

Experiences from Indonesia – Coastal restoration in Tsunami-impacted areas

Budget: 840.000

Implementing agencies: Wetlands International (lead partner), IUCN, WWF, Both Ends & 47 local CBOs.

Funded by: Oxfam Novib.

Objectives: Ecological restoration of coastal areas coupled to sustainable development of local communities.

Where: Coastal areas in Aceh, Indonesia

Implementation period: 2006-2007

Rationale & background

On 24 December 2004, a devastating tsunami hit the coasts of Southeast Asia. More than 200.000 peoples lost their lives and infrastructures and ecosystems were destroyed throughout the region. Livelihoods of millions of people were severely impacted, not only as a result of material losses, but also due to loss of life supporting services provided by important coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, beach forests and coral reefs. The international community rapidly responded to the disaster through large-scale humanitarian aid and reconstruction works. Reconstruction of coastal ecosystems and revitalization of environmental services however, was not considered a priority.

Approach

The Green Coast project tried to fill this gap by initiating integrated poverty alleviation and nature restoration activities in tsunami-impacted areas throughout Southeast Asia. To accomplish this, the project provided a large number of small grants (€ 5.000-15.000) to local NGOs with extensive working experience in the region. Bio-rights was selected as the main tool for small grant initiatives in Aceh, Indonesia.

Following a baseline inventory of post-tsunami conditions, no less than 58 small Bio-rights initiatives were initiated in cooperation with an equal number of local community groups. Regional NGOs and CBOs were responsible for management of the projects. Beneficiaries agreed to participate in a range of conservation activities including rehabilitation of mangroves and beach forest and protection of marine protected areas. The community groups ensured that all conservation activities were properly executed through continuous project monitoring, tending and replacement of seedlings and joint patrolling in the project areas. In return they received funding for initiation of income generating activities such as sustainable fisheries, cattle breeding and food processing. Micro-credits turned into grants if all contractual agreements were met upon termination of the project. In replanting programmes for example, seedling survival rates had to exceed 75% at 6 to 12 months after planting. If survival rates were lower, a proportion of the money had to be refunded to the project. Anticipating the importance of restored ecosystems to the livelihoods of local communities, beneficiaries were as much as possible involved in the design of different conservation activities. As a result community members could play a significant role in gazetted marine protected areas and selecting species for replanting which they considered important for sustaining their livelihoods in the long-term.

Outcome

More than 1.5 million seedlings have been planted in total, covering a surface of over 600 hectares. Seedling survival rates were high (generally between 70-80%), although there were significant differences among project sites. Several marine protected areas have been established. They are all respected by the local community and will remain under protection after termination of the project. The involvement of communities in project development and the strong focus on training and awareness created commitment and a feeling of ownership among participants. This significantly promotes the project's long-term sustainability. A large diversity of income generating activities has been initiated. Many activities already generate significant amounts of income and can be considered successful. Others are still in an early stage of implementation and will hopefully show their success in the near future.

Future activities

Future Green Coast initiatives will focus on larger project sites, incorporating all issues that relate to sustainable land use in coastal areas. As such the second phase of Green Coast will serve as a logical step from direct tsunami response to integrated and long-term coastal zone management. Bio-rights will again serve as a tool to link poverty and conservation issues in the field.