

Cooperative Mangrove Resource Management and Local Livelihood in Pichavaram, South India

Yusuke Ogino

Key Words: Mangrove, Local Livelihood, Cooperative Mangrove Management, Education, Livelihood Alternatives

1. Background

Mangrove is one of the typical coastal ecosystems in the tropical and subtropical areas, formed by the special association of the fauna and flora which lives in the intertidal zones where seawater and freshwater mixes and creates the brackish-water region. Although the mangrove resources are often strongly linked with people's livelihoods in the adjacent villages, global pressures combined with population growth caused the remarkable losses of the mangrove habitats in global-scale dimensions. As a consequence, there are strong calls for clarifying the impact factors for mangrove degradation and conserving the mangrove ecosystems that enables local people to improve their livelihood conditions.

2. Community Perception on Mangrove Management in Pichavaram

Located in the state of Tamil Nadu of India, Pichavaram is covered by the dense mangrove forests which cover more than 1,400 hectare. Many of the villages behind the mangroves were physically protected by the forest at the time of Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004. Accordingly, the local perceptions on the importance of the mangroves from not only the productive but also protective aspects have been greatly increased. However at the same time, mangrove resources have been rarely recognized as the community concern in many of the proximate villages so that local people's willingness to take initiative and involve themselves in the mangrove management system has been still very low. This is because they think the mangrove forests are absolutely the government property, thereby led to their perceptions that there is nothing more for the local communities to do and help managing the mangrove forests.

3. Findings and Conclusion

Due to a number of afforestation and mangrove management projects implemented by external organizations in Pichavaram, the covered area of mangrove forests has recovered almost up to its original state. However, considering that there are a number of future uncertainties and threats which could exert negative impacts on mangrove wetlands, the mangrove management is strongly expected to be conducted on the partnership between local communities and external organizations with appropriate sharing of power and responsibility. In pursuit of the cooperative mangrove management, satisfying the pressing development needs from the communities and their capacity building are the most urgent issues to be coped with. In order to meet their needs of the village development, potentiality of the mangrove resources such as eco-tourism and crab-fattening can be identified as the livelihood alternatives. In addition, educational programs on mangrove forests are recommended as the tool for raising public awareness. Lastly there is an urgent need in taking into account ability of facilitator to mobilize community-based group formation toward cooperative mangrove management.