

# THE SRI LANKA MANGROVE CONSERVATION PROJECT

By becoming the first country to protect **ALL** its mangroves,  
Sri Lanka is taking unprecedented action to fight climate change.





# History made in Sri Lanka

**O**n May 12, 2015, a precedent-setting deal was struck in Sri Lanka. Seacology, Sri Lanka-based NGO Sudeesa (formerly known as Small Fishers Federation of Lanka), and that nation's government announced a new and unique partnership that is making Sri Lanka the world's first country to protect **all** of its mangrove forests.

Sri Lanka is the 25th largest island in the world and is home to more than 21,000 acres (8,815 hectares) of intact mangroves. These trees, which put down their roots in brackish water along Sri Lanka's shorelines, serve important ecological and economic functions. They are important to maintaining Sri Lanka's biodiversity and vital fishing economy, they provide protection against storm damage for the tsunami-prone island nation, **and they are a vital tool for mitigating climate change** (see sidebar).

Our means for achieving this ambitious goal are a true representation of the win-win model Seacology has developed in our more than two decades of conservation work. Sudeesa, an organization with a long and proven track record, will provide microloans and job training to thousands of disadvantaged coastal Sri Lankans, primarily women. In exchange, communities that otherwise might cut down mangroves to survive agree to protect mangroves.



All of Sri Lanka's more than 21,000 acres of intact mangrove forests are now protected by the Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project.

**21,782**

Existing acres protected

**9,600**

Acres replanted

The project was based on Sudeesa's program offering economic opportunities to low-income women in exchange for their active conservation of mangroves.

The partnership with Seacology scales up this model, previously offered only in Sudeesa's home district, to the whole nation, to protect all the country's remaining mangrove forests. It is also restoring thousands of acres that had been cleared of

their mangroves. A number of mangrove nurseries, three of which are now operating, will propagate all 22 species of mangroves native to Sri Lanka, and the seedlings will be replanted in coastal areas that were once densely forested. Since the 19th century, nearly three-quarters of Sri Lanka's mangrove habitat has been lost, having been cleared for use as shrimp farms or damaged in Sri Lanka's devastating civil war.

While not receiving project funds,





Members of the Sri Lankan navy join Seacology and Sudeesa personnel and local women to plant mangrove seedlings grown in nurseries established by the project.



Sri Lanka's then-environmental secretary Nihal Rupasinghe and Seacology Executive Director Duane Silverstein after signing the agreement.

**1,500**

Communities served

**15,000**

Microloan recipients

the Sri Lankan government is an active partner in the conservation effort. The Environment Ministry has agreed to demarcate and establish legal protection for all of Sri Lanka's mangroves, and is providing rangers to patrol the newly protected areas. The Sri Lankan navy has also volunteered to assist the restoration effort and has already planted thousands of seedlings.

"It is the responsibility and the necessity of all government

institutions, private institutions, non-government organizations, researchers, intelligentsia, and civil community to be united to protect the mangrove ecosystem," said Sri Lanka's president, Maithripala Sirisena, at the project's launch in 2015. "I highly appreciate and admire the joint effort made by the international non-governmental organizations Seacology and the Small Fishers Federation of Lanka to conserve the mangrove ecosystem of Sri Lanka."

## Essential importance of mangroves



Mangroves provide shelter for young fish, many of which go on to populate coral reefs. These fisheries provide essential nourishment and commerce for coastal communities.

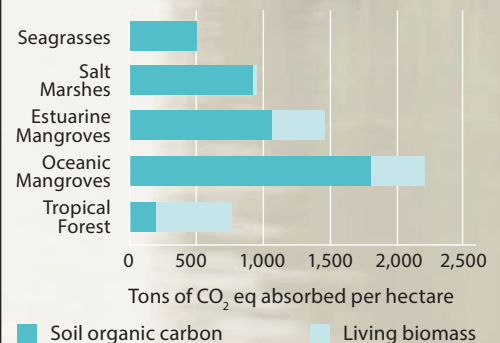


Mangroves reduce storm damage to coastal communities by dissipating the energy of wind and waves.



Mangroves absorb atmospheric carbon—far more than other types of forests—and trap it in the soil around their roots. They can absorb 3-5 times more carbon than other types of forests, making them critical to fighting global warming.

### Carbon sequestration: Mangroves vs. other ecosystems





# Investing in the future of

**S**eaecology projects are designed to be win-wins: Both the environment and the local community partners benefit, and the community and economic benefits reinforce and incentivize the ecological ones. While the Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project is much larger in both cost and scope than the average Seaecology project, this same win-win model applies.

The project builds upon a program that our partner NGO, Sudeesa, has successfully run for more than 20 years, providing skills training and microloans to economically disadvantaged women. With the additional funds provided by Seaecology, this program is being expanded nationwide, and these services will be offered in 1,500 communities around the island nation.

Since the launch of the project, we've been able to increase the size of the microloans offered from \$45 to \$80 each. While this amount may seem small by Western standards, it can be life-changing in Sri

## Some beneficiaries of our project



**Jospin Kristina Kumari** lives in Samidigama Village, in the Puttlam District of Sri Lanka. She was living in poverty with four children, a sick husband, and no regular source of income. She joined Sudeesa and received training on running a bakery. Jospin was able to get a small business loan to set up a bakery of her own and now employs three other members of the community. In the future, she hopes to expand her bakery's product line. She is a member of her village organization that protects local mangrove forests.



**Ivon Sama Perera**, 55, was born in a fishing family in Bathalangunduwa, an area affected by the war, and had to flee to Wannimundalama with her husband, leaving their fishing gear behind. This meant losing their income from fishing; her husband also fell ill and was unable to work, and Sama took on the responsibility of supporting the family. She started production of snack foods with a 10,000-rupee microloan after receiving training from the Seaecology Sudeesa Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project.



**Thavanesan Rageshwary**, 54, ran a small retail shop at Vidathaltheevu in Mannar district before joining the Seaecology-Sudeesa Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Program. After attending a three-day training, she obtained a 10,000-rupee (about US \$70) microloan and expanded her business, adding food items. She now earns an additional 5,000 rupees per month and intends to expand her business again using her new management skills.



**Jeewanthi Mallawarachchi**, 32, married into a fishing family. After receiving training she developed her skills to dry and process fish in a more hygienic way. There is a high demand for her dried fish, and she is processing it more efficiently after receiving the training, she says. She used a microloan provided from the Seaecology Sudeesa Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation program to improve her business.

Lanka. With a small cash infusion, thousands of coastal Sri Lankan women, many of whom had turned to harvesting

mangroves for firewood in times of desperation, can open a small business or expand an existing one.

Also funded by the project is the Seaecology-Sudeesa Mangrove Museum in Pambala, at Sudeesa's



# of the Sri Lankan people

## The Seacology-Sudeesa Mangrove Museum

A major component of the project is the world's first mangrove museum, located in Pambala, adjacent to Sudeesa's headquarters. The recently opened facility is a state-of-the-art educational facility that introduces guests to the myriad ecological and economic benefits of healthy mangrove forests. Sudeesa anticipates more than 20,000 annual visitors, mostly schoolchildren.



A group of Sri Lankan youths tours the museum.



With members of Seacology and Sudeesa in attendance, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena cuts the ribbon at the official opening of the museum on July 26, 2016, World Mangrove Day.



The facility is integrated into the area's natural mangrove forest, which can be viewed through its large windows.

headquarters. The first-of-its-kind facility, which opened in July 2016, serves to educate

tourists and locals alike about Sri Lanka's mangrove forests, and the ecological and

economic importance of maintaining those habitats. The museum is already a popular

destination for student field trips, and Sudeesa anticipates over 20,000 visitors a year.





“Sri Lanka is showing the world that it is possible to conserve mangrove forests whilst also improving the lives of local people, restoring wildlife habitats, and helping to ameliorate climate change. This inspirational project is an excellent example of what can be achieved for mangrove forest protection. We hope that other countries with mangrove forests will follow Sri Lanka’s lead and replicate the success of this model.”

— *Dhammika Wijayasinghe, Secretary General, Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO*

“More than half the world’s mangroves have been lost over the last century but all of those surviving in Sri Lanka, one of their most important havens, are now to be protected in an unprecedented operation. The organiser of the project, the biggest of its kind, see the role of women as the key to its success.”

— *The Guardian*

“Mangroves are considered to be one of the world’s most at-risk habitats, with more than half being lost or destroyed in the past century. Conservationists hope other mangrove-rich nations will follow suit and adopt a similar protection model.”

— *BBC Science*

“I wish to thank Sudeesa and Seacology for this much needed initiative; it is my hope that this would be the beginning of a long term effort to sustain the mangroves for greater conservation benefits.”

— *Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka*

“Our Asian neighbors can act as our role models in heralding bold moves for the protection of the mangroves. More than half of the world’s mangroves have been lost over the last century, but all of those surviving in Sri Lanka are now to be protected in a landmark project initiated in May 2015.”

— *Huffington Post*

“Sri Lanka’s pioneering nationwide program to save its damaged mangrove forests is bearing fruit a year on.”

— *Reuters*

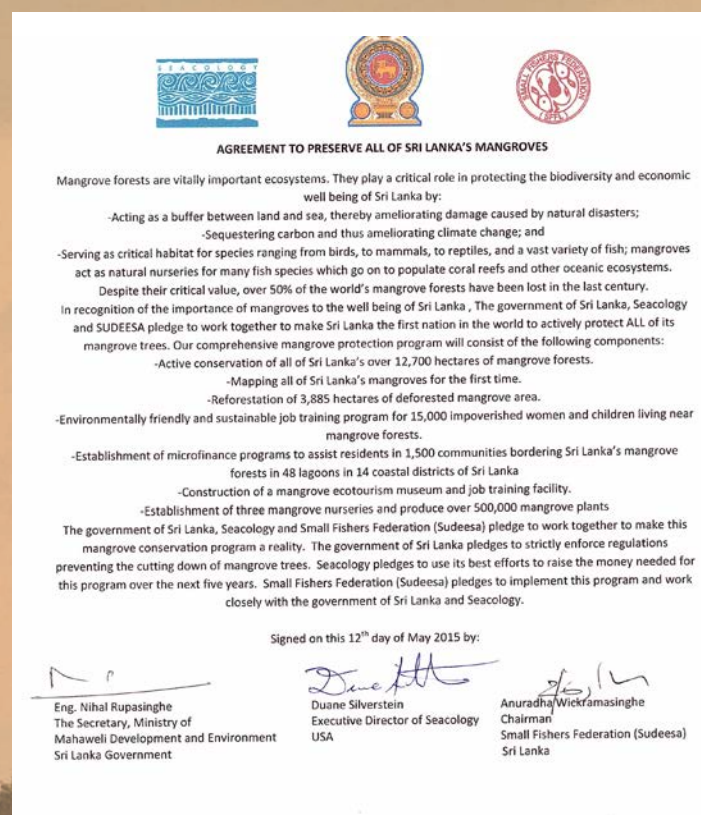


The Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project is projected to cost approximately \$4 million over five years. As of late 2016, Seacology has raised the

core budget for the project and is continuing to raise funds to expand the budget for microloans and other project components.

### Project Budget Summary (in USD)

DESCRIPTION	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	TOTAL
Demarcation of mangrove forests	27,154	27,154	—	—	—	54,308
Setting up community cooperatives for mangrove conservation and job training	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	450,000
Microfinance loan funds	136,950	178,221	323,193	323,193	323,193	1,284,750
Mangrove conservation and community education facility	172,000	262,028	—	—	—	434,028
Mangrove nurseries	240,018	170,217	25,220	7,100	7,100	449,655
Project staff	172,650	177,005	181,490	186,109	190,867	908,121
Travel	44,680	44,680	44,680	44,680	44,680	223,400
Public education	37,500	37,500	25,000	25,000	25,000	150,000
Office supplies and legal expenses	52,305	13,700	13,700	13,700	13,700	107,105
<b>Total</b>	<b>973,257</b>	<b>1,000,505</b>	<b>703,283</b>	<b>689,782</b>	<b>694,540</b>	<b>4,061,367</b>



Above, the three-way agreement between Seacology, Sudeesa, and the Sri Lankan government; top left, Sudeesa Chairman Anuradha Wickramasinghe meets with women who have received Sudeesa microloans; bottom left, women tend to one of the mangrove nurseries established by the project.



## The Sri Lanka Mangrove Conservation Project



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 270 projects in 57 countries and has protected more than a million acres of some of the world's most vulnerable ecosystems.

[seacology.org/srilankamangroves](http://seacology.org/srilankamangroves) | [mangroves@seacology.org](mailto:mangroves@seacology.org) | (510) 559-3505

For more information, please contact Development Director Aaron Rashba, [aaron@seacology.org](mailto:aaron@seacology.org)



The Small Fishers Federation was set up in 1992 as a development network of small-scale fishers and farmers' organizations in Sri Lanka. The short name of Small Fishers Federation is Sudeesa, with a Sri Lankan meaning of "organization with a better vision."

The Federation is an approved charity and nonprofit making, non-governmental organization, incorporated under government regulations for the monitoring of receipts and disbursement of funds by NGOs. As an umbrella organization, the Federation conducts advocacy, economical, social, and educational and Environmental programs to strengthen and empower the small scale fishing and farming communities in self-reliance.

[sudeesa.org](http://sudeesa.org) | [smallfishersfederation@gmail.com](mailto:smallfishersfederation@gmail.com) | 0094 32 2248707