



Method for flooded forest conservation at Tonlesap

Summary of the situation

DATe has learned from the beginning of our work in the Tonlesap region, that the greatest cause of the flooded forest destruction is due to local communities cutting trees for cooking fuelwood needs. This problem is caused by the daily needs of people for fuel, as other cooking fuel sources are not available or more expensive. We discovered it was not possible to stop local people from destroying the flooded forest without providing them with an alternative solution. One appropriate solution is to reduce the consumption of fuelwood by introducing improved cookstove (ICS). This solution has been taken up, accepted, and is considered a success story.

Increased improved cookstove dissemination is promising, but there are some other requirements that should also be undertaken at Chhnok Tru itself and other areas of Tonlesap.

Need to replant and protect the natural seedlings of flooded forest

Why protect natural seedlings?

Every year there are millions of seedlings of flooded forest, which are killed by water hyacinths and by people.

Water hyacinth is an introduced freshwater aquatic plant, which lives in lakes, ponds, and rivers. Very large areas of hyacinth plants are present at Tonlesap Lake. Naturally water hyacinth produce large numbers of seeds during the raining season (July-September), then these spread out everywhere in the lake carried by the flooded water. They live as floating plants on the water surface. When the water level drops, then they go down and accumulate on the bottom settling directly on top of the natural seedlings of flooded forest. Some of the flooded forest seedlings will be killed by water hyacinth smothering them. Even more regrettable is when the water hyacinth dies and dries out local people set fire to it and burn it to improve hunting conditions. Unfortunately, billions of seedlings are killed this way every year.



Photo of Water Hyacinth



In the past, the impact of water hyacinth was not a big problem, because the water hyacinth were much fewer, and they didn't kill the small trees as there were still lots of larger flooded forest trees. Usually, the large trees are very effective in catching and stopping the water hyacinth during the high water level preventing most of them from settling down on to the ground. The water hyacinths get caught by the large trees and would be killed after several months, before they would fall to the ground or into the water.

Why replanting?

Many hectares of flooded forest have been destroyed, and now when the land floods there is no flooded forest remaining in some areas of Tonlesap.



An area where the flooded forest was destroyed

SOLUTION

DATE is trying to work with local communities to solve the above problem using the following method:

- A. Produce flooded forest seedlings in a nursery
- B. Move the natural seedlings to nursery and replant them in areas where there is destroyed flooded forest.
- C. Try removing water hyacinths plants that are covering the natural flooded forest seedlings