



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



LOWERING EMISSIONS
IN ASIA'S FORESTS

PROGRAM UPDATE

Protecting and Restoring Mangroves in the Face of Demand for Valuable Coastal Land



A mangrove friendly organic shrimp farm in Ban Tre province Vietnam.

Mangroves are critically important in the fight against climate change. These coastal forests not only store large amounts of carbon, but also protect coastlines from storms, maintain biodiversity and support local livelihoods. However, across the planet, increased demand for tourism infrastructure, large-scale shrimp farming and other commercial activity along coasts are quickly destroying the fragile environments that house mangroves.

How can mangrove conservation and restoration become a widespread reality in coastal areas that are faced with ever increasing pressures for further development? Reserved forests and protected areas provide one tried and tested option, but in most cases such areas cannot be established over large expanses of coastline due to the demand for higher profits generated by tourism and shrimp industries.

The best way to ensure mangrove protection and restoration is to identify financial incentives for communities so they become a part of the solution without sacrificing their livelihoods. To that end, the *Income for Coastal Communities for Mangrove Protection* project, a collaboration between the United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program, Mangroves for the Future (MFF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and UN-REDD, is developing a low cost mechanism enabling investors to responsibly promote mangrove protection and restoration. This will be accomplished through the provision of local level funding to provide diverse livelihoods, enhance natural resources and protect coastlines.

However, for conservation of mangroves to become more widespread, protection and restoration must make long-term economic sense while also meeting environmental and social goals. That is the challenge revealed at a recent workshop on Mangroves and Climate Change, held in conjunction with Mangroves for the Future, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

One model combines action by the government, the private sector and local communities and revolves around mangrove-friendly aquaculture that is supported not only by large shrimp exporters interested in sustainability labeling and associated price premiums, but also by government-backed policy and accompanying mangrove restoration programs. Farmers' needs to escape risks of disease outbreak in monocultural shrimp production are a further driving force.

During a visit to project sites in Ban Tre and Tra Vinh provinces, Professor Mai Sy Tuan of the Hanoi University of Science pointed out, "Although income and economic value may be less than industrial shrimp production, certified organic shrimp fetch a higher price and aquatic conditions are improved by the mangroves, which are integral to the production system."

In developing local level agreements whereby different parties commit to sustainable production, Andrew Wyatt, IUCN Mekong Delta Programme Manager, said, "We have to stress the need for training of local level management boards, community monitoring and use of language appropriate at the community level. For sustainable production systems to become self-sufficient, financial and technical support is generally necessary for around one year."

Lessons learned from almost a decade of experience by Mangroves for the Future will hopefully be converted into widespread protection and rehabilitation of mangroves for sustainable coastal development and improved livelihoods for coastal dwellers.

The United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests program (USAID LEAF) is a five-year (2011-2016) regional project focused on achieving meaningful and sustainable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from the forest-land use sector across six target countries: Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea.

For More information:

USAID Asia: info-rdma@usaid.gov USAID LEAF: leaf_info@leafasia.org