provide the Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) and Service Providers with valuable information to assist them with improving and further developing the employment program and to potentially enhance the services they provide. Lessons from this evaluation may assist to provide a bench mark from which future employment programs can be measured.

1.3 Rationale

This evaluation has been undertaken with the approval and support of the GDA and its project managers Tropical Aquaculture Australia to assist them in identifying any gaps in the delivery of the GDA Mud Crab Farm employment program.

The evaluation will provide valuable information to GDA and stakeholders on the effectiveness of the delivery of all aspects of the employment program such as, on the job training, mentoring, supporting participants for work, education, government support, community support, family support, participant goals and aspirations. It may also answer the question is this particular program financially, culturally and environmentally suited for the participants. It is the view of the evaluator that these issues are fundamental to the success of Indigenous development opportunities.

*Not culturally appropriate for Larrakia ie .
environmental + social disaster.*

The location of the Kulaluk community Mud Crab Farm is in Coconut Grove, in Darwin which is a prime up market residential area of Darwin; it is five to ten minutes from the CBD of Darwin and five to ten minutes from Casuarina which is the major shopping centre in Darwin. ?



There is belief economic development is the key to self determination for Indigenous people. If Indigenous people utilise the one valuable asset they have which is their land as a bargaining tool to build economic independence this may provide them with the opportunity to break away from the welfare cycle.

"The only way to break the vicious cycle of disadvantage and dysfunction is to build capabilities through economic and social development based on engagement with the real economy." (Pearson. N 2000)

Pearson and Langton recurring reference in Kulaluk plans

The Kulaluk community have utilised this asset and are committed to achieving economic independence through the development of their Mud Crab Farm venture. This venture is not the first time they have tried to create wealth from their land. They have had several bad experiences with other business people. This project is however, the first time they have created an opportunity in which their members can own and operate their own business. The community's vision is that they become self sufficient and move away from welfare dependency through this project.

*eg Vysrook
Chim
Redoo
etc.*

*"We want to create a viable business so we don't have to rely on government money."
(Secretary, H. 2006, the NT News 5 April 2006).*

In discussions with stakeholders it is evident that a lot of measures and levels of support are already in place to ensure the ongoing success of the program such as the Shared Responsibility Agreement (SRA) with both the NT and Commonwealth government, the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) which is administered by Darwin Regional CDEP and the on the job training component delivered by Tropical Aquaculture Australia, the Structured Training Employment Program (STEP) which is administered by Gwalwa Daraniki Association, delivered by Tropical Aquaculture Australia in conjunction with Charles Darwin University that includes both a structured education component and mentoring of participants. Both programs are funded by Department of Employment, Workplace Relations (DEWR).

Yet, with all the varying levels of support from stakeholders and the Mud Crab farm continually being in the media spotlight due to the political agenda of the Government who are promoting the benefits of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRA's) with Indigenous communities; there are still underlying issues which are hindering the progress of the employment program to reach its full potential.

This evaluation will identify strategies that will assist the Association to provide an employment program which is culturally appropriate, environmentally appropriate and financially sustainable for the community's future.

1.4 Support "Stakeholders"

This evaluation has the support of the Gwalwa Daraniki Association and key stakeholders such as their project team Tropical Aquaculture Australia (TAA), Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC), Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the participants of the program. It has also gathered information and feedback from other stakeholders such as NT Fisheries, Darwin Regional CDEP and Dept Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Support from all these stakeholders is vital to maintain a detailed and unbiased approach to this evaluation.

1.5 Role of the Evaluation Researcher

The role of the Evaluation Researcher is that of an external researcher. The Evaluation Researcher works outside of the program. The advantage of being an outsider is that I will have a fresh and unbiased approach to the evaluation. The disadvantage of being an outsider is that I may not have access to information that would be readily available to an insider or one that has personal connections within the community.

?

1.6 Evaluation Focus Question

How effective is the delivery of the Gwalwa Daraniki Mud Crab Farm Employment program?

Hardly 'unbiased' if she agrees that the land in question is to be used in this way e.g. 'prime real estate' 'the one valuable asset they have' prawn farm on 'small piece of land' etc
arsh

2. Background

2.1 The Broad Context

Cultural

The Kululuk Mud Crab Farm is owned and operated by the Gwalwa Daraniki Association which is an Aboriginal organisation that was incorporated on 6th June 1973. This organisation represents a small family group of the larger local Aboriginal Larrakia clan of the Darwin area. This family group reside at the Kululuk and Minmirama Communities which are located in the Coconut Grove and Ludmilla areas of Darwin. The current members of the Association are the descendants of the family of Bobby Secretary, his sisters and his brothers who were identified as the traditional owners at the time the Special Purpose lease was granted. However, the Association maintains its membership by allowing people to become members once they have lived at the Kululuk or Minmirama Communities for 12 months or more.] *

* The granting of the Kululuk lease was not a simple process for this small family group but one of many drawn out years of struggling for land rights from the early 1950's. This family group never gave up their struggle for their rights to the land and this resulted in the first land claim being lodged on the 20th May, 1971 and the Special Purpose Lease at Kululuk being granted on the 3rd August, 1979.

Due to a lot of division and tension within the larger local Aboriginal Larrakia clan, this small family group have very little ties or connection with them and any assistance sought through government funding bodies is done independently through the Gwalwa Daraniki Association with no affiliation to the Larrakia Nation.

* Note: Helen Secretary's mother (dec) opposed the struggle for land rights.

Demographic (reasons land was granted)

Since 1979 there has been very little economic development in the community and the extent of any opportunities was somewhat limited due to some parts of the area being mainly mangrove swamp lands and also being in the flight path of the Darwin International Airport. The latter, had restricted any economic development in the area of commercial or residential ventures. Yet today, this land is seen as prime real estate by the wider Darwin community for commercial ventures and is very much sought after; which may result in further economic independence for the community in the near future.

The main source of income for community residents is unemployment benefits from Centre link or employment under the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) which are both Government funded programs. The Kulaluk and Minmirama communities has one administration building which is the Kulaluk Office, forty three houses which are maintained under the Indigenous Housing Authority of the NT (IHANT) repairs and maintenance program and has a population of about 150 to 200 people on a permanent basis.

"If we are to survive as a people we have to get passive welfare out of Aboriginal governance. We have to get rid of the passive welfare mentality that has taken over our people. We do not have a right to passive welfare – indeed we can no longer accept it. We have a right to build an economy." (Pearson, N 1999)

Political

The Northern Territory government consists of a legislative assembly which has a membership of twenty five (25). This is inclusive of nineteen (19) Australian Labour Party members, four (4) Country Liberal Party members and two (2) Independent members. The Australian Labor Party achieved victory in 2001 after twenty seven (27) years of CLP rule. The structure of the new Parliament reflects the multicultural nature of the Territory; there are five Indigenous members and two of ethnic origin. Women have strong positions of importance, winning ten of the twenty five seats.

The Chief Minister, Clare Martin is the member who is responsible for Indigenous Affairs in the Northern Territory and Elliott Mc Adam is the Indigenous member who is responsible for assisting the Chief Minister on Indigenous Affairs. Elliott Mc Adam's portfolio also includes being Minister for Local Government and Minister for Housing which are important areas where Indigenous representation is crucial for Indigenous people.

A political support mechanism for Indigenous people in the top end of the Northern Territory is The Northern Land Council (NLC) which is a large Indigenous organisation that was established in 1973 to represent Indigenous people throughout the Northern Territory. The NLC regional office is located in Casuarina which is a ten minute drive from the Kulaluk Community and mud crab farm. The most important responsibilities of the NLC are to consult with traditional landowners and other Aborigines with an interest in the land. The NLC uses principles which are fundamental to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. The NLC also acts as a representative body for native title claimants in its area under the Native Title Act 1993.

The Gwalwa Daraniki Mud Crab farm is high on both the Territory and Australian Governments political agenda due to the government funding and support that has been injected into the project and its location in prime residential areas in the middle of Darwin.

The location of the mud crab farm also enables easy access for politicians to visit, promote and support Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRA's) in the Top End and Australia wide. Shared Responsibility Agreements are a relatively new funding arrangement which has only been introduced since the demise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

GDA has a Shared Responsibility Agreement with both OIPC and the NT Department of Business Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) which enables all parties to benefit from a positive outcome. GDA a successful business, Commonwealth Government another successful SRA which supports the implementation of SRA's and the NT Department of

Business, Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) can utilise the facility to create appropriate models for commercial farming of mud crabs on Indigenous land in Northern Australia as well as the farm being used as a demonstration site for other interested Indigenous communities. The media portrays that the community is striving towards success and continually mentions the government support it is receiving, yet there is no mention of all the underlying issues which occur on a daily basis at the farm and the ongoing pressure to keep it operational. ?

"It is great to be here at the Mudla Crab Farm, to try what were the most delicious crabs I have ever eaten in my life and to see a project like this which is a real commercial project giving training, giving jobs, making a profit and providing for the local people an economic base and that is what I think indigenous affairs is going to be about in the future, real economic opportunity, real jobs, real investment and real businesses". (Costello, P 2006)

Economic *Prawn farm bankrupt 1999*

In 1997, a local business negotiated a lease with the Association to rent a small piece of land to establish a prawn farm business. The business went bankrupt in 1999 and several prawn ponds and a shed still remain from this venture. Since then a number of businesses had approached the Association to access the prawn ponds to develop aquaculture businesses. However, due to the experience with the failed prawn business they were reluctant to go into any new joint ventures with outsiders. The Association identified this as an opportunity to develop an economic enterprise for themselves and Tropical Aquaculture Australia was employed to conduct a feasibility study on whether an aquaculture venture may be commercially viable for them. ?

With the support mechanisms in place from NT Fisheries and Tropical Aquaculture Australia as potential project managers this provided the organisation with the foundations to start negotiating with government agencies for funding for this project. As a result of this the Mud Crab Farm was established in November 2004 with the support of both the Commonwealth and NT Government. This venture is the first attempt by the Association to manage their own business, create employment and educational opportunities for their own

members and strive towards a sound economic base for their community instead of relying solely on government money.

In August 2005 the Mud Crab Farm employment program was established by the Gwalwa Daraniki and their stakeholders and if successful the program will provide the community with a viable business which will assist them to strive towards their vision of a self supported organisation moving off welfare. The ongoing success of the employment

program is vital to provide the members with ongoing employment, education and training opportunities and as the demand in the market grows both locally and nationally so will the employment and educational opportunities for the members.

“At a practical level, Indigenous economic development is simply about including indigenous Territorians in the economic and social fabric of society. It is the next step in self-determination, where enterprises are owned, run and managed by Indigenous Territorians.” (M. Kilgariff, 2004)

Social

The Kulaluk and Minmirama communities are located in prime residential areas of Ludmilla and Coconut Grove in the heart of Darwin; they are within walking distance to the sea and beautiful beaches. On one side of the Kulaluk community there is a large prominent residential area and within walking distance are large shopping centres, health centre, public transport, renal unit, alcohol rehabilitation centre, aged care home for Indigenous people, banks, service stations and recreational facilities such as bowling alley, skating rink, sporting oval, local swimming pool and across the road from the Kulaluk community is a large industrial area.

Despite all these facilities at their finger tips the community still appears to have little access to services due to major barriers such as lack of income, education and employment opportunities. Having experienced life in a remote community for the past 3 years with

limited access to mainstream services it was very surprising to see that a community right in the middle of Darwin has very similar characteristics. It is also visible that Indigenous people in Darwin are still facing the same barriers, challenges and issues that Indigenous people in remote areas of the Top End face on a daily basis.

why?

The Organisational Context

Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) is the organisation that represents the members of Kulaluk and Minmirama communities. Gwalwa Daraniki Enterprises (GDE) was established to represent the business enterprises of the Association. A board of Directors (Steering committee) was formed which includes all stakeholders that were involved in the creation of the venture.

?

The committee guides the overall operations of the venture including identifying funding sources, maintaining funding arrangements for the life of the project; act as the strategic planner and as a forum for contributing agencies and other stakeholders. The Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) is responsible for managing the day to day operations of the farm through their chosen project managers, TAA. GDA is also responsible for all administration aspects of the Mud Crab Farm including time sheets, employing and dismissing of participants and decision making processes in consultation with the project managers.

The project managers, Tropical Aquaculture Australia are responsible for the day to day operations of the Mud Crab farm including the delivery of the employment program components which include on the job training, mentoring and support, the education training component (STEP) delivered in conjunction with Charles Darwin University and is supported and funded by DEWR. Support is also provided by NT Fisheries which includes providing crab lets, technical support, and training for Indigenous trainees both at the farm and in the hatchery on how to grow crabs in a farm environment and sell to the available market.

Shared responsibility or no responsibility? ←

The Mud Crab farm employment program currently has eight (8) participants with six (6) new participants signed up to commence in the near future. Six participants work at the mud crab farm and are currently undertaking the Certificate 3 & 4 in Aquaculture; two participants work in the Kulaluk office and are undertaking the Certificate 2 in Business Administration; both courses are for a period of one to two years. The participants will

CDU

have the opportunity to continue in their studies at a higher level to increase their education and employment opportunities in this area.

At this stage, because the Mud Crab farm is not generating a viable income; payment of award wages is not possible so participants are paid Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and the Structured Training Education Program (STEP) wages on a fortnightly basis which is funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

* [These below award wages does very little to assist the association or the project managers to keep the participants committed and motivated to the long hours of work they endure including shift work as the crabs need to be fed three times a day with the last feed sometimes at midnight.

"I think CDEP was a good idea and there are successes with CDEP in the sense that it does give you part-time employment. It does give the community some money to spend on community projects, but it locks you in." (Professor R Bob Gregory, 2005)

Program Rationale, Aims, Objectives and Strategies.

The aims of the structured employment program are to provide an economic base for the community as well as providing ongoing employment and educational opportunities for its members. Farming is not a natural skill for Indigenous people and this program will

* How viable was it?

as for
marina
?

provide participants with scientific farming skills as well as incorporating their own natural skills as hunters and gatherers which is a part of their cultural lifestyle as salt water people searching in the mangroves and fishing the tidal creeks for seafood.

} Bagot
people
want
to do this.

The program provides ongoing employment through on the job education and training in the area of aquaculture which includes tertiary based training in Certificate 3 and 4 of Aquaculture at Charles Darwin University. This requires participants to demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements of the competency based components such as; prepare and

pack stock for live transport, work effectively in the seafood industry, control pests, predators and diseases, produce algal and live feed cultures, undertake routine maintenance of water supply and disposal systems and structures, handle stock and collect brood stock and seed stock.

Participants also receive on the job training in scientific experimenting of growing mud crabs in a farming environment this training is delivered by NT Fisheries within their daily routines.

Appropriate mentoring support is also provided to participants as part of the program in all aspects of their employment, education and training by the farm managers, Tropical Aquaculture Australia. The mentoring is to encourage, motivate and support participants through each step of their chosen career pathways and also includes general work ethics.

The objective of both the CDEP and STEP programs is to provide participants with quality employment outcomes which will be evident when they finalise their training and receive their formal qualifications in the field of aquaculture.

none completed

These qualifications will enable participants to have the necessary formal qualifications and skills to work effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the mud crab farm and the community. This will also result in participants being competitive in the seafood industry for employment opportunities if they chose to leave the mud crab farm. Employment opportunities in the area of aquaculture are available at the Darwin Aquaculture Centre, several prawn farms, in the fishing industry, barramundi farms and in all areas of storing, packing and transporting of seafood in Darwin.

The long term goal of the program is to provide economic independence for the community through owning and operating their own competitive viable business which will provide ongoing employment opportunities and income being generated back into the community to provide a better quality of life for its members.

There appears to be a lot of commitment and support from the Association and key stakeholders to ensure the ongoing success of the employment program. The aspirations and commitment of the community as a whole will be tested throughout these early stages of the project for it to remain a community driven project. From this evaluation we hope to identify any underlying issues and provide strategies that will allow the employment program to continue to be a flourishing venture for the Gwalwa Daraniki Association and its members.

So much for a southern "expert" assessment

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience substantial economic disadvantage in the areas of wealth, employment and income in comparison with other Australians. In part, this disadvantage is due to a legacy of limited employment opportunities, a history of working for rations rather than wages, educational disadvantage and location barriers. These factors limit the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve a greater level of economic independence. With economic independence, individuals and communities will have increased opportunities, a broader range of life choices and a great sense of empowerment and achievement" (Thorpe, M, 2000).

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section describes how the research was conducted including the evaluators standpoint, the units of analysis, the sample group, data sources both primary and secondary, methods of data collection, methodological triangulation and data analysis.

3.2 Evaluator Standpoint

Throughout this evaluation the researcher is primarily an external researcher who does not work or live in the community. The researcher is a Commonwealth Public Servant on a study scholarship who has been fortunate enough to have been given the opportunity to undertake this research project at the Kulaluk Community Mud Crab Farm in Coconut Grove in Darwin.

There is belief and that of the research evaluator that economic development is the key to self determination for Indigenous people and it is evident that through sheer determination the Kulaluk and Minmirama Communities have taken an opportunity to utilize their land, existing resources and assistance from the Government to strive towards economic independence by developing a viable business for their people which will assist them to break away from government handouts and to maintain control of their lives.

The purpose of this evaluation is to gauge how effective is the delivery of the Gwalwa Daraniki Mud Crab Farm Employment Program and to identify any barriers and challenges that maybe impeding its progress. This will be carried out by practicing high ethical standards, building relationships and supporting groups for action within the community and their supporting stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

The following steps were taken to ensure that this evaluation was conducted in an ethical manner which was acceptable to the community:

Step 1

Approval and support in writing was sought from the Gwalwa Daraniki Association prior to the commencement of the research project. This is imperative to the research evaluator as an Indigenous person to gain acceptance, approval and trust from the community to undertake this evaluation research project on their country.

Step 2

To formalise the establishment of the CRG a letter was sent to all participants informing them of the purpose of the evaluation and to seek their approval and support throughout the evaluation project.

Step 3

Research Principles were developed to guide me throughout the evaluation process. These principles focus on the importance of community participation, consent and involvement in decision making for the duration of the evaluation research project. Throughout the evaluation I will use the Indigenous Terms of Reference framework (ITR) and Community Development principles (CD) to guide me and this will be evident where I have regularly consulted with the CRG group and the Chairperson of the Organisation throughout each phase of the evaluation to obtain feedback, approval of information to be used, direction and to maintain the focus of the evaluation.

Step 4

A letter of consent to conduct interviews with participants was developed and was used to obtain and maintain consent throughout the research process. This letter of consent provides both ethical and legal protection for the evaluation researcher and the participants as some information could be of a sensitive nature and if not dealt with appropriately could result in physical, social or psychological harm to people who have participated in the evaluation.

3.3 Units of Analysis

This evaluation consists of three units of analysis which are the:

- Community Development Employment Program (CDEP).
- Education component, and the
- Mentoring component

These units of analysis are the particular areas within the two major programs that the evaluation researcher will be analysing. The two major programs are Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and the Structured Training Employment Program (STEP) both Tropical Aquaculture Australia and Gwalwa Daraniki Association abide by these policies and guidelines to deliver the employment program at the Mud Crab Farm. Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) is the funding body and policy developers and these policies include milestones that participants of the programs must achieve to ensure continuous funding of the project.

3.4 Sample Group

The sample group will consist of four participants and five key stakeholders of the project. The participants are local aboriginal residents, their ages range from sixteen years to thirty five years, both male and female and most commenced on the employment program in August 2005 but were previously on CDEP in the Kulaluk Community, although a couple only commenced in April or May of 2006, Helen Secretary the Chairperson of Gwalwa Daraniki Association who manages the administration of the project, timesheets and employing of participants.

Bob Rose and Phil Elsegood, project management staff of Tropical Aquaculture Australia who are responsible for the day to day operations of the mud crab farm including delivery of all aspects of the employment program, the Lecturer from Charles Darwin University who delivers the competency based training in Cert 2 & 3 of Aquaculture , Ian Ruscoe,

Project Officer from NT Fisheries the department that provides crab lets for grow out, technical and experimental support and ongoing support to obtain funding from various government departments, Rob Manley, Project Officer from Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination whom the Organisation is in a Shared Responsibility Agreement (SRA) with the Association for the Mud Crab Farm.

3.5 Data Sources

Primary data Sources:

The primary data sources are the participants of the employment program, the Chairperson of the Organisation, Management practitioners of Tropical Aquaculture Australia the Mud Crab Farm Managers, Coordinator and Lecturer at Charles Darwin University, Senior Project Officer from Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination whom are policy makers of Shared Responsibility Agreements and Senior Project Officer of NT Fisheries whom is a practitioner in the field of experimental aquaculture.

Secondary Data Sources:

The secondary data sources are documents collected on CDEP and STEP Policy Guidelines, Shared Responsibility Agreement document between OIPC and Gwalwa Daraniki Association and the Establishment of the Mud Crab Farm Aquaculture venture and Demonstration Site on Gwalwa Daraniki Land at Kulaluk document.]

3.6 Methods of data collection

The methods of data collection will be by interviews, questionnaires, observations and documents.

Structured interviews will be conducted with staff from TAA, OIPC and CDU and a couple of the participants as these respondents are willing to participate in recorded interview sessions.

The research evaluator is aiming to gather a lot more background information from the respondents from TAA, OIPC and CDU as they are very committed to the ongoing success of the program and work closely with the participants of the employment program. Two of the respondents have advised that if time does not permit they will complete questionnaires by email.

Questionnaires will be completed by some of the participants of the program who are shy and lack confidence in participating in a recorded interview. A couple of stakeholders may complete questionnaires by email if time does not permit them to participate in recorded interviews. All interviewing of participants will be conducted either at the Mud Crab farm during working hours or in their study sessions at the Tropical Aquaculture Australia office.

Observations Covert and open observations were conducted on informal visits to the Mud Crab farm whilst the participants and Farm Managers were working and also at Critical Reference Group meetings of members. All sample group members will be made aware of the observations prior to them taking place.

Documents were sought from relevant stakeholders.

3.7 Methodological triangulation (validity)

This evaluation project will involve the collection of data and information using several different methods such as interviews, questionnaires, observations and supported by documents. By gathering relevant documentation from stakeholders this strengthens the credibility and validity of the research results.

3.8 Data Analysis

The main objectives of the data analysis was to collect data on the three components of the Employment program which are on the job training, the education component and the mentoring component and to answer the question on whether the delivery of the employment program is effective or not.

3.9 Limitations to the research design

I envisaged being an external evaluator with minimal time constraints would be an advantage to the research project and yet I found this to be a huge disadvantage because I was often forgotten about unless I contacted stakeholders or stumbled across a meeting. There were crab harvests that I could have attended to get a real insight into the day to day operations and highlights at the farm but this never transpired. Also living four hours from Darwin had its downfalls as I did not visit the mud crab farm as often as I would have liked.

In house disharmony midway through the evaluation was a disadvantage to the evaluation process as I found that some CRG members were not working as closely as they had previously and I had to use a lot of effort and negotiation skills to get them to work in a collaborative manner for the benefit of the evaluation project.

Another problem was collecting the data from some of my sample group as there were such a small number of participants involved in the program. Although, they had all initially agreed to participate in the evaluation process when the time came to conduct an interview or complete a questionnaire some participants were intimidated by the data collection process and appeared to be avoiding me.

Another difficulty I encountered was that some of the participants appeared to be holding back on providing their true feelings or emotions about some of the questions I asked. I reflected on this and felt that it could have been due to a number of reasons such as the design of the questionnaires and interview schedules, maybe they did not feel comfortable with the evaluator because of no previous history with their community or as the mud crab farm is continually in the media spotlight they are unconsciously portraying that everything is great. ?

4. Data Analysis

The data collected was qualitative and was gathered from three different groups:

- Funding and Service Providers (both State and Commonwealth)
- Management/Project Team,
- Indigenous participants/community members

From the data analysis six themes emerged:

- Funding and Infrastructure
- Self Determination and Governance
- Farm Management
- Employment Conditions and Opportunities
- Education and Training
- Mentoring

Funding and infrastructure

Most participants expressed concerns about the lack of infrastructure and resources available at the mud crab farm to enable them to carry out their jobs effectively and in a timely manner. This was also supported by Management.

Management also identified that funding is a major barrier to providing the necessary infrastructure to enable the farm to reach its full potential. Although, Management did acknowledge that the amount of money that has been received by Government agencies has been quite considerable; the method in which they deliver those funds has not been beneficial to the Organisation.

However, some Funding and Service Providers have confirmed that funding and support from various agencies has been quite substantial. Yet, other funding agencies have not delivered their guaranteed funds which has hindered the project.

"I think if we had power it would make our jobs easier" (Participant)

"If we can't do it, it usually costs money and it's up to Bob the Farm Manager to buy or hire equipment" (Participant)

"If we got all the funding at the very beginning of the project, we would have power and fencing and more input from the trainees." (Management)

I think, in terms of some of the stuff we want to do, the money is there, it's how they choose to deliver it. They're delivering it in what they call drip-feed. So every quarter we get a bit of money." (m2)

Self Determination and Governance

Gwalwa Daraniki members have a long term goal of becoming fully self-sufficient and economically independent of government funds through the success of the mud crab farm venture. This is also evident in the views of the participants and the Management of the Mud Crab Farm.

However, Management has expressed concerns that there is a lack of skills and interest within the community to be able to appropriately manage the project which is evident in the business administration component of the employment program which has not been meeting training outcomes.

Funding and Service providers have also expressed concerns that there is a lack of skills in the community to meet the demands of managing and operating a business.

"Me and my sisters are like traditional owners and well to me I hope that this thing does work out because we have been longing to have this thing for how many years now." (Participant)

"Because their and our long term goals for the community are to be self sufficient with no help from government." (Management team)

Part of the reason we created an admin arm was to provide some succession planning for the Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA). What we thought was that we could train the girls to do admin and sort of pick up the governance stuff they'd be able to take over, they haven't." (Management Team)

"In terms of running a business I think the business side of it is a big challenge for participants to come to term with. The business side of it which is all unfamiliar ground, so I think running the business is perhaps not so appropriate and I guess, easy for people to work with." (Funding or Service Provider)

Farm Management

Participants are supervised by the farm manager and carry out their tasks by following a roster system which indicates what tasks have to be carried out each day and by whom. Participants also conduct informal meetings with the farm manager in a group environment and discuss their work rosters and any issues affecting the farm or their employment, this system appeared to be working well. Although, it was mentioned that the farm manager does listen to their ideas but doesn't always pursue them.

However, Management has expressed concern that the farm manager's role is restricted because he is undertaking numerous other duties to ensure the farm remains operational and that he only manages this by working astronomical hours each week. They have also identified that more qualified staff are needed to assist the farm manager in the day to day operation of the farm which will allow him to fully commit to providing participants with positive employment outcomes. This was also supported by funding and service providers.

Funding and Services Providers also expressed concerns that there may be staff management issues which are evident in acquiring and retaining participants in the employment program.

"We mainly have rosters and we now just use the rosters which is good because before that we would just do one thing and then go onto something else but now it is all organised and we just keep going on with each task we have to do for that day" (Participant)

"Yes, we sit in a group and discuss what's happening with our employment and work. It's good because we all have our individual say and talk in a group, we all get along." (Participant)

"Presently, the farm manager is also teacher/tutor, administrator, board member as well as the project manager. In hindsight, a young qualified aqua culturist to assist the farm manager for 6 to 12 months during the construction phase would have been prudent to help set up the husbandry environmental monitoring protocols. This would have allowed the farm manager to devote more of this time to the lengthy red tape associated with the establishment of the business." (Management)

"The staff management has probably not been adequate to solve all the issues associated with gaining and retaining motivated community employees. Evidenced as high levels of staff changeover". (Funding or service providers)

Employment Opportunities and Conditions

Participants envisage the employment program as a means for full time employment, fulltime award wages and providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge in the area of aquaculture to manage the mud crab farm for their community in the future.

However, the participants have recognized a lot of obstacles along the way which is diminishing their enthusiasm. Obstacles such as low wages, working long hours including shift work with no remuneration, lack of team work and commitment. This is supported by both Management and Funding and Service Providers.

“Get a fully qualified job with my degrees and certificates in aquaculture” (Participant)

“No, we are not on a lot of pay, minimal pay. I come back after hours at night time, sometimes at 7pm as well as 5 or 6am in the morning to pump water into the ponds. Our hours are usually 8.30am to 4pm but that can vary too. I used to be on \$520 CDEP supervisor rate plus \$320 top up. I work shifts and Sundays with no extra pay, no extra shift money. Still had to work Christmas Day as well. We get paid for 18hrs a week and work another 18 to 20 hrs and still only have two thirds of the pay. “ (participant)

“I think if there is more team work it would be going great” (Participant)

“The trainees pay them a proper wage, I think their underpaid” (Management team)

“The problem I’ve got with the employment program is that I think people are vastly underpaid and because they’re underpaid it’s really hard to put it to them about when they should come to work, how they should come etcetera.” (Management Team)]

Education and Training

Participants are aware of the long term benefits of the education and training they are undertaking such as obtaining certificates, work experience and fully qualified employment. Yet, participants have indicated that the study can be challenging and due to farm commitments they have not been attending university on a regular basis and are falling behind with their study which further disadvantages them.

Management and funding and service providers have also identified that there are barriers and challenges to participants succeeding in the education and training component such as

low levels of education, dropping out or not attending the course, lack of transportation to access technical expertise and hatchery practices at Channel Island and lack of interaction and planning by management and service providers.

"Would like to end up with a couple of certificates and experience with equipment such as bobcat, excavators, front end loaders, get my chainsaw tickets and more work experience."
(Participant)

"We haven't been able to Uni because of harvests. Harvests depend on the size of the crabs and they can't wait because we are studying. If you leave them too long they go soft. We started going to Uni 3 times a week, then 1 day and then don't go at all, rarely."
(Participant)

CDU

Considering the participants have never been aquaculture farmers or terrestrial farmers, very well. The various funding and educational agencies are also on a very steep learning curve in terms of understanding how to remedy, ameliorate and improve their services provided to people with challenging socio-economic conditions and attitudes. (management team)

"Going to University for people, you know, some of those who are engaged on the project haven't had a great grounding I guess academically, and to be thrown in at the deep end at university is such a huge step, and I see that as being a fairly major challenge and barrier to people succeeding." (funding or service provider)

Mentoring

The participants of the program have indicated the importance of receiving the mentoring and ongoing support for their education and on the job training and that the assistance has been valuable to them. However, Management has pointed out that mentoring at the farm hand level and mentoring of the Chairperson has been excellent; yet, the business administration component of the employment program has not been so successful.

However, Funding and Service Providers have identified that the mentoring has not been very effective which is evident through a lack of commitment to the farm and a high turnover of participants dropping out of the program and that there is definitely a need to improve the mentoring component.

"Yes, it helps with study; we all work in a group environment so that we know what to do. I try to do some at home to get through it. The mentoring helps when you get behind."
(Participant)

At the farm level, yes. I think the mentoring at the farm hand level, I'd say Bob's doing a great job even though he has some cultural issues, I think he's done a great job and he does it by doing a 60 hour week." (Management team)

If the training mentor was doing his job well, there may be better levels of staff retention as well as better levels of employability. That is, lower absenteeism, better numbers turning up on time, higher levels of initiative etc, but these are expected to improve in the longer term. (Funding or service provider)

"I think the training/mentoring; we've recognized that we might be able to do that a little bit better." (Funding or service provider)

5. Discussion and Findings

1. There is a lack of adequate capital funding to purchase essential infrastructure for the mud crab farm.
2. There is a lack of essential infrastructure at the mud crab farm which is hindering the progress of the employment program to reach its full potential.
3. The community and participants envisage the employment program as the key to self sufficiency, revenue and ongoing employment for the community.
4. There is a lack of adequate skills in the community to assist in managing the financial administration of the project.
5. The farm manager is overloaded with roles and responsibilities which prevent him from implementing a structured management plan for participants.
6. There is a lack of consultation with participants about work and study processes.
7. The current participants are committed to the employment program because they see the long term employment and training opportunities for themselves and the community.
8. There is a lack of community commitment in relation to participation on the employment program both administrative and aquaculture. ✓
9. The participants feel that they are not adequately remunerated and have inadequate work conditions.
10. There is a lack of government support in relation to award wages for participants of the employment program.

11. There is insufficient planning and interaction between farm management and the course service provider in relation to the study component for participants.
12. Management, funding and service providers have identified gaps in the mentoring and support program for participants of the employment program.
13. Management, funding and service providers have identified that the mentoring program needs to be improved to increase commitment and retention rates of participants on the employment program.

How viable was it from the start?

e.g. the ponds are far too big to manage, being designed for prawns (bankrupted after two years).

How can the GDA claim self-sufficiency with so many funding bodies/agencies involved?
Can a profitable business be run by so many agencies?

The GDA was obviously reluctant from the start.

Why is membership restricted to one family?

* What is the best use of this unique area of urban bushland?

GDA Plans for mangrove areas have included
(a) Canal housing 1981 (b) Mosquito drains 1984
(c) Prawn farm, 1997 (d) Crab farm 2005
(e) Marina 2009

Under the permits granted, if the project fails, the area must be restored.

6. Recommendations

(DRAFT)

1. Gwalwa Daraniki Association (GDA) and Mud Crab Farm management board to continue negotiating with government agencies in relation to Capital Funding for essential infrastructure for the mud crab farm.
2. GDA and management board to discuss and develop a strategy to employ qualified staff to assist the farm manager with the day to day operations of the mud crab farm.
3. Ongoing consultation between the Farm Manager and participants in relation to work and study processes and implement procedures to monitor outcomes.
4. GDA to negotiate employment agreements with participants of the employment program both administrative and aquaculture to establish roles and responsibilities of both parties.
5. GDA to request further financial and governance training for administrative participants to ensure adequate managing and monitoring of finances for the project.
6. GDA and mud crab farm management board to continue negotiating with funding agencies for award training wages for participants of employment program by early 2007.
7. GDA and mud crab farm management board in consultation with participants to review employment conditions at the farm and develop and implement strategies to improve these services by early 2007.
8. Implement ongoing consultation between Farm Manager, Course and participants to develop and implement a structured study plan including mentoring to enhance learning outcomes for participants by early 2007.

Conclusion:

The project is a giant scam to filter government funds

7. Conclusion

This evaluation has highlighted that the employment program is still in its early stages as it has only been in operation for twelve months and is still experiencing a lot of teething problems.

However, it has highlighted that this is the ideal opportunity to evaluate the current procedures and practices of the program and if required make the necessary changes or implement new strategies that will assist in improving the employment and educational outcomes for participants.

It is the evaluator's opinion that the employment program in its current form is operating purely as a livelihood project that is providing a means of employment for a small number of community members. The overall project will not generate the revenue the community envisages without a number of supporting factors such as adequate funding and support from government agencies, commitment from the whole community, and commitment from the participants as their educational and technical levels increase.

This evaluation has also shown that stakeholders believe the program is financially viable and some have acknowledged that funding delivery has not always been to the advantage of the project but with monitoring and review mechanisms in place this may improve.

The one factor that has been astonishing throughout this evaluation is the sheer determination of the farm manager and some participants to make it work. For the farm to be conducting harvests without any power and participants determining how and when to sell the crabs within and around their community speaks volumes for the commitment of these people.

*Why no analysis of inappropriate infrastructure,
+ environmental and social effects of the
project? Location? Water quality? Human resources?
Wider Aboriginal interests? Land usage?*