

Eco-Development in the Coastal Zone through
Capacity Building and Conservation

Project Ref. No: 101.01.05

Final Report

In Partnership with
Rufford Small Grants for Nature Conservation



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PROJECT SUMMARY

- Title of the Project : Eco-Development in the Coastal Zone through Capacity Building and Conservation in South India.
- Ref. No. : 101.01.05
- Contact Person : Mr. K. Ravi Pradeep
- Implementing NGO : Society For Integrated Rural Development (SFIRD)
- Duration of Project : One Year
- Target Area : 5 Fisher-folk villages in Nizampatnam coastal Revenue Sub-Division of Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh, South India.
- Program Supported by: Rufford Small Grants (RSG), UK.
- Total Budget : INR 2,17,928 (approximately £ 2,900)
- Staff Involved : Mr. K. Veera Raju, Ms. Sk. Gowharunnisa under the supervision and guidance of Mr. K. Ravi Pradeep and Mr.T. Jaya Kiran
- Stakeholders : Members of women SHGs, CBOs, Youth Associations, high school going children, functionaries of Forest department, functionaries of NGOs working in the coastal area, members of Panchayathraj Institutions (PRIs) and the local peoples representatives / leaders.

INTRODUCTION:

SFIRD has been working in Nizampatnam, a coastal revenue sub-division on the coast of Bay-of-Bengal for the past 8 years. The reference communities of SFIRD are Traditional Marine Fisher-folk (FF), Dalits and most backward class communities. The FF resides close to the coast (some villages are just 500 meters from the shore) as they tie their boats and store their fishing gears just on the coast. The villages are prone to endemic natural calamities resulting in lose of property, cattle and some times human lives. SFIRD after building rapport and contacts with the people found the need for conservation / regeneration / restoration of Mangrove eco-system which has been playing a vital role in arresting the cyclone winds and heavy storms as shock absorbers.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM:

It is noticed that the local people are dependent on Mangroves and are destructing them for fodder to their cattle, fire wood / cooking fuel, for fencing and construction of houses, etc. People are not bothered and are not aware of the degradation of different of different varieties from the local species namely '*Rhyzophora*' and '*Avecinia*'. In this context, SFIRD organized Exposure visits and Training programs for the staff who are working with SFIRD under different programs and the members of CBOs. Further the implementing VO felt the need for systematically and scientifically organizing awareness generation and concentization programs to the members of Women Self-Help Group (SHGs) members, Youth Associations and higher level high school going children studying in the formal education centers locally.

On hearing about the Ruffords Small Grants (RSG) and its contribution for the Nature contribution, SFIRD approached the authorities of RSG under the small grants program. The board of RSG was kind enough to approve and sanction £ 2,900 for the envisaged program. The amount was formally received into the FCRA account of SFIRD in the month of July, 2005. Further an acknowledgement was sent to RSG for the same. Later on as per the requirement, SFIRD sent information for their usage in RSG website along with photographs and other documents.

GOAL:

The ultimate Goal of the Eco-Development project with the support of RSG is Empowerment and Capacity Building of stakeholders in 5 Traditional Marine Fisher-folk communities on conservation and sustainable Management of the Coastal Eco-System.

OBJECTIVES:

The envisaged objectives of the Program are

- To generate awareness and to concentize the stakeholders of 5 reference communities on safeguarding, conserving and regenerating the Mangrove Eco-system.
- Organizing Training Programs to different stakeholders for building their capacities to look for alternatives to Mangroves.
- Capacitating Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other line departments to play a vital role in Nature conservation and Management.

- To sensitize small and marginal farmers with the bad affects of shrimp industry in the coastal zone – the marginal farmers are going on large scale Aqua culture activity, destructing the Mangrove forests in the coastal area.
- To undertake plantation of Mangrove varieties in the degraded coastal area by raising nurseries of different varieties.
- To take up plantation in the villages which helps the people as buffer protection at times of Natural calamities.
- To form village level Functional committees for safeguarding the coastal Eco-system.

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED / OBJECTIVES REALIZED:

A. Training Programs:

SFIRD organized cluster level Training Programs for the stakeholders of 5 coastal villages in 3 different batches. Leaders and members of the village level Women Self-Help Groups and Youth associations were selected by the staff of SFIRD for participating in the camps. The members attended the camps which are held with two day duration each. They used to get back to their homes and return in the morning. SFIRD has 23 staff members working under different programs and the management felt that it is more beneficial for all the staff members to acquire knowledge and gain information on Coastal Eco-system especially the conservation of Mangrove forests. Experienced resource persons belonging to the organizations working in the coastal area of Andhra Pradesh were invited to deliver lectures and conduct sessions during the camps. The participants were provided with reading material (for those who can read) charts and pictorial graphics were used. The participants were divided into groups at random to discuss issues related to Mangrove conservation and regeneration.

Prior to the organizing of camps, 8 of the staff members involved with SFIRD in working with coastal villages were taken to an exposure trip in Kottapalem Mangrove location. The groups were well organized and the participants expressed that though they are residing in the region for the past several years, they are not aware of the various factors related to Mangrove Eco-system and the very importance of the Mangroves. They were Motivated and Mobilized not to destroy the Mangrove forests for any of their personal use hereafter

Number of Camps held	-	3 camps as per schedule.
Participants	-	165 Women, Men and members of local youth groups (participants lists are available).
Resource Persons	-	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Ch. Surya Prakash, Grama Pragathi Society, Kavali. 2. Mr. K. Ravi Pradeep & Mr. T. Jaya Kiran, Functionaries of SFIRD. 3. Mr. G. Gopala Rao, Director, IFIRD. 4. Smt. J. Bhanumathi, Co-ordinator, GORD. 5. Mr. P. Venkateswarlu, Retired Forest Guard.

B. Mangrove Regeneration / Restoration Program:

During early 90s, massive Mangrove vegetation was observed in the coastal region of Nizampatnam area. Degradation took place due to people making use of Mangroves as fodder for their cattle, fire wood and for timber for fencing and house construction. People are not sensitized towards the importance of the Mangrove forests for Eco-development in the region. Therefore, SFIRD, after having surveyed the entire region with local leaders and community organizers, found the necessity for planting more number of Mangrove plantations in the region. *Avecenia* and *Rhizophora* varieties (the local names for these species are Tella mada, Nalla mada, Ere mada, Ponna, Thippa, Thilla, Urada, Guggilam, Thandaga, etc). Initially, the staff of SFIRD along with the local youth visited the locations on two mechanized boats to identify the different types of locations (degraded areas) where saplings are to be planted.

Accordingly, near '*Gondisamudram*' nursery beds were organized and the seedlings were collected from the Mangrove area and were planted in the polythene bags and in the plane area. Within 3 months the saplings were ready for re-plantation. Totally 40 people were engaged in the clearance of the land for planting the varieties. 3 local mechanized boats were hired for the plantation activity. The people of the area understood the importance of regenerating of the Mangroves and the staff of SFIRD paid regular visits along with the local youth to observe the plants growing. SFIRD planted over 30,000 saplings as per the envisaged objectives.

C. Tree Plantations in the Villages:

SFIRD found the need for planting useful saplings around the House Sites, along the roads, in the community lands and on the village boundaries as they help / safeguard the village communities at times of heavy storms and natural calamities. Staff of SFIRD visited the households and spoke to the people on the importance of plantation of saplings and safeguarding them. Later on, the staff contacted the local Forest Department functionaries / Government nurseries and procured the saplings for planting in the villages as specified above. Casurina, Neem, Flame of the forest, Pongamia and neeredu were planted in the 5 target villages namely Kotturu, Sarada Nagar (east), Vermapuram, Sanjeeva Nagar and Tallathippa. The plants are growing well and the survival rate is 60%. Local youth and especially the high school going children (those studying 8th – 10th standards in the age groups of 13 – 15 years) were motivated by the staff and volunteers of SFIRD towards the protection and care of the saplings.

D. Involvement of School Children in Eco-development:

Three schools are located in the Target area where our 5 villages are situated. SFIRD's staff met the Management and Teachers of these schools in order to involve them actively in Eco-development activities. The purpose is to involve the children and to make them understand the importance of Mangroves and plantation activities in their villages.

SFIRD organized awareness sessions for the children of the 3 schools. Totally around 200 children in the age group of 13 – 15 years are mobilized to form into Eco-clubs which are meant for Eco-development activities. Essay writing and quiz competitions were conducted and the winners were awarded with certificates and gifts. While observing the 'World Fisheries Day' and 'World Youth Day', rallies were organized and the children participated actively by raising slogan and by carrying banners and cards on environment related issues.

E. Formation of Village Functional Committees:

The area is prone to endemic natural calamities as they are located close to the coast of the Bay-of-Bengal. People were badly hit by the Tsunami and seven deaths were reported besides heavy loss to fishing crafts, gears and dry fish stored on the coast. During the process of implementing the above conservation activities, SFIRD formed village level committees in all the 5 villages. They are entrusted with the responsibilities of protecting and safeguarding the saplings planted and as the future custodians of the resources. The committees are further strengthened in the lines of Mangrove conservation and safeguarding the locations which were planted with different varieties.

F. Advocacy and Lobbying:

- Local CSOs were consulted and were involved during the implementation of the program. The local Panchayat Raj (local self government) president extended maximum cooperation.
- Cultural activities in the form of '*Burrakathas*' were organized to sensitize people on Eco-development issues.
- Slogans were written on walls, in the village main centers on the importance of protection and safeguarding environment.
- Handouts were written in local language and were distributed in the target villages and the neighboring villages to bring awareness in people on environmental issues.

IMPEDEMENTS ENCOUNTERED:

- Reluctance (in the initial stage of the program) from the local villagers as we are proclaiming not to destroy mangrove forests for fodder to their cattle, for construction material, for fuel wood for cooking – infact they were habituated / dependent to use Mangrove forests since generations.
- The TSUNAMI devastation in December, 2004 destructed the mangrove plantations in large scale manner (prior to the implementation of the present program with the support of RSG – ML Foundation).
- Participation of stakeholders in one camp (organized in the month of July) was nominal as people were attending to agri - based activities as daily laborers.
- The 'OGNI' natural calamity in the form of cyclone, recently, caused severe damages to the households of our target villages. People were requesting for relief measures.
- People were demanding for monetary benefits to take up income generation activities.

CONCLUSION:

SFIRD and the elders of the local Target communities are indeed thankful and grateful to the **Rufford Small Grants** program for nature conservation for supporting the one year program which helps them on safeguarding the coastal eco-system. There is need for implementing other related activities in the area to a great extent. The stakeholders look forward for continued partnership and support from RSG in taking up and implementing similar activities in our coastal region. SFIRD intends to approach **The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation** committed for improving nature conservation with *area specific action programs* related to Coastal Eco-system in this part of the world.

Report compiled and submitted by

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Forwarded by

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