

MANGROVE PLANTING FOR COASTLINE PROTECTION – TO PLANT OR NOT TO PLANT

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Abstract

The 26th December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was generated by a massive 9.3 Richter scale earthquake. The destruction wreaked by this tsunami was colossal in terms of both losses of human lives as well as to coastal property. There were a number of anecdotal reports of mangrove forest playing a role in saving lives and property; and the destruction and degradation of mangroves were blamed to enhance the damages caused by the tsunami. As a result, governments and non-government organisations are embarking on plans to plant mangrove belts along coastlines to provide protection from future tsunamis. This paper provides basic information on natural distribution and regeneration of mangroves, examines the need for mangrove planting along the coastlines in tsunami affected areas based on the field observation, repositions policy priorities for mangrove protection and rehabilitation, and offers options for coastal protection where mangrove planting is not possible.

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