

Project Update: July 2015

Work towards the restoration of mangrove ecology has begun in the three villages of Patharpara, Annpur and Chargheri under Lahiripur Panchayat of Gosaba block in the district of 24 Parganas South. The work being carried out by Sunderban Wildlife & Rural Development Society (SWRDS) are as follows-

DEVELOPING MANGROVE NURSERIES: We have been able to develop mangrove nurseries in these villages. The seeds collected from the tidal waters are planted in plastic bags filled with soil and reared these nurseries till they are between 2.5 feet - 3 feet tall. It takes about 90- 100 days for the seeds to develop into saplings of this height. The species of mangroves being planted include Sundari (Heritiera fomes), Goran (Ceriops decandra), Kankra (Bruguiera Gymnorhiza) , Kholshi (Aegiceras Corniculatum), Byne (Avicennia Officinalis), Dhundul (Xylocarpus Granatum), Keora (Sonneratia Apetala) amongst other

DEVELOPING PLANTATION SITES: Based on our pre- identified *chor* land, our team members are developing plantation sites by transferring the saplings from nurseries to such land. These saplings are planted based on the nature of mangroves and their suitability to the respective soil conditions. The saplings need to be planted at least 4 feet away from each other to leave space for the elaborate root systems of the species.



RESTORATION OF MANGROVE AQUA SYSTEMS: Mangrove ecosystem has endowed the local villages with naturally occurring ponds and water bodies. But over the years they have become shallow and rendered useless. To begin with three community ponds have been identified in these villages which are being manually dredged / desilted. The villagers are digging out the silt, mud etc. and opening them up for accumulation of water again.



While the community mangrove forests take their time to develop, these aquaculture systems will be developed into silvo fishery units. Based on the knowledge of the villagers, fingerlings of various species of fish including crabs can be introduced in these water bodies and harvested.

Further, such community managed water bodies can also provide water for irrigation, thereby opening up agriculture as a livelihood option for at least some families with land in the target villages. Sunderban as we know is a hot spot of climate change-- characterized by erratic rainfall, which is either scanty, surplus or untimely. Hence, agriculture failed to emerge as a feasible option in the villages as against forestry.

The brackish water in the region can however support certain coarse varieties of paddy/ pulses etc. in rotation suiting the seasons along with vegetables and fruits as water melon, cucumber, potatoes, varieties of gourds, pumpkins amongst others.

The sustainable resources generated by the rivers/ ponds can help villagers to clean/ maintain them voluntarily, even after the completion of the project.

AWARENESS DRIVES: The villagers of the three target villages are keen to spread awareness on their work in other neighbouring villages. They are keen that more members join hands with them in the campaign of restoration of mangrove ecology, generation of sustainable livelihoods in the villages and ultimately reducing human pressures in the tiger habitat.



The awareness campaigns are in the form of street campaigns where members move around in the villages to draw the attention of the fellow community members which eventually culminates into awareness meetings. The beneficiary members share their experiences on their work which culminates into interactions with the other participating members.

CLEANLINESS DRIVE: The community members are particularly vigilant and continue to keep nursery and plantation sites clean by picking up poly packs, throw away plastic packets etc. that are often littered by the tourists. Such waste clogs the soil preventing the sprouting of mangrove seeds or growth of saplings. .

RAPPORT BUILDING WITH LOCAL ADMINISTRATION: It is a constant process. The villagers are getting involved in local meetings/ conferences on environment protection/ govt. meetings etc. to enable them to speak out on the proposed work and its utility.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES: Guarding of plantation sites from cattle grazing, developing fish culture in the de silted ponds, emphasis on increasing agriculture in the villages and more awareness campaigns.



