

REBUILDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE WITH TREES PEOPLE WANT (REGRIN PROJECT) IN ACEH AND NIAS

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The western coast of Aceh was the worst hit among all areas affected by the tsunami of 26 December 2004. Economic activity in the region centres on the coast, and the damage caused to markets and transport infrastructure has also had a major impact on people inland. Through the ReGrIn project (funding mostly from EU Asia Pro Eco-IIB program), ICRAF and its partners are promoting economically valuable “trees people want” in the coastal landscape in tsunami and earthquake damaged areas of West Aceh and North Nias. These productive trees help to increase the resilience of local communities to natural disasters and expedite livelihood recovery and economic development.

Over the last three years, numerous activities have been conducted that include:

- Assessment of damage, opportunities for long term improvement of tree crop production and trade; tree diversity surveys, land access and farmer institutions
- Tsunami damage on soils and water sources; site suitability for perennial and annual crops
- Assessment of the role of tree crops in the physical mitigation and socio-economic recovery of Tsunami affected coastal and inland communities
- Economic and ecological assessments; land use modeling, ecological simulation and scenarios; farmers’ land use decisions
- Supporting participatory land use planning to promote planting “trees people want”
- Strengthening local institutions to undertake land use assessment, planning and implementation

Local people were involved throughout the project, from damage assessment through to plan development and implementation. They were supported by local capacity building institutions and non-government organizations (NGOs). ICRAF and partners provided technical assistance to farmers, local government and other institutions to improve land use planning and ensure there is integration between the coastal and upland areas. In its final few months the project is focusing on capacity enhancing for and application of participatory methods for spatially explicit land-use planning in West Aceh. The project is currently working closely with the land use planning agency BAPPEDA and other government agencies (forestry, plantation, agriculture and extension services).

The ReGrIn project took an innovative approach; focusing on building the social capital needed for effective coastal zone management rather than meeting physical targets. There is potential for this approach to be replicated in other affected areas. It is hoped results and lessons from the ReGrIn project, including the role of tree crops in disaster mitigation and socio-economic recovery, and the impacts of emergency response efforts on the tree crop sector will be valuable in unfortunate events of natural disasters in future.