

Community Stewardship Approach to protect & restore Mangrove Plantation on mudflats of Sundarbans

Community Stewardship approach has been initiated for the first time in Sundarbans under the Livelihood project for the protection and conservation of 4,403 hectares of plantation in the 59 Gram Panchayat under 14 blocks of Sundarbans in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Under this program, stewards from the community have been identified based on their leadership skills, participation in group meetings, engagement in different sustainable livelihood practices and most emphasis was given to their willingness & passion to protect and restore the mangrove plantation at community mud flats. Their role is not limited up to patrolling only even they do aware and motivate the entire community to join hand in protection of mangrove through prevention of grazing, fishing and felling for fuel wood.



Santosh Kumar Malakar, Steward of Jharkhali Gram Panchayat filling out the mangrove watch report.



Pranab Sardar, Steward of Deulbari Gram Panchayat filling out the mangrove watch report.



Surveillance Meeting with Mangal Das, Steward from Gopalgunj Gram Panchayat and Pranab Sardar, Steward from Deulbari Gram Panchayat.

These stewards through their dedication and devotion towards mangroves constantly patrol and protect the plantation in their respective areas facing numerous hardships and challenges such as encroachment of perpetrators who engage in illegal fishing, felling and grazing. With the help and cooperation of local Gram Panchayat and community, they have been able to protect the plantation. Santosh Kumar Malakar. Steward of Jharkhali Gram Panchayat quoted *“In spite of my livelihood dependencies on agriculture and pond fishery, I do visit to protect the plantation and natural sapling from fishing nets, felling and grazing”* when asked about the struggles of mangrove protection. The same issue was reiterated by Mangal Das and Pranab Sardar both Stewards of Gopalgunj and Deulbari Gram Panchayat. NEWS interventions and capacity building programs have made all these stewards capable to monitor the growth of their plantation site scientifically by regularly filling out the Mangrove Watch Report every month which includes information on percentage of survival of existing plantation, period of inundation, soil condition, canopy cover, frequency of pest attack, felling for fuel wood collection, grazing and illegal encroachment for fishing etc. The achievement and the highlight of the Community Stewardship

Approach lies in the participation and response within the community of Sundarbans and their passion and desire to protect their natural flora and fauna of Sundarbans. This initiative is an essential and important factor in ensuring the protection and sustenance of the diversity of Mangroves in Sundarbans with Community support and participation and it will lead to effective conservation of the Mangroves for future.