



Decades of ICZM experiences, Sri Lanka

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For many years coastal erosion continued to be a critical problem causing serious damage to infrastructure, the road and railway network, degradation and loss of coastal land and natural habitats and disrupting coastal livelihoods. (photo: Coastal Conservation Department - CCD, Sri Lanka)

Summary

Since the Sri Lanka Coast Conservation Act came to operation in 1983 and the first Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) was adopted in 1990, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) has been strongly embedded in Sri Lankan environmental management agenda. Over the years, the policy and management frameworks for ensuring sustainable development of the coastal areas have been improved, a more holistic and integrated approach to coast erosion management adopted and a significant proportion of the highly erosion prone areas stabilised. The regulatory framework for managing coastal development has been refined and awareness of coastal issues and need for action created at the political and policy levels. The ICZM programme has broadened to cover a wider range of issues such as water quality, coastal fisheries and aquaculture.

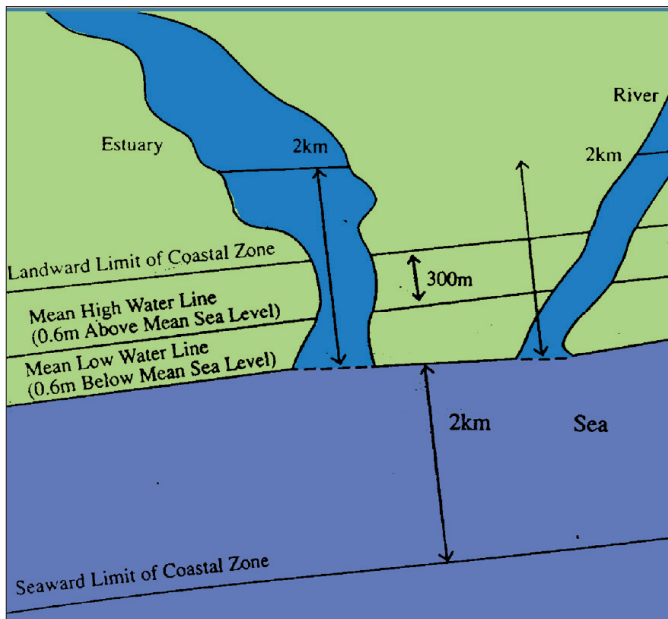
The programme has focussed attention on mitigating coastal erosion, reducing the impact of coastal development by regulating the location of new development and, to a lesser extent, managing coastal habitats. The Sri Lankan ICZM programme has also been the testing ground for emerging planning approaches such as Special Area Management Planning that provide for greater involvement of the stakeholders and the local level administration.

The low-lying parts of the coastal zone are vulnerable to impacts of climate change and coastal hazards. The Tsunami of December 2004 inundated large areas along the east, south and southwest coasts. Climate change will pose a series of extra challenges due to increasing storm surges and sea level rise. Intensified coastal monitoring and a long-term vision are prerequisites for timely adaptive responses.

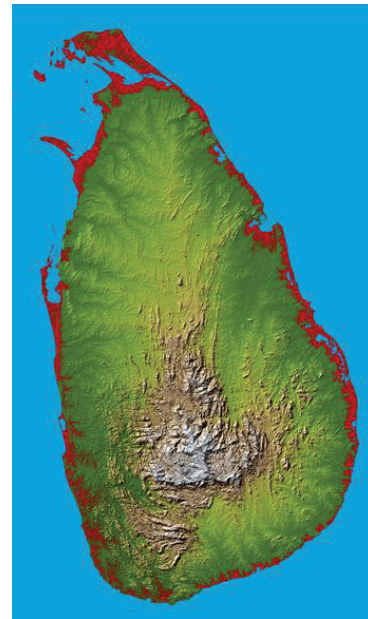
Continued cooperation at international, national and local levels is a key factor in the success of the Sri Lankan ICZM programme, now and in the future.

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*'Coastal Zone' as defined in the Coast Conservation Act - 1981.
(source: Coastal Zone Management Plan, 2004)*



*Sri Lanka: its topography and the coastal zone.
(photo: NASA/JPL/NGA)*



*The low lying coastal areas exhibit considerable variety of landscape types bays, lagoons, headlands, marshes with lush coastal vegetation, beaches and dunes. Sri Lanka is the most biologically diverse country in Asia per unit area , UNEP 2005.
(photo: Rekawa Lagoon, Sri Lanka: © Chandana Gunasena)*



*Coastal zones are attractive for tourists, providing at present about 1% of Sri Lanka GDP.
(photo: Tjark van Heuvel)*