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The Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project

Seacology, in collaboration with Sri Lanka-based NGO Sudeesa, is working to make Sri Lanka the world's first nation to comprehensively protect all of its mangrove forests.

About Seacology

Seacology protects threatened habitats of the world's islands by working directly with local communities to both conserve their natural resources and improve their quality of life. We offer a unique deal: if a village agrees to create or enforce a forest or marine reserve, Seacology will fund a key community need, such as a school or health clinic. Since 1991, Seacology has completed or has in progress more than 250 projects in 55 countries and has protected more than a million acres of some of the world's most vulnerable ecosystems.

Partnerships

Seacology will harness Sri Lanka-based NGO Sudeesa's experience in implementing job-training and microfinance programs, fields in which Sudeesa (formerly known as Small Fishers Federation of Lanka) has been a leader for more than 15 years. It boasts a 96% loan-repayment rate, and 12,300 clients have found jobs as a result of Sudeesa's training. This partnership will give many more impoverished Sri Lankans alternative ways to earn a living that do not entail cutting down mangroves.

No charitable funds will be given to the government of Sri Lanka, but it will play an important role in this effort by demarcating and gazetting mangrove forests, providing legal protection for all of Sri Lanka's mangroves, and providing rangers to patrol mangrove forests. The government of Sri Lanka is fully supportive of this project.

Ecological Benefits

Our project will:

- Protect all 21,782 acres (8,815 ha) of Sri Lanka's existing mangrove forests.
- Replant an additional 9,600 acres (3,885 ha) in areas where mangroves have been cut down.
- Establish three mangrove nurseries to promote replanting efforts.

Humanitarian Benefits

Job training and microloans will be offered to 15,000 low-income individuals through 1,500 community organizations located adjacent to Sri Lanka's mangrove forests. Each of these organizations will be responsible for ensuring that no mangroves are cut down in its specified area, an average of 21 acres per community.

Our project will:

- Provide alternative job training for impoverished Sri Lankans, especially those who lost family members in the recent civil war.
- Offer microloans to support new sustainable businesses.
- Build a first-of-its-kind national mangrove conservation museum, with 20,000 expected annual visitors from throughout the country, many of them schoolchildren.

see reverse

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Why Mangroves?

Mangroves are trees and shrubs that grow in brackish and saline water along tropical and subtropical shorelines. Mangroves' stilted roots are anchored in underwater sediment and extend above the surface.

Mangroves are crucial to the global ecosystem. Protecting Sri Lanka's mangroves will have profound environmental and humanitarian benefits, which will be felt throughout the world.

First, mangroves provide a nursery for many fish species, shielding juvenile fish from predators. They improve water quality by trapping sediment and absorbing excess nutrients.

Mangrove forests also provide a key buffer against storm surges and rising sea levels. This was widely seen in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami that ravaged several countries across the Indian Ocean. In many cases, communities that had intact mangrove forests suffered fewer deaths and less damage than those without them.

If mangroves are protected, they can be tremendously effective in fighting climate change. Mangroves sequester far more carbon than other forests. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) estimates that mangroves and coastal wetlands store three to five times more carbon per acre than tropical forests. Conversely, the high carbon content of mangrove forests means that if disturbed, they release a tremendous amount of CO_2, hastening climate change.

Mangroves have been destroyed at an alarming rate; in the past 100 years, the global population has been cut in half, as mangrove forests were converted to shrimp farms, croplands, and urban areas. In Sri Lanka, 74% of mangrove forests have been lost since the 19th century, much of this a result of the devastating civil war fought from 1983 to 2009.

Finances

Seacology has a long record of fiscal efficiency, with just seven full-time staff and a network of part-time field representatives managing our global network of successful projects. Approximately 65% of our support comes from individual donors, with the remainder from foundations, corporations, and Seacology affiliates in Europe and Japan. In FY2014, 75% of our $1.65 million total expendatures was allocated to program costs.

The Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project, budgeted at $3.4 million over five years, is Seacology's largest single project to date.

Seacology Awards and Recognitions

- Laureate, Prince's Prize for Innovative Philanthropy
  Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, Tocqueville Foundation (2015)
- Global Vision Award
  Travel+Leisure Magazine
- Global Sustainable Tourism Blue Award
  Islands Magazine (2007)
- Top-Rated Nonprofit
  Greatnonprofits.org (multiple years)
- "Achievement in Innovation Award"
  California Association of Nonprofits (2005)

Support Us

Gifts can be made at **seacology.org/srilankamangroves** or by phone or check (see top of this page).

More Information

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More project details and updates available at **seacology.org/srilankamangroves**.