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# Tardy progress in corp's urban afforestation project

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Kochi: The Kochi Corporation is struggling to find land for the urban afforestation project it launched together with the World Resources Institute (WRI-India).

The project to plant native species to increase green cover in urban areas which was kicked off in December last year has been implemented only on 0.5 acres in the city where around 1,000 saplings have been planted.

The WRI has written to around 50 institutions, including schools, colleges, and residents' associations, seeking their support to plant the saplings in their compounds but the project has been executed only on the premises of 12 of them.

“Most of the institutions in the city have paved tiles in their compounds offering little soil space. They cite this reason for not taking up the project. Paved tiles cause more rainwater run-offs as the water won't percolate to the ground. They have an adverse impact on groundwater recharging. Moreover, private firms and resident's associations fancy exotic plant species and are reluctant to take up the project. Exotic species reduces ground water recharge which is dangerous for our biodiversity,” said Achu R Sekharan, programme manager of climate and disaster management of WRI India, adding that the project's aim is to bring back the lost biodiversity in the area.

The largest urban afforestation move under the project so far was carried out in Cottolengo Brothers Care Home in Palluruthy, Chinmaya Vidyalaya in Vaduthala, the public crematorium in Fort Kochi and SRV Government High School.

The saplings for each site are selected after proper assessment of soil, and after taking into account factors such as the presence of overhead cables, and drainage under the guidance of the Kerala Forest Research Institute in Peechi. With the

opening of schools and colleges WRI-India is hoping that the project will attract more takers.