

## Oysters for a better living

**Ngan and Ngoc have started cultivating oysters to improve their income after their pond was damaged by flooding.**

Mrs. Vu Thi Ngan and her husband Ngoc have a pond next to the river Len in Da Loc. Before the flooding they cultivated sea grass in the pond but because of the salty sediments that filled the pond, they have changed their production to shrimp.

The couple were among the first to involve in planting mangrove. They also started producing oyster together with 34 other families with inspiration from CARE. CARE organised a study tour to Nghe An, a neighbouring province, to see how people cultivated the oysters there.



“Cultivating oyster is very simple”, says Vu Thi Ngan. “We needed to invest labour in the beginning to make a construction of bamboo. Then we buy some string were we put big shells that the oysters can attach to. My husband went to different restaurants to find the shells. In the beginning they gave them away for free, but more people asked and now they take money for the old shells.”

The oysters grow big enough for harvesting after 8 months. Then Ngan and Ngoc just need to take the strings of the bamboo, break off the oysters and put the strings back on the bamboo.

“We have two bamboo constructions of 50 m<sup>2</sup>, one in the river and one in the shrimp pond, because the oyster filter the water and is nourished by the shrimp. If everything goes well we can harvest and sell for about 5 million dong (300 USD) of oysters in one season,” says Mr. Ngoc. “Maybe we will build another 50m<sup>2</sup> to expand our production.”

Together with CARE they plan to make a co-operative with the other 33 households. When they are organised they can get a better price for the oysters. Maybe they will do marketing together at the district market.



Vu Thi Ngan sinks into the muddy banks of the river and shows the young oysters on the strings. She is 60 years old but remarkably agile. Later she jumps on her bicycle to go back to the village. Her husband stays to take care of the oysters and the shrimps and to protect them from being stolen. He has also planted some mangrove seedlings to protect the river bank from erosion.