

Improved community management of the Maduganga wetland



Demonstrating the solar-powered lamp, Maduganga, Sri Lanka © K. Ekaratne

In particular, the project aimed to supply local fishermen with an environmentally friendly and cost-effective replacement for the kerosene lamps they generally use for night fishing. Each fishing boat is estimated to use one litre of kerosene nightly, costing US\$0.75. In a pilot initiative, the Nagenahiru Foundation gave 18 fishermen electric lamps, charged in the daytime by two community-operated solar-powered units.

Target beneficiaries

Community members living around the Maduganga estuary.

Outputs

- ▶ Improvements to Pathamulla Mangrove Education Centre.
- ▶ Delivery of 16 awareness programmes and 23 education camps.
- ▶ Provision of 18 solar-powered LED/CFL lamps to 18 fishermen.
- ▶ Provision of two community-operated solar-powered charging units.
- ▶ Training for 50 women in reed handicraft production.
- ▶ Training for 50 women in organic home gardening.
- ▶ Establishment of a model mangrove nursery and planting of 3,000 mangrove seedlings.
- ▶ Creation of an environmental task force with 100 members.



LOCATION

Maduganga, Sri Lanka

PRIORITY POWS

- Civil Society Engagement

DURATION

Eight months

MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$4,386

Objectives

This project had four main objectives:

- 1 to raise awareness of the importance of the Maduganga ecosystem;
- 2 to pilot alternative livelihood activities for those engaged in harmful practices;
- 3 to safeguard the health of the wetland ecosystem; and
- 4 to establish an environmental task force to conserve the wetland ecosystem.

Background

The mangroves of the Maduganga estuary play important ecological, economic and social roles. Conserving this ecosystem is vital, which means teaching local communities how to manage and protect it for future generations. The Nagenahiru Foundation, a local NGO, created an eight-month programme to highlight the importance of mangroves and develop alternative sources of income for enhancing livelihoods without damaging the forests.

Accomplishments and challenges

People's attitudes towards conserving the wetland have changed. The community has gained insights into the importance of

mangroves and the environment, and has become more enthusiastic about protecting the ecosystem. In practical terms, participants planted 3,000 mangrove seedlings in an effort to restore degraded coastal vegetation.

The project also helped the Pathamulla Mangrove Education Centre to educate schoolchildren and local people about the importance of safeguarding the coastline.

Fishermen switched from polluting kerosene lamps to more environmentally friendly electric lamps. This eliminated the emission of 3.15 kg of carbon dioxide and kerosene fumes by each lamp, each night. Each fisherman also saves about US\$220 annually in kerosene costs.

Women were trained in handicraft production and organic home gardening methods to supplement their income and give them economic opportunities on a par with men. They can now make a greater contribution to their family's income.

Challenge

One challenge faced by the project was constant flooding, which hindered the growth of the replanted mangrove seedlings.

Contributions to cross-cutting themes

Communications

An environmental exhibition was mounted by schoolchildren to highlight the importance of the environment.

Gender equality

The project benefited and empowered both men and women. Local communities tradi-

tionally depend on men to bring in the income and women to look after the home and children. Through this project, both men and women were given opportunities to enhance their incomes. Men made savings by using the new lamps. Women trained in handicrafts and home gardening contributed to the well-being of their families and gained some economic independence.

Climate change

The move to electric lamps has eliminated carbon dioxide and other emissions from burning kerosene, reducing the impact of fishing on fishermen's health and the atmosphere.

Lessons learned

The 18 fishermen now enjoy night fishing in a fume-free environment with reduced health risks (constant exposure to noxious kerosene fumes is unhealthy). The new electric lamps allow uninterrupted fishing irrespective of the weather, unlike kerosene lamps which cannot be used in the wind and rain. The fishermen appreciate the economic and environmental benefits of the lamps and have continued to use them.

It is important to educate communities through awareness programmes, and in this respect the Pathamulla Mangrove Education Centre played a key role. Especially important are training courses which will motivate and inspire community members.

Lastly the women targeted in this project have taken well to home gardening and handicrafts, indicating that the project's choice of alternative activities was an appropriate one.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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