Manzanar Project: Eureka the Technique to Alleviate Poverty in the Barren Coast of Hergigo

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The Manzanar Project of the Ministry of fisheries has achieved its strategy of alleviating poverty in some families of the Village of Hergigo. This innovative method for a system of conserving and rehabilitating mangrove eco-systems is harmonious with the coastal desert to improve the living standard of the people by creating a sustainable food throughout the year.

The project developed different techniques to use the mangrove seeds and foliage as animal fodder by adding fish meal as a supplement. Animal herds were kept small and skinny because there were not enough plants for grazing during the dry season and often, animals were lost to starvation. Besides the people started to sell the excess for money to improve their standard of living, thus they are on track to become self-sustained by creating a sustainable economy and switched their nomadic life.

The people of Hergigo are very poor and most of the people in the village with herds are nomads, spending some months in a year away from their village to obtain food for their sheep and goats somewhere in the high land.

During the last six years, The Manzanar Project has been receiving global attention. In 2002, founder of the Project Dr. Gordon H. Sato was awarded the Rolex Award for Enterprise, the Blue Planet Prize in 2005, for his Manzanar Project. To date, the initiative has succeeded in planting more than 1 million mangrove trees in Hergigo and Massawa Causeway.

Dr. Sato who recently came from USA to see the Project in Eritrea is hoping Hergigo to be a model for the country and other coastal countries in the rest of the world. “It is my belief that the work I am accomplishing goes unrecognized by others just for celebrity but as an essential lesson that must be transformed to others.” He has already set a similar project in Mauritania, a North African country. “The Manzanar Project is not 100% succeeding in every aspect of its aims but is producing knowledge which is guiding poor people how to get rich. Once people use this knowledge we can say we won.”

Sato once the director of the W. Alton Jones Cell Science Center has strong initiative to alleviate poverty and hunger by low tech solutions. He is aiming to fix the injustice world by the Manzanar Project on a wide-scale, long-term basis.

“The world population is getting bigger and bigger every time and some time it will be over populated,” he says. “But poverty reduction leads to population control, because rich people try to have small number of family size. For example countries such as Japan and Italy their population are going down.”

For Sato, Eritrea is limitless. There's the over 1,200 km unlegislated intertidal mud flats of the coast to plant with mangrove and halophytes and feed animals to raise livestock, and to increase fish productivity of the coast thus to improve living standard of the people in the coast. “I wish every citizen in Eritrea will be rich in short time and can support their families better.” "I'm always optimistic. I never think I'm going to fail," he says. "What alternative is there?"

Each of the 30 families working with the Project already owns ten to fifteen sheep and goats. They have milk and meat to feed and sell. And above all they do not have to go far for their animal's fodder. The villagers are very good with their animals.

Indirect benefits derived from this project help the ecology of the area. 10t C02 fixed per year per hectare when trees reach full canopy, three years after planting. It also contributes to the enhancement of the environment by providing shelter for living ecosystem, spawning and nursery area for most living creatures and protects coastal erosion. Its litter production provides additional nutrient supply to the estuarine system. Fire wood production is another significant economic contribution to the local community.




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Eritrean Coast in Picture