



From smoking fish to planting mangroves

Empowering communities to work in a sustainable way



Programme

Saving the Mangroves on Tristao

Goal

Saving and increasing the mangrove areas in Tristao Islands

Achievements

The three main strategies are: 1) planting new mangroves, 2) restoring abandoned rice paddies into mangroves, and 3) reducing the need for cutting mangroves. Up to now a total of 185 hectares have been planted during the program. Also a total of 346 hectares of abandoned rice paddies were restructured to allow for natural regeneration.

Partner

PRCM (Partenariat Régional pour la Conservation de la zone Côtière et Marine)

PRCM, together with the Guinean organizations Guinée Ecologie and PREM, wants to save and increase the mangrove areas in Tristao Islands, a marine protected area with IBA Birdlife Status in Guinea. This program is based on a community approach – it is only possible to sustainably increase the area of mangroves if there is full participation of the local communities which in turn is only possible if their socio-economic situation improves. In January we met Ahmed Senhoury, PRCM’s director, on the Tristao islands and spoke about the progress made in the program.

In 2021 a strong focus has been put on planting mangroves and assisted natural regeneration of mangroves. The season for these activities is only three months during the rains – July to September – which means that very good preparations for the logistics are needed. All the replanting activities are done by the communities, the programme partners only assist them with technical knowledge, choosing the best sights and materials needed.

A new way of looking at mangroves

During these three months the communities are busy too with planting their own staple food, rice. It is important to show the value of mangroves beyond wood for cooking, so the people are willing to make time for the planting of the mangroves. This has been and is the most difficult to accomplish; to change the mentality of the communities and empower them to work autonomously in a sustainable way in the future.

PRCM is proud that together they have managed to plant 123 hectares of mangroves in 2021 and to restructure another 25 hectares of abandoned rice paddies to allow for natural regeneration. "After a first difficult start-up year in 2019, we have realized great results with the planting of mangroves which is well visible in the fields", Ahmed Senhoury, PRCM's director, explains. "In another two years the first hectares of mangroves planted will start flowering and reproducing naturally. This will give an enormous boost to the sites that have been planted."



"We have realized great results with the planting of mangroves"

Ahmed Senhoury, Director PRCM

Replicating the ovens

Another reason for optimism is that within the communities people have started replicating the ovens constructed within the project for fish smoking. Ahmed: "The ovens we have built do economize on wood and on cooking time for the women. We have introduced this new technique as a pilot to show and teach the communities how to improve fish smoking and we have trained the local workers how to construct them. As such, the replication of the ovens is a great indicator to be optimistic for the future!

Enforcement for progress

The education level of the communities is quite low and they are not used to working in groups. Increasing their knowledge of the importance of the mangroves for their livelihoods, and introducing them to innovations for their economic activities that use less wood has shown great results and benefits. For progress, it is now essential to assist the communities to form groups and enforce the capacities within these groups. They are central in all the programme's activities as they are the ones doing the planting of mangroves, breaking the dikes to allow for water to flow through the abandoned rice fields, and are taking care of economic activities like fish smoking, apiculture, producing palm oil, and salt production.

