

Goal of Approach:

The Mangroves for the Future (MFF) initiative was launched in December 2006 in Hin Look Dieu village, Phuket, Thailand by President Clinton in his capacity as UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery and as a strategic and long term response to the continued degradation of coastal ecosystems threatening the livelihoods and security of coastal communities throughout the Indian Ocean Region.

MFF is a regional partnership-led initiative that seeks to effect demonstrable changes and results across four key areas of influence: regional cooperation, national programme support, private sector engagement and community action through knowledge, empowerment, and promoting good governance in coastal areas.

MFF aims to strengthen the environmental sustainability of coastal development, and promote investment of funds and other resources in coastal ecosystem management for sustainable development. MFF initially focused on the countries worst-affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami; India, Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. MFF has recently (2010) expanded its geographic scope to also include Pakistan and Viet Nam.

Input provided by: IUCN

Main elements of the implementation strategy

The Mangroves for the Future (MFF) programme is founded on the premise of partnerships, and its annual work plans are implemented through its institutional partners, as well as other government and non-government stakeholders. MFF is governed by a Regional Steering Committee (RSC), comprising representatives from the MFF 8 Member Countries, core institutional partners (UN agencies, Wetlands International, Care and IUCN), and MFF's main donors. The RSC meets annually to agree on the forward work plan and approves financial allocations for MFF's major activities under the annual work plan.

Directed by the RSC, implementation of the MFF work plans is managed by the MFF Regional Secretariat based in IUCN ARO (Thailand) and by MFF National Coordinators. Where available (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam) the MFF National Coordinators work through the IUCN country office, otherwise through the UNDP country office (Indonesia and Maldives). In Seychelles, where neither IUCN nor UNDP are represented, the National Coordinator works under direct guidance of the MFF Regional Secretariat. The MFF work plan is implemented mainly through:

1. Country office agreements between IUCN ARO and the relevant IUCN/UNDP country office. Two types of agreements are applied, giving: a) support to implementation of the annual work plans of the National Coordinating Body (NCB) in each Member Country, and b) support to implementation of small-sized projects selected jointly by the NCBs and the relevant country office;
2. Grants to medium-sized projects based on implementation contracts between IUCN ARO and the grantee organization; And,
3. Regional initiatives based on agreements between IUCN ARO and the implementing partner organisation as per RSC decision.

It is the RSC that decides on the total amount that can be allocated to the three modes of implementation. Presently, the upper limits for small grant projects, medium grant projects and regional initiatives are USD 25 000, 100 000 and 200 000, respectively.

Targeted beneficiaries

MFF aims at strengthening the resilience of ecosystem dependent coastal communities in its member countries.

Any significant lessons learned

The overall lesson learned is that effective governance structures and arrangements are interdependent and their interplay is what defines MFF's uniqueness. This system allows MFF to feed into national processes and then bring relevant feedback from them to inform decision making at the regional level. This learning and sharing of experiences is then fed back into national processes in an iterative cycle. Unlike many intergovernmental processes, MFF provides a more "open" model of governance that seems to resonate well within the coastal context, which is characterized by a very broad range of stakeholders and interests/conflicts.

The MFF countries present great diversity in terms of their geophysical, socio-economic, cultural and political characteristics. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern a number of underlying elements common to the success of many projects in all eight countries, which resulted in positive impacts and indicate good prospects for sustainability. For example, the following attributes featured consistently in many of the MFF small grant projects:

- Choosing local partners with experience and expertise. A key underlying factor in the overall success of the projects was the knowledge, skill and commitment of the local implementing partners. Those who had been in operation for a number of years were more likely to have the skills and dedication required to mobilize the community and other stakeholders in support of the project objectives.
- Partnering with local institutions. Linking the project to existing institutions was seen to help mobilize local capacity and support, including endorsement by local government authorities, and securing their active involvement
- Harnessing the knowledge and capacity to mobilize people. The underlying factor in project success was the knowledge and capacity of local implementers to mobilize the target communities and other important stakeholders including local government officials. Above all, nearly all project implementers were aware, or soon discovered, that involving people in communities and instilling a sense of ownership is perhaps 'the' key factor in achieving a project's objectives. Most projects found approaches or methods to create this all important ownership.
- Ensuring community involvement, providing a clear project vision. Having a clear project vision, and being able to enthuse and motivate stakeholders by demonstrating success relevant to their professional interests, and personal and community economic concerns, were all underlying factors in project success. The projects in Sri Lanka, in particular, is doing an outstanding job of initiating small but sustainable livelihoods projects by using simple technologies and participatory approaches which motivated people's interest and awareness.
- Providing 'open access' to information. Access to information is essential to empower decision-making. To achieve this, projects should make information materials 'open access' (i.e. freely available to copy for non-commercial purposes) and disseminate them available to

all interested parties. The project managers reported that information materials were frequently used by groups such as school environmental clubs, environmental NGOs, and youth groups during their various events. If made available, environmental messages in the form of songs, videos, radio spots and other media products will continue to reach audiences for a considerable time to come.

- Return on investment. A high return from quite modest financial investments was a key achievement of the SGF, which provided grants not exceeding USD 25,000 per project (and with many projects receiving much less). By carefully selecting projects with potential for growth, SGF grants served as seed money. Moreover, these grants placed the funds directly in the hands of local organizations, mainly NGOs and CBOs, thereby giving them a sense of official recognition and credibility, as well as the financial resources to make direct investments on behalf of the local communities they represent.
- Endorsement and Recognition. SGF funding also brought a sense of endorsement that raised a project's status and made further development and subsequent applications for funding more likely to succeed. External recognition, in the form of awards or participation in national events, was another powerful motivator that raised the profile of projects. This helped to build confidence and promote wider interest in the project, leading to better dissemination of results.
- Project ownership. As mentioned earlier, creating a sense of ownership among the intended beneficiaries is perhaps 'the' key factor in achieving a project's objectives. The most effective way to promote community involvement and ownership is to demonstrate tangible benefits, so that people can see that the project innovations are both practical and of value; and these attributes will in turn encourage their further participation.
- Changing behaviour. People seldom perceive their activities as harmful to the natural environment and, consequently, it cannot be assumed that they understand the relationship between their environment and their physical and economic well-being. Changing peoples' attitude can be difficult and takes time, as it often involves convincing them to end, or modify, their traditional practices, or learn and apply new skills. The most effective way to change mind sets and practices is to demonstrate tangible benefits from the changes proposed.
- Culture and education. Fundamental to achieving ownership and changing behaviour is to develop a good understanding of the target community itself and how best to impart new knowledge. Taking time to understand local conditions and attitudes is vital to project success, especially when dealing with very traditional communities that may be suspicious of external influences. Educating people requires much thought and perseverance, and educational materials must be well designed to best suit their intended audiences. Involving local religious leaders or school teachers can be an effective way to impart learning to communities.
- Enhancing livelihoods. When introducing potential alternative forms of livelihood, the chances of success will be increased significantly if the proposed activity is in line with local knowledge, skills, and traditions. It is important that beneficiaries have appropriate business skills such as book keeping and marketing. Production must be linked to a market chain to ensure that activities are commercially viable for the producers. Also related to product marketing, consideration of wider social trends may be helpful; for example, the growing preference of consumers for more naturally produced products.
- Ensuring sustainability. Long-term sustainability can only be ensured if project participants are willing to step up and take responsibility. The first step in this process is to empower the target groups and give them space and freedom to operate. This gives people the opportunity and motivation to identify their own problems, formulate and apply their own solutions and, most importantly, to test their own innovations. Engaging young people is an important element in planning for sustainable outcomes.

- Communicating effectively. Notwithstanding some constraints, the SGF projects achieved impressive results regarding communications, generating coverage in the media (print, radio, television and online); they also developed a large range of promotional material, including DVDs, t-shirts, pamphlets, posters and wall calendars, as well as training manuals and other educational materials. However, not enough consideration was given to understanding the profile and information needs the target audiences for these various communication products. It is especially important to provide information in a relevant form.
- Sharing information. It is clear that project managers can learn a great deal from one another if effective information-sharing mechanisms are in place. In addition to exchange visits, where practical, MFF has recognized the need to give consideration to the use of online and social media tools, as a means of facilitating the sharing and exchange of information between projects.
- Building confidence. Confidence is a key element in achieving project success. Project managers and partners are generally sensitive to this intangible quality and often are very good at building confidence among the target beneficiaries, which in turn makes an important contribution to their empowerment. A lesson from this is to attempt to record or even to measure gains in 'confidence' as part of its monitoring, learning and evaluation system.
- Engaging the private sector. Although a small number of projects did involve the private sector, the huge potential for corporate involvement was largely untapped. High profile activities, such as mangrove rehabilitation, would seem to offer particularly attractive opportunities for private sector investment. MFF has noted to examine carefully at ways to significantly increase private sector involvement in future projects, including promoting some of the project successes from the SGF projects in Phase 1 to potential private sector partners.

Resource requirements

Since its inception, MFF has received core programme support from Norad (NOK 30M between 2007-2011) and Sida (SEK 29M between 2006-2010). A Mid-Term Review (MTR) of MFF commissioned by Sida in December 2009 resulted in recommendations for a continuation and modest expansion of MFF into a second phase for which Sida made an additional contribution of SEK 54M during the period 2010-2014. In June 2012, Norad provided another contribution of NOK 7M for the calendar year 2012. In addition Danina is supporting MFF with a grant at 25mill DKK for implementation of a three year project (2012 - 2015) focusing on the potential of Mangroves and other coastal vegetation for climate change adaptation and mitigation in the MFF region

Potential for replication or scaling-up

MFF will continue to reach out to other countries of the region that face similar issues, with an overall aim to promote an integrated ocean wide approach to coastal zone management. While mangroves are used as the flagship ecosystem, MFF addresses all coastal ecosystems. The aim is to provide a vehicle for linking ecosystem conservation to sustainable development goals, thereby addressing the long-term threats to coastal ecosystems and livelihoods. MFF facilitates the building of a collaborative platform for multiple stakeholders to work together regionally and nationally to promote investment in coastal ecosystems as development "infrastructure".

Any additional information