

Addressing Land Degradation in Nauro-Gor—Papua New Guinea

Project Description

Due to the loss of water resources and continual soil erosion, a coalition of local municipalities, religious organizations and the Provincial Forestry Office have mobilized reforestation and afforestation efforts in order to combat environmental degradation.

The objectives of the reforestation project are a combination of educational and hands-on exercises that include the rehabilitation of degraded lands in the Nauro-Gor area to achieve a no-free land threshold by 2014. Furthermore, the project seeks to educate youth in reforestation and conservation, to build nurseries and conduct relevant trainings, and to reviving the indigenous flora of the region.

Background

Papua New Guinea is ranked third behind both Congo and Brazil as having one of the largest remaining tracts of undisturbed tropical rainforest. The rate at which our forest is being depleted mostly by logging industry and unsustainable anthropogenic practices is a worrying trend. Even with good forestry laws and policies, monitoring of logging industry and enforcement of forest regulations remains a big challenge. Small initiatives being taken by resource owners across the country are helping to preserve remaining forest and protect our endangered native flora and fauna. As people begin to understand and acknowledge their forest resources and its biodiversity value, more is being done to manage remaining undisturbed land, rehabilitate degraded areas and establish protected territory. Over 70% of the land mass is under customary ownership. As a measure to offer more economic incentive to locals, the government developed a lease back business model called the Special Agricultural Business Lease (SABL) that would allow locals to free up their land and go into business. However, it has now been established that this system has been abused and subjected to fraudulent practices, leaving locals as impoverished as ever with degraded landscapes and no benefits from projects taking place on their land while the land continues to be tied up under the SABL. As a result, the government has put in place a moratorium on issuing of SABLs indefinitely while investigations continue and a full report is expected by the National government before remedial action is taken.



Implementing Organization: United Nauro-Gor Inc. (UNG)

Location: Papua New Guinea

Duration: July 2011 to September 2012

Number of Beneficiaries: 14,000+ people

SGP Contribution: 46,000 USD

In Cash Co financing: 8,000 USD

In Kind co financing: 10,000 USD

Implementation

The main objectives of the project were to rehabilitate degraded lands in Nauro-Gor and achieve a no-free land threshold by 2014; as well as to educate the younger generation and engage them in reforestation and conservation programs. The project aims to build more nurseries and conduct relevant trainings to enhance increased tree production and conservation initiatives in Nauro-Gor and surrounding areas, given special attention to reviving indigenous (natives) trees that have long been extinct in the area.

One of the objectives and key elements of the project was the establishment of an Environmental Taskforce that would coordinate the entire project. This was fundamental in creating partnerships and capitalizing on the strengths of each stakeholder. Thus, the project established strategic alliances with relevant stakeholders such as the PNG Research & Conservation Foundation Inc, the PNG Forest Research Institute, PNG National Forestry Service (Provincial branch) and the Catholic Church.

The main activities of the project include:

- Creation of 14 nursery sites to nurse (germinate) and grow various tree species (including native trees) and distribute them to all communities within Nauro-Gor and the surrounding localities



- Management of a gully and a cave along the Waghi river that is highly populated with bats preserved and managed as a tourist attraction;
- Development of an area to create a wildlife sanctuary for sightseeing and invigorating the increase in indigenous flora and fauna;
- Management of a watershed for canoeing by tourists and public alike on the famous Waghi river, as a way to generate income to preserve the ecosystem.

These initiatives were geared towards providing economic incentives for the local people (including the engagement of widows, orphans, drug addicts and other disadvantaged groups) to conserve the ecosystem they live in.



Environmental Impact

Conservation of the ecosystem and reduction tree cutting along river banks have improved water flows and reticulated production of water systems.

Traditional water sources for drinking now flow with improved speed and intensity. As a result of the project, 50,000 trees were planted in Nauro-Gor within two years and tree planting is still continuing. The trees population is beginning to swell and you can now see greener patches of marked vegetation on the landscape extending east to west, unlike before where the land was overly exposed and barren.

As part of implementation of the SGP project, the CBO incorporated coffee and spearheading the experimentation of agroforestry with controlled planting of casuarina (yar) with coffee.

This practice has called the attention of key partners, particularly the Provincial Forestry Office and the Coffee Industry Corporation (CIC) to further document the results or the activities. Hence, their support and interest in developing agroforestry is furthering the project sustainability.

Continual erosion of top soil lessened, especially among the people that planted casuarina trees in the new food gardens to prevent soil erosion as a land management practice.

In addition, the project and the active collaboration of the community united key tribes involved in longstanding tribal warfare, that had lasted for over 3 decades. Now the community is keen in conserving and preserving the ecosystem.

Slash and burn technique is strongly discouraged and unnecessary bush fire and tree cutting is prohibited. Those who are seen doing this are heavily penalized by the Directors of the Association. In fact, this has been one of our community laws explicitly declared in the Associations Constitution and forms a part of management of remaining and scattered trees.

Members of the Environmental Taskforce were trained by technical officers from the Provincial Forestry Office in nursery construction and maintenance, and teachers from all schools in Nauro-Gor (elementary, community & primary schools) were given a five days workshop on Conservation & Reforestation by PNG Research & Conservation Foundation Inc and awarded certificates.

These teachers have become agents of change by providing education and information on reforestation to the communities and their students at large. The lessons learned have been passed to students who will further disseminate the practices to their families.

Socio-Economic Impact

One of the economic activities included in the project was the sale of seedlings from their nurseries to nearby villages. Wealthy patrons in the area have supported the nurseries by ordering and maintaining select tree species, as well as by providing direct financial support to the project.

It is important to note that almost all participants of the reforestation project are volunteers with the exception of some members of the Environmental Taskforce who are paid a small stipend.

Secondary developments from the project include locally driven awareness campaigns of the pros and cons of harvest practices in the forest. Furthermore, the project was able to help the local church expand to construct space to house the forestry office.

The Nauro Reforestation – Educating to Conserve project is a non-revenue generating project. However, it has also assisted in paying school fees for pupils in the upper primary grades (7 & 8) and lower and higher secondary grades (9 – 12). Through the project, the community is implementing an internal employment school fee assistance scheme which seemed fruitful to the region's short and long term benefit.



Policy Impact

The continued partnership and collaboration with the Provincial Forestry Office is a conduit for immense policy change at the sub-national level. The Simbu Provincial Forestry Plan that is currently under review is deliberating some critical steps and strategies to effectively implement its plans and programs within the province.

A pragmatic and inclusive partnership with CBOs and Faith Based Organizations in communities remains an effective strategy for long term replication. Continuous success at various levels of our (UNG) engagement is reasonable for CBOs/ FBOs inclusion in the provincial plans/programs.

Gender mainstreaming

Women from Nauro-Gor were largely involved in the implementation of the project. They were involved in training and have been certified. In fact, prior to the project many women were actually planting trees seedlings.

Among women the project worked specially with widows and young single mothers. Approximately 300 women were directly involved in the project. Many have worked for their kids who would benefit from the School fee scheme. Others were doing volunteer work as instructed by the Environmental Taskforce members, according to the various programs.

Replication and Up-scaling

The success of UNG with their tree planting and forest conservation project caught the attention of the Provincial Forestry Office and members of UNG are currently working closely with the provincial government to review the provincial Forestry Plan. The provincial forestry office is also developing a project to establish a large tree nursery at a local high school (Rosary Secondary School).

The students will directly participate in the project as the school grounds has been identified as the site for planting. The provincial office will have direct oversight and management over the project.

With the support from partners such as UNDP and the Provincial Forestry Office, SGP and United Nauro-Gor are working on submitting a proposal to the Department of National Planning & Monitoring to up-scale the project in the whole province (Simbu).

UNG is currently awaiting a response from the National Government.

In addition, the community is working on a documentary of the project that will continue to raise awareness and promote the replication of these sustainable land management practices.

Lessons Learned

One of the key elements of the success of the project was the expertise and coordination of multiple stakeholders. A project similar in design is dependent on adapting the initial planning and budgeting allocated to the project. Furthermore, planning must be inclusive and the budget certain for workable partnerships to flourish. In dealing with informal networks and low-infrastructure areas, flexibility among partners to adjust to on-the-ground situations is key.



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