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# CONCEPT PAPER ON SPECIAL AREA MANAGEMENT FOR SRI LANKAN COASTS

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SPECIAL AREA MANAGEMENT  
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## **1. BACKGROUND**

The framework for management of the Coastal Zone of Sri Lanka is provided in the Coastal Zone Management Plan prepared by the Coast Conservation Department in terms of the Coast Conservation Act No. 57 of 1981, its amendments and regulations promulgated under its provisions, and adopted by the Government of Sri Lanka in 1990.

The Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) addresses a set of specified coastal problems and issues at a national level and provides policy guidelines for mitigating these problems. The primary tool prescribed in the CZMP for implementing these policies is a regulatory system based on the permit procedure mandated by the Coast Conservation Act and regulations gazetted under its provisions. Implementation experience reveals the need for a proactive approach and the need to mobilise community support for coastal resource management initiatives to be successful. The CZMP represents only the first stage in developing a management program for Sri Lanka's coastal areas. The Plan is to be revised and updated on a continuous basis. It states that "subsequent planning efforts will involve developing objectives and implementing actions for other coastal problems, area specific managements plans, refinement of existing management guidelines and suggested amendments to the Coast Conservation Act". The work on the revision of the CZMP has already commenced with the completion of "Coastal 2000 - A Resource Management Strategy for Sri Lanka's Coastal Region", which has already received the endorsement of the Coast Conservation Advisory Council. This strategy document highlights the need for the CCD to transform itself from a primarily regulatory agency to a service oriented organisation. Locally based, geographically specific planning and implementation efforts are recommended as a means of achieving such a transformation. This concept paper has been prepared with a view to achieving inter-agency consensus on special area management methodologies to be adopted to achieve the objective of mobilising local community support for coastal resources management initiatives.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

Coastal resources management initiatives in Sri Lanka have not been able to achieve the desired results at the local and community levels even though such initiatives have been based on rational and well thought out policies. The main reason for the failure has been the inability to mobilise the support and commitment of the local communities for implementation. The support and commitment of communities and local leaders have not been forthcoming for the following reasons.

- (i) There has been inadequate participation by local communities in the planning decisions and implementation processes. Local communities therefore feel that the formulation and implementation are being done by outsiders who do not understand the site realities. They are therefore antagonistic or uninterested.

- (ii) The benefits of improved resource management are not immediately perceived or understood. Equally, the impact of resources management on current livelihoods based on unsustainable use practices are negative for them and cause those affected to react against them.
- (iii) The means to cushion economic dislocations caused by implementation have not been specified and put in place as a prelude to such implementation (e.g. alternative livelihoods, relocation, participation in program planning etc.) This creates social tensions which are articulated as political objections to implementation.
- (iv) The financial and social benefits of sustainable resource use practices have not been adequately demonstrated. Hence local communities do not perceive themselves as beneficiaries.
- (v) Implementation is by state officials who do not communicate well with local leaders, hence the program is viewed as interference by outsiders.

The sustainability and success of resource management initiatives will remain doubtful unless such initiatives are planned for and adopted and implemented by local communities. There must be acceptance that they are for the common good and hence in the local interest.

### **3. THE BASIS FOR SPECIAL AREA MANAGEMENT**

Special Area Management (SAM) Planning and techniques have emerged as a successful method of managing development in complex settings. The complexity may be due to the special ecology of the setting, its vulnerability to change, the social setting which provides potential for use conflicts, or overlapping jurisdictions. The SAM Planning process is based on the recognition that existing planning, legislation and institutional implementation mechanisms, are alone insufficient. It accepts the need to integrate the local community at the centre of the planning and implementation effort, thereby making them the custodian of the resources being managed.

The basic premise for the SAMP process is that it is possible to organise local communities to manage their natural resources and that they will continue to do so if they perceive that they derive tangible and perceivable benefits from better management. The planner, the planning agency or the organizational group play only a catalytic role in organising the local community. They can provide technical and financial support for the management effort which is formulated and implemented as a local community effort. Hence, the planning agency takes on the role of facilitator rather than that of a superior authority that imposes its will on the local community. Important aspects of such facilitation are technical inputs which provide a sound

scientific understanding of the nature, scope and potential of the resources when managed sustainably. Also the mediatory role is important where competing demands are balanced in a manner that ensures the sustainability of resource use.

The objective is to allow the local community to accept the role of custodian of the resource with a sense of ownership rather than to view the local community as a rapacious exploiter of a common heritage. The principle is that resources cannot be managed on a sustainable basis unless those who exploit them are committed to this goal and involved in the management process.

#### **4. THE PROCESS**

The purpose of special area management is to resolve competing demands on a resource by planning out optimal sustainable use. The process is to mediate amongst the competing users and to build a consensus on what use or uses can be harmonious and sustainable. It will incorporate the consensus achieved into a strategy that will lay out the steps for achieving such harmonious and sustainable use and put in place the institutional mechanisms for ensuring compliance, and to implement the strategy. This, in turn, requires a sound understanding of the social and political structure of the community, the special interest groups and stake holders, and an identification of unbiased local leaders who can play a stewardship role.

The need to adapt to local realities forecloses the possibility for the entire process to be blue-printed in advance. However, there are several steps that can be specified as being essential. These are "

- a) Agreement on need for SAM or a particular site;
  - identify participants (national or local)
- b) Compile Environmental Profile of area through
  - secondary information
  - rapid area assessment
  - designation of geographic extent
  - identification of key management issues
  - identification of key groups/individuals involved.
- c) Conduct planning - cum - training workshops in the area to
  - present environmental profile
  - raise awareness of issues/management possibilities
  - determine/refine management issues
  - formulate management objectives
  - initiate a task force at site level with outside representatives
  - develop understanding of resources and environment
  - develop draft management plan

d) Enter the community with full-time presence of professional facilitators (NGO) to :

- refine management plan
- organize work groups to perform planning duties
- assist implementation of planned projects
- evaluate results

At all stages of the process the following key principles must be kept in focus :

- SAM Planning is an open, participatory process;
- Consensus is the basic principle of SAMP;
- All decisions must be clear and well documented;
- The Task Force must be of manageable size and commitment of the members is essential;
- Representation by all key groups must be ensured;
- The process should be completed expeditiously. It is difficult to effectively sustain the effort and maintain interest if the process takes too long. The Time Schedule should be restricted to a maximum of 24 months.
- Tangible results need to be documented and presented within 24 months.

The most important aspect is that the leadership role must be given to the local community. The sponsoring agency representatives only act as catalysts in mobilising the services of the local leadership and in providing technical inputs that are not locally available. The effort must be geared to inculcating a sense of leadership amongst the community and in providing them with an understanding of the principles of natural resource management and the need to ensure that development is environmentally acceptable and sustainable. It is a process whereby the community is sensitized and made responsible for managing local environmental resources.

## 5. CONCLUSION

SAMP is not an easy process. By its very nature it is time consuming and stressful. It requires extensive individual task force member commitment. Sensitivity and adaptability to emerging concerns of those affected during the SAMP process will in most cases determine how successful the effort will be. In spite of the difficulties it remains the best way to achieve sustainable resource use by mobilising the ultimate beneficiaries, the local people, in the implementation of planning initiatives.

## Special Area Management (SAM) Framework

POLICY STEPS	OUTPUTS	PROCESS METHODS
Issue identification and analysis	List of issues and causes	Observation, local workshops, interviews, public, training and education.
	Environmental profile on immediate and surrounding area of management	Secondary information, key informants, rapid area assessment, local government and non-governmental participation
	Boundaries for area of work, planning needs and research identified.	Planner analysis and inter-agency discussion
Goals and objectives for resources management	Clearly stated objectives and indicators of completion	Techniques to gain consensus
Policy selection for resources management	Appropriate policies and their implications	Legal advice and planner analysis
Management strategies and actions	Draft management plan	Workshops and inter-agency coordination, local participation
Implementation	Field projects for - education, training, research, people organization, public works, resources management	Public involvement, political support, professional assistance as needed.
	Policy acceptance	
Evaluation	Monitoring of key indicators and trends, information to revise management plan	Participatory monitoring with professional guidance.
Readjustments to plan and implementation	Revised plan and procedures	Planners and local participants

## **SUMMARY**

### **Characteristics of Special Areas :**

**Failure of existing management authorities to achieve management goals**

**Failure of top-down approaches and current regulatory regimes to manage area optimally.**

**Lack of appropriate management framework and management fragmentation**

**Presence of user conflicts (conservation vs development)**

**Presence of tension caused by inadequacy of opportunities for social upliftment.**

**Presence of management conflicts - local vs provincial vs national**

**Spatial area historically defined by users and/or agencies**

**Naturally valuable area, important for human use**

**Area of high sensitivity to impacts of inappropriate resource use practises.**

## **Why use a SAMP?**

**Enables amicable solution of use conflicts**

**Provides a greater predictability and assurance of decisions for conservation and development interests.**

**Focuses and streamlines management strategies**

**Focuses management into a single setting or on a single area**

**Provides ability to manage development in complex ecological and administrative settings**

**Increases regional coordination and guides development along sustainable lines.**

## **Negative Features of SAMPs**

**A complicated process (information gathering, decision making, consensus building etc.)**

**Requires a substantial commitment by members of the "Task Force" or agencies concerned (meetings once a month for two years)**

**Can be stressful and threatening to participants**

**Must be completed in a timely manner (two years or less)**

**Individual commitments may vary and change with time (voluntary or involuntary)**

**Requires support at all levels of government (local, provincial, national)**

**Agencies must keep commitments made for the SAMP (needs binding implementation arrangements)**

## **Common Mistakes in SAM Planning**

Allowing the process to take too long

Drawing boundaries too small from a bio-political perspective

Establishing too large a task force

Omitting key group representatives

Selecting a consultant or lead agency that is not neutral (has a development or conservation bias)

Allowing consultants to dictate task force directions and techniques

Inadequate records of decisions made

Too much time before members receive information on meetings etc.

Too much time between meetings

Political intimidation of task force members

Changing group or agency representatives

Changing agency policy towards the SAMP

Inadequate meeting facilities

Inadequate staff/consultant services

Inappropriate representatives of agencies or groups or jurisdictions

Inadequate commitment to SAMP

Implementation procedures left to end of process.