

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE

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The United States recognising that coastal areas are the focal point of a wide range of impacts from both territorial and marine activities enacted legislation in 1972 for the planning and management of coastal areas. The US Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 is about the earliest legislation developed with respect to Coastal Zone Management. In view of the considerable experience developed in coastal resources, policy and management over the years the US Coastal Zone Management Programme not only focusses on planning of coastal activities but on comprehensive Coastal Resource Management. But Coastal Zone Management is a comparatively new concept in the developing countries.

Coastal resources are of major economic significance in developing countries. The majority of LDCs are coastal states or islands, and their coastal ecosystems contain rich natural resources capable of supporting a variety of activities and serving diverse human needs for food, energy, shelter, and other commercial development. Development opportunities occur in many sectors: fisheries; energy development, including mangrove fuel, off-shore oil and gas, wind-generated and offshore thermal energy conversion; coastal agricultural development; mangrove forest management; tourism, transport facility, port and harbour development; urban development; industrial facility siting, and mining sector opportunities.

Economic planning and development in many countries have not included sufficient analysis of long term and coincidental consequences of action upon natural coastal resources and environment in general. One reason for this imbalance in decision making is the inadequacy of information about impacts on coastal resources and environment for technological change.

There is increasing pressure in the developing countries for rapid development of coastal resources by both government agencies and private economic interests, which regard coastal areas as under-utilized. Typically, coastal development has evolved in response to the pressures of individual sectoral interests that plan development independently and do not adequately consider the effects of one form of exploitation upon another development activity. Consequently many coastal resources are susceptible to negative impacts, and the potential is great for severely reducing the long-term productivity of the system. To ensure that renewable resources remain available to future generations, resource management should be directed towards sustained utilisation of natural resources, i.e. the level to which a resource should be harvested, extracted or utilised should not be more than that amount which can be either produced or renewed over the same period. The unmanaged growth of competing demands for coastal space produces over exploitation, conflicts among uses, and ultimately loss of the economic assets of the coastal resource base itself. Conversely, planned and co-ordinated development of coastal resources can provide the basis for accelerated and sustainable econo-

mic growth that will have major employment generation, production and equity benefits.

The need for an intergrated and management oriented program for the development of the coastal areas in Sri Lanka was recognised only in the early 1970s. Until recently, various coast protection works were stimulated by increasing incidence of sea erosion and consequent damage to property and solutions were engineering oriented; the responsibility for such coast protection works was fragmented within several governmental agencies.

A dramatic growth in coastal development was witnessed over the past few years - population pressures have led to rapid rates of coastal settlement, coastal industrial and tourist facilities have expanded leading to increased utilisation of both living and non-living coastal resources. These efforts of development have led to a decline in diversity, productivity and stability of the coastal environment, due to inadequate attention paid to the complexities and the vulnerability of the coastal system. The seasonal, monsoonal conditions prevalent in Sri Lanka further aggravated the problems.

Increase in incidence of coastal problems, resource use conflicts, and the increase in understanding of the intricate nature of the coastal environment led to the realisation that engineering solutions alone were not sufficient and that a more comprehensive approach of integrated coastal zone management was required.

Sri Lanka is one of the very few developing countries, which

has enacted legislation specifically directed towards Coastal Zone Management. The Coast Conservation Act No. 57 of 1981, which became operative in October 1983, contains the following provisions to ensure orderly and balanced utilisation of coastal resources and for the benefit of the public at large.

- a) Requires the conduct of a coastal zone survey, to enable better understanding of the coastal resources, amenities and utilisation patterns.
- b) Preparation of a Coastal Zone Management Plan to enable formulation of policy on the rational utilisation of the coastal zone and the management of development activities within the coastal zone.
- c) Interim permit procedure to enable regulation of development activities.
- d) Provision to call for Environmental Impact Assessment so that the environmental aspect of projects will be considered in addition to the economic aspects.
- e) Coast Conservation Advisory Council to facilitate inter-agency coordination required both during the preparation of the Coastal Zone Management Plan and the implementation of the Plan.

It should be noted however, that Sri Lanka at present does not have the expertise or an adequate information base on coastal resources to embark on a comprehensive management programme.

Thus the management programme during the initial period will focus more on regulation of activity employing a "problem-oriented" approach whilst at the same time developing the expertise and the information base required for a more comprehensive programme of resource management.