

Mangrove restoration: participatory assessment of current practices



Assessing mangroves, Tamil Nadu, India © MSSRF

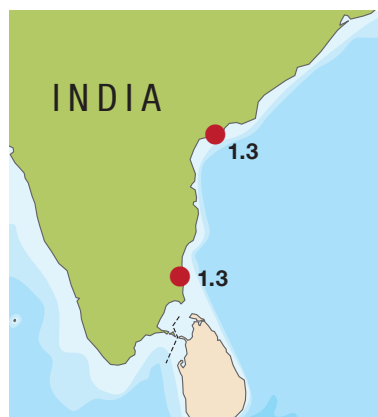
sedimentation processes. The importance of hydrological regimes is now understood but weaknesses still remain. For instance, 90% of the mangroves currently being planted are *Avicennia marina*, neglecting other species in need of regeneration. Second, inadequate attention is given to community livelihood issues. Third, village planning institutions lack the technical, social and economic capacity to sustain mangrove restoration efforts. This project addressed these issues in the states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Target beneficiaries

Local communities and Joint Mangrove Management (JMM) stakeholders.

Outputs

- ▶ Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of current techniques in mangrove restoration by stakeholders (communities), and identification of opportunities to improve those techniques.
- ▶ Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the participatory process followed by JMM and village-level institutions.
- ▶ Identification of gaps, and measures for filling these, in the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, particularly primary stakeholders such as local communities and the state Forest Department (FD).
- ▶ Identification of opportunities to enhance income from mangrove planting and restoration, and to reduce poverty amongst mangrove-dependent communities.



LOCATION

Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, India

PRIORITY POWS

- Knowledge for Management
- Strategies for Management
- Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation

DURATION

19 February 2010 to 1 February 2011, extended to 30 May 2011

MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$17,400

Objectives

The project's objectives were to assess current planting techniques for restoring degraded mangroves and for pioneer planting in new areas, as well as the social and economic benefits and constraints of these activities. The project also looked at current institutional mechanisms at the grassroots level and their roles in mangrove restoration. It identified livelihood enhancement and diversification opportunities which can be integrated into restoration programmes, and developed strategies to overcome the technical, social, institutional and policy constraints to planting.

Background

The importance of mangroves was recognized by wetlands managers in India in the early 1980s, leading to a complete turnaround in forest policy from intensive exploitation to complete protection. During the early 1990s, management focused on restoration, principally by replanting. The results were generally poor as attention focused on the forest component, neglecting other important aspects such as hydrology and

Accomplishments and challenges

Stakeholders have indicated that mangrove cover has increased considerably, and that dependence on mangroves for firewood

has decreased. However, a weakening of FD involvement with community stakeholders may reduce planting success in future initiatives.

Village Forest Councils (VFCs) need to be strengthened and all stakeholder roles clearly defined. Monitoring and evaluation of the FD officials involved in VFCs should be instituted to gain community trust. Welfare schemes in coastal areas need to be integrated with management of mangroves, since these provides the core livelihood security for communities in the region. All-concrete houses should be provided to residents, and policies adopted to promote the supply of gas to mangrove-dependent households.

Lessons learned

Participatory analysis of community perceptions of mangrove management practices is essential to understanding the associations between these practices and communities. It is also necessary to refining future strategies and policies on mangrove restoration and joint management. In most cases, communities have not taken ownership of their mangroves because JMM is perceived locally as an FD project, not a continuous process involving communities. Wherever a strong partnership links communities, the FD and NGOs, the results in terms of both increases in mangrove cover and community empowerment are better and more sustainable.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr V. Selvam
Director
M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

111 Cross Street, Taramani Institutional
Area, Taramani, Chennai 600 113, India

Email: vselvam45@hotmail.com