

Green Canopy Yayawatta (GCY) and Green Canopy Vitichukalai (GCV)

When building new villages for tsunami victims surrounding land is often stripped bare. New settlements have no green cover or vegetation and are hot and dusty. This unwelcoming environment is not only an aesthetic and health issue, but also leaves the area open to erosion, makes it hard for families to establish home-based income activities and means vital habitat for native plant and animal species is lost.

It is here our expertise in Analog Forestry, organic farming and participatory programme development has greatly benefitted these communities. Through the set-up and support of CBOs in each village we have worked to:

- Restore surrounding vegetation and greenbelt areas
- Build community capacity in sustainable agriculture, organic farming, horticulture, bioremediation and ecological restoration
- Help establish village cooperation in fractured communities

GCV

The Green Canopy Project in Vitichukalai, on the east coast of Sri Lanka, was initiated in June 2007 to rehabilitate the environment which was badly affected through improper agricultural practices and the tsunami. We are working with the community to restore the ecosystem and educate farmers in sustainable agricultural and land use practices.

A plant production centre provides plants for the restoration and community recovery program, with 77 beneficiary families selected as agricultural producers. A few families of farmers who are cultivating on government land, within the village premises, also benefit from the training program.

Unfortunately the current political situation and escalation of hostilities in the north has affected communities throughout the country. GCV has faced many implementation difficulties, including transportation, communication, workshop attendance and limited working hours on par with the security situation. In response the timeline has been extended to enable us to successfully achieve project goals.

GCY

The tsunami resettlement village in Yayawatta got off to a difficult start. As in many post-tsunami villages, the connection to utilities was to be arranged by the local authorities. In the case of Yayawatta, connection to the electricity grid happened 12 months after the inauguration and there were a number of issues setting up the water supply. As a result the village was slow to be occupied and the community became fractured.

We started work in 2007 on a home-garden and greening programme. Our first challenge was to develop a cooperative spirit in these difficult circumstances. We started by supporting resident families by supplying them with well water from our nursery, until the water supply was established by the authorities. As the technical issues were resolved, families slowly moved into their houses and we were able to bring people together for organic farming training and a community planting programme.

Through the set up of an environmental committee, which encouraged villagers to work cooperatively, the community established 46 home-gardens and a medicinal garden bearing some 200 Ayurvedic plants. This garden will provide alternative to expensive Western medication by offering traditional treatments to families. The village is now working together to maintain the restored common areas and develop their home-gardens to improve vegetable production.



Budding workshop in Yayawatta