

Renewing Mangrove Forest for More Secure Livelihoods



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CHALLENGE

Typhoon Linda, which hit Vietnam's southern provinces in November 1997, starkly highlighted the extent of degradation of the coastal Mekong Delta. During the 1990s, the area's mangrove forest, an important breeding ground for aquatic organisms and a barrier against typhoons, was being destroyed at an alarming rate for timber and charcoal production. Meanwhile unplanned development of shrimp farming took hold, contributing to further loss of mangroves. Over time, recurrent outbreaks of disease in shrimp aquaculture drove numerous farmers into poverty, giving them no choice but to exploit the mangrove itself. The viability of the forest was in question.

APPROACH

The IDA supported Coastal Wetlands Protection and Development Project adopted a comprehensive, long-term approach to the protection of the coastal wetlands of four provinces: Ca Mau, Bac Lieu, Soc Trang and Tra Vinh. Mangrove forest was replanted while the causes of its destruction were tackled. A Full Protection Zone was set up for the reestablished forest; and poor and landless people displaced from the area were relocated to a Buffer Zone where—with training, land-use rights certificates, new homes, social support and credit—they were enabled to engage in small-scale farming, livestock-raising and aquaculture.

RESULTS

The project planted 4,662 hectares of mangrove in the Full Protection Zone and 983 hectares in the Buffer Zone. When combined with complementary government forestry programs, this resulted in reforestation of more than 95 percent of the barren areas in the Full Protection Zone. At the same time, more than 1,400 poor households were relocated to new homes in Buffer Zone settlements where schools, clinics, roads, potable water supply and sanitation were established.

Highlights:

- In Ca Mau, the most southerly project province, coastal erosion decreased by 40 percent between 2000 and 2007. Biodiversity is recovering from past depletion, with aquatic resources like sea crabs and clams reappearing and increasing.
- The project created incentives and sanctions to protect newly reforested areas. Forest protection and maintenance contracts with local communities are in place, and violations of the Forestry Law along 470 kilometers of coastline declined from 1,757 incidents in 2002 to 318 in

2006.

- Training, demonstration model farms and credit helped bolster livelihoods and expand economic opportunities for the resettled poor. A household survey showed people's living standards two years after resettlement had improved, with poverty among interviewees nearly cut in half, falling by 10 percentage points.

-In light of socioeconomic changes in the coverage area that called for better prioritization and targeting of project interventions and taking into account the government's own vastly larger mangrove-planting program, the project was restructured in 2004. The scope of technical assistance was curtailed, reducing its costs from US\$11.3 million to US\$7.3 million while outreach was refocused on training and poverty reduction activities for the poorest households and on resettlement site development in the Buffer Zone.

IDA CONTRIBUTION

IDA financed SDR 22.7 million (US\$31.8 million) of total project costs, and Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) contributed US\$7.3 million to fund a package of technical assistance. The government's contribution was equivalent to US\$16.3 million.

NEXT STEPS

Local government authorities are committed to continuing the training and social support activities for resettled households beyond project completion.

Forestry staff gained experience in planting significantly taller mangrove trees with advanced techniques in challenging environments beyond the protection of dikes. This is expected to be especially valuable at a time when climate change is putting coastal communities at greater risk of natural disaster. In areas where degraded mangrove land has been restored through tree planting, gains will be consolidated with new dikes and new lines of planted trees to expand the Full Protection Zone.

LEARN MORE

Coastal Wetlands Protection and Development Project (1999-2007)

[Project documents](#)

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