



Rehabilitation of coastal forests after the tsunami

Workshop on coastal forest rehabilitation and management in Asian tsunami affected countries. 26 September 2006, Bangkok, Thailand

Twenty months after the 2006 Indian Ocean tsunami, FAO held a one-day workshop in Bangkok on “Coastal forest rehabilitation and management in Asian tsunami affected countries” to exchange information on post-tsunami coastal forest rehabilitation and identify related long-term needs.

The workshop was organized by the Government of Finland funded ‘Forestry programme for early rehabilitation in Asian tsunami affected countries’ and centred on presentations provided by representatives of national forestry agencies from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The presentations drew attention to:

- the pre-tsunami status of coastal trees and forest resources and impacts of the tsunami;
- the status of implementation of coastal forest rehabilitation and issues that have emerged;
- lessons learned, policies, legislation and institutional factors affecting management of coastal forests and trees; and
- key needs to support short- and long-term efforts in coastal forest rehabilitation and management.

Representatives of regional and international organizations, NGOs and donors also participated and presentations of programmes and activities in coastal forest rehabilitation were given by the IUCN led Mangroves for the Future initiative, the Green Coast/WWF Aceh project and the Coastal Greenbelt Initiative of the Global Environment Centre.

The meeting’s main message was that although the tsunami caused direct damage to forests in the worst hit areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India, a more significant outcome has been a heightening of awareness of the degraded state and continuing loss of coastal trees and forests in the region. The social and environmental implications of these losses are varied but in general the repercussions of forest and tree removal are felt most acutely by poorer sections of society and associated environmental costs are seldom born by those reaping direct benefits.

The opportunity therefore exists to improve the situation through reform of policy and management systems such that conservation and rehabilitation of coastal trees and forests are better facilitated. The direct activity of planting trees is an integral part of this effort but by no means the only component, as post-tsunami experience has shown – seedlings were often planted only to be subsequently removed or to die because of inadequate assessment of the prevailing policy, economic and physical environments.

Recommendations in relation to coastal forest rehabilitation in the areas of information collection and coordination; policy, legislation and institutions; and capacity building and technical assistance were generated by workshop participants. Prominent themes include:



- Making better use of local knowledge during project activities and disseminating information at the local level and in local languages;
- Collecting and disseminating information on the effects of climate change on coastal forests and the role of coastal forests in mitigating associated adverse effects;
- Preparing guidelines on good practices, training and extension and technical matters in relation to coastal forest protection and management;
- Developing guidelines to incorporate forestry into disaster management strategies;
- Reducing policy conflict and overlaps detrimental to coastal forests and developing regulations to bridge gaps between policy and implementation;
- Building capacity in relation to, and improving levels of, participation and consultation in relation to coastal area policy and planning;
- Strengthening links among field programmes and research and education institutions to support improved coastal forest rehabilitation and management;
- Implementing technical, communication and policy related training for government and non-government organisations in relation to coastal forest rehabilitation.

The recommendations of the workshop reinforced the appropriateness of many of the activities undertaken by the FAO's current regional forestry-tsunami programme and provided valuable inputs for future activities and forthcoming work such as that proposed under the Mangroves for the Future Initiative (MFF), due to begin in 2007.

Outputs from workshop including the country papers and recommendations are available at the following address: www.fao.org/forestry/site/35733/en.