

## Safeguarding mangroves through awareness programmes



*Rhizophora mucronata* planting at Puttalam, Sri Lanka © K. Ekeratne

### Target beneficiaries

The fishing community of Mulipuram at Puttalam lagoon.

### Outputs

- ▶ Delivery of awareness programmes.
- ▶ Organization of an art competition for schoolchildren.
- ▶ Delivery of livelihood training programmes.
- ▶ Training of local village volunteers in capacity building.
- ▶ Installation of signboards informing the community about MFF.
- ▶ Planting of one hectare of mangroves.



#### LOCATION

Mulipuram, Puttalam, Sri Lanka

#### PRIORITY POWS

- Strategies for Management
- Civil Society Engagement

#### DURATION

Eight months

#### MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$4,374

### Objectives

The objective of the project was to safeguard the mangroves fringing Puttalam lagoon by raising awareness of their importance among local communities.

### Background

Puttalam lagoon is noted nationally in Sri Lanka for its high biodiversity. The lagoon extends over some 600 hectares of mangroves, 700 hectares of salt marshes, extensive mud flats, seagrass beds and the estuaries of two rivers, the Kala Oya and Mee Oya. Fishing is the main livelihood of the communities living around the lagoon.

Over time, the rich mangrove stands bordering the lagoon have been degraded by the collection of fuel wood by local people and by encroachment, including the construction of unauthorised buildings and conversion of forest land to salt pans. Recognising that the illegal destruction of mangroves must be stopped, the leaders of the local fishing communities proposed this project to safeguard the coastal mangrove belt and make people aware of the threats it faces.

### Accomplishments and challenges

The community planted one hectare of mangroves and erected signboards informing people about the project and MFF. The awareness programmes and livelihood training programmes gave men, women and children valuable knowledge about mangroves and the coastal environment. As a result, the community is now more aware of the environmental importance of the mangroves bordering the lagoon.

#### Challenges

At the outset of the project, mobilizing the community proved difficult as they expected too much from NGOs who were unable to meet their expectations.

Not all of the sites identified for replanting mangroves were suitable because of their soil conditions or exposure to waves at high tide.

Lastly, in some sites, mangroves planted close to the seashore were damaged by the activities of fishermen.

## Contributions to cross-cutting themes

### Communications and gender equality

Signboards were erected to disseminate information to the community, and the beneficiaries of the project included women's groups and women's societies.

### Lessons learned

The way a project motivates community members to participate influences the way it achieves its results. Through empowerment, and the support and presence of government officials, communities can be encouraged to contribute strongly to the project. Including

income generation methods also serves as a motivating factor.

The project grantee learned that when restoring deforested mangrove areas, the soil (ideally sandy or finer sediments) has to be stable enough to ensure minimal erosion during tree growth.

The community as a whole learned how to tend and protect mangrove plants. The newly restored mangroves are expected to provide additional vegetation cover for the coast. To ensure their survival, the community, fishermen and forest field officers have continued to monitor the planting sites after the end of project.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Friendly Environmental Cultural  
Economic Technological Support  
Organization (FECET)

36 Masjid Road, Puttalam,  
Sri Lanka

Tel: +94 32 2265664