

Mangroves for the Future (MFF) is a unique partner-led initiative to promote investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development



## Building resilience in coastal communities

MFF works to protect and restore the health of Asia's coastal ecosystems. The goal is to strengthen the resilience of ecosystem-dependent coastal communities by promoting "nature-based solutions" which recognise that well-managed, healthy and diverse ecosystems can contribute significantly to human resilience and well-being.

MFF has adopted mangroves as its flagship ecosystem in recognition of the important role that mangrove forests play in reducing the impact of coastal disasters. But the initiative embraces all coastal and marine ecosystems, including coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, wetlands, sandy beaches and seagrass beds.

From its beginnings as an initiative to assist the six countries most affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, MFF has openly welcomed other countries requesting membership, and now operates in 11 countries around the region.

## Coastal ecosystems at risk

Mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass meadows and marshes provide food and livelihoods to around two billion people in Asia. They also protect people living near the coast from the worst storms and tidal waves, reducing the risk of disasters and building resilience to climate change impacts.

Yet these same habitats are also the most in need of protection. Unsustainable use of coastal resources, poor fisheries management, population growth and increasing coastal development are exerting unprecedented pressure on Asia's coastlines. Over the last 40 years, more than 40% of coral reefs and mangroves have been lost in Asia Pacific alone.

When ecosystems degrade, this further exacerbates the vulnerability of the poor, many of whom are highly dependent on environmental services for their lives and livelihoods. In South and Southeast Asia, large and mostly poor human populations are often concentrated in coastal areas which are also at high risk from climate change impacts such as sea-level rise and more frequent and severe storms.



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## THE MFF APPROACH



MFF's core principles are that all its initiatives must be policy-relevant, people-focused, partnership-based and investment-oriented. The initiative works to influence policy and practice for integrated coastal ecosystem management by providing a platform for regional cooperation with the aim to generate and share knowledge, empower communities, strengthen national governance and engage the private sector.

### Applying knowledge

MFF works to bridge the gaps in existing knowledge around integrated coastal management by using grant projects to generate examples of sustainable management of coastal ecosystems. Case studies are developed and shared with the goal of replicating successful management models and influencing local, national and regional policy.

Project sites provide significant opportunities for generating and applying knowledge, and the regional nature of the MFF initiative allows for country to country learning, including exchange trips to facilitate

sharing of knowledge between countries and communities and regional scientific symposia and workshops to address shared regional coastal management interests.

MFF also supports intensive Integrated Coastal Management courses to train coastal management practitioners from MFF member countries.

### Empowering communities

MFF invests directly in coastal resilience through on-the-ground projects with the goal of empowering communities to play a role in managing the ecosystems and resources they depend on for their livelihoods. MFF's Resilience Analysis Protocol (RAP) is used to help communities assess their resilience challenges and identify a vision and key interventions that will support a more sustainable future. A strategic consideration of the MFF program is gender equality, which aims to provide socio-economic and political empowerment to communities by creating equitable and sustainable human development for all.

### HOW MFF WORKS

At a regional level, MFF is managed by a Regional Steering Committee. This multi-stakeholder body is co-chaired by IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with representatives from MFF's member country governments and institutional partners. The mandate for overseeing MFF's in-country activities lies with a National Coordinating Body in each member country which works alongside existing national frameworks for managing coastal areas. The MFF Secretariat is based in Bangkok, Thailand, and works closely with the RSC, National Coordinating Bodies and the country offices of IUCN and UNDP.

The MFF Small, Medium and Regional Grants are the primary mechanisms through which MFF delivers on the ground results for the well being of ecosystem-dependent coastal communities. Small Grants are meant to support local NGOs in their work with communities to achieve direct environmental and livelihood benefits. There is a specific small grant facility for engaging the private sector in efforts to support sustainable coastal zone development. Medium Grants are intended to build on and expand successful small grant projects, and Regional Grants address large scale coastal zone management issues involving two or more countries.

### Enhancing coastal governance

At the heart of the MFF initiative is a commitment to enhance the governance mechanisms which underpin sustainable coastal development. This commitment





MFF currently operates in 11 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. The initiative spans over 75,000 km of coastline – a range which includes some of the world's richest and most threatened coral and mangrove ecosystems, and some of its most vulnerable coastal communities.

starts with MFF's own unique governance structure which allows for true ownership of the initiative at regional, national and community levels.

In each country a National Coordinating Body comprised of representatives from government, civil society and the private sector determines their own priorities for coastal investment which complement the MFF objectives, and also manages the implementation of the small grants.

By bringing together all sectors in one national platform, MFF has made a significant contribution to overcoming traditional “siloed” approaches and is developing a common understanding of coastal issues and the nature-based solutions which will address them.

At the community level, the principles of community ownership and co-management are key criteria for determining the awarding of small grants. The objective is to provide support to small community-based organisations and to strengthen their ability to engage in decision-making processes which affect their coastal resources, thereby helping them to determine their own sustainable futures.

## Engaging the private sector

The private sector is an important stakeholder in many of the areas where MFF operates. MFF works to actively harness the resources, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector so they can take part in protecting coastal ecosystems. This may involve helping key industries to assess and mitigate their impacts on coastal ecosystems and communities thereby influencing their supply chains, supporting their connections to local communities and leveraging opportunities for communities to develop small-scale, sustainable enterprises which diversify livelihood opportunities and contribute to household and community resilience.

## PROJECTS FOR PEOPLE: Building resilience at local, national and regional levels



Since 2006, MFF has supported more than 250 projects, many of them with small community organisations which have worked to restore coastal ecosystems and build community resilience. Through these projects, local community organisations gain invaluable knowledge, contribute information to local and national authorities and improve their capacities for coastal management. Projects are developed with the goal of replication and scaling up so that best practice can be applied from local and national levels to a regional context.

## STORIES FROM THE FIELD



### Building community resilience

Devastated by recurring cyclones and poor management of natural resources, Shyamnagar and Sarankhola sub-districts, located near the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans in Bangladesh, are home to 400,000 forest-dependent people. MFF's participatory resilience analysis process engaged communities in thinking through what the strategies might be for improving their lives in the future. They identified saltwater intrusion, intensive shrimp farming and lack of community access to shared resources as some of the biggest issues.

Based on the results of this analysis, MFF has supported a number of inter-connected projects in this area, including the re-excavation of canals and ponds and the introduction of integrated fish-prawn-rice farming and homestead vegetable cultivation techniques. The results: hundreds of people now have access to clean drinking water; irrigation in the dry season has improved the livelihoods of more than 100 farmers; and new aquaculture and agriculture techniques have provided new sources of nutrition and additional income. Perhaps most important is that the communities have been empowered by their success and are gradually finding ways to engage in local governance processes and re-establish their rights to use common resources.

### Enhancing knowledge sharing

In Pakistan, a regional project that addresses management of coastal erosion spurred the development of the country's first National Assessment Report on Coastal Erosion. The study drew the attention of various stakeholders and formed the basis for a coastal management plan for identified erosion hotspots which will involve a whole range of institutional, policy and ground level actions to address coastal erosion issues in Pakistan. The Pakistan Navy is even integrating the recommendations of the report into the draft National Maritime Policy.

### Harnessing the power of community enterprise

Viet Nam's Mekong Delta region is one of the most productive in Asia, contributing half the country's fisheries output. But in the last 20 years, intensive shrimp production has drastically changed the landscape and destroyed most of the Delta's mangroves, leading to increased coastal erosion and vulnerability to sea level rise. The intensive nature of the farming can lead to disaster, with entire shrimp harvests being wiped out in just a few days from disease. A number of MFF-supported projects in the area are now exploring alternative approaches.

Working with major shrimp exporters, MFF has been able to secure a price premium on shrimp produced by farmers who ensure that at least 40% of their farm is covered with mangroves. This style of farming raises shrimp in their natural habitat. The cost of inputs is lower and the shrimp are less prone to disease. The initial results are very promising – by harnessing the power of community enterprise and big business, mangrove-shrimp farming looks set to raise incomes and to decrease the vulnerability of the people of the Viet Nam Delta.

### Promoting sustainable business

In many parts of Asia, the tourism industry is dependent on healthy coral reefs to attract tourists. At the same time, poorly managed snorkelling and dive operations can also damage these ecosystems. Green Fins is the only globally recognised set of standards which provides a comprehensive management approach to operators. As one of its regional projects, MFF has supported the implementation of the Green Fins system in the Maldives and Viet Nam – influencing not just individual operators but also government policy. As a result, the Environmental Protection Agency of Maldives has included Green Fins activities in their work plan and budget for 2015, and in Vietnam, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism has included the Green Fins Code of Conduct in national policy for dive tourism operations.

MFF is financed by Danida, Norad, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Thailand and Sida with substantial contributions from its core partners and from the private sector. By demonstrating the high economic and social returns from investing in coastal ecosystems, MFF partners expect the scope of the initiative to keep growing, especially through public and private sector partnerships. MFF will continue to seek co-financing opportunities that build on projects already started or planned, to maximise their positive outcomes.

MFF welcomes the involvement of anyone who shares its concern for coastal sustainability.

For more information, please visit: [www.mangrovesforthefuture.org](http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org).