



## **Post-tsunami opportunity for improved coastal area management**

Workshop on coastal area planning and management in Asian tsunami affected countries. 27-29 September 2006, Bangkok, Thailand

The Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004 drew national and international attention to the condition of coastal zones in countries across the region. Prior to the tsunami, the need for relief from poverty and for economic growth had driven extensive land use changes in coastal areas, much of which was unplanned. This left coastlines and coastal populations in a highly vulnerable state – both physically and economically. The 20 months of rehabilitation and reconstruction that followed the tsunami have, in some cases, perpetuated this pattern – coordination and planning were made difficult by the many actors involved and the urgent need to restore the livelihoods of tsunami victims as quickly as possible.

FAO's own experience during the rehabilitation period showed that greater cross-sectoral integration and coordination could provide for more effective rehabilitation with longer lasting benefits. Furthermore, livelihoods in rural areas are multi-sectoral in nature and interventions by individual sectors alone can leave communities in a state of imbalance.

In response to the situation, the agriculture, fisheries and forestry groups of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific joined together to organise a three-day workshop in Bangkok on "Coastal area planning and management in Asian tsunami affected countries" from 27-29 September. The aims of the meeting were to increase understanding of coastal area planning and management and issues related to sectoral integration, and to identify actions to improve coastal area land use planning and management in the Asian tsunami-affected countries.

The workshop was supported by the Government of Finland, SIDA and OCHA. Ninety four representatives of governments, regional and international organizations and NGOs participated. The workshop centred on presentations provided by resource persons from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The presentations highlighted pre- and post-tsunami trends and issues in coastal areas; conflicts and gaps in coastal area policies and regulations; and institutional issues and decision-making processes for coastal area management. Thematic papers were also presented on land tenure and use change in relation to poverty and the environment, integrated coastal zone planning and integrated land management in Asian tsunami affected countries

Eleven presentations covering experience and activities in coastal area planning and management were made on behalf of IUCN, Green Coast/WWF Aceh, ICRAF, the Sustainable Development Foundation, VSO-Maldives, UNEP, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, Thailand, the Forestry Agency of Japan, the National University of Singapore and FAO-Banda Aceh.

Participants pointed out that in many places planning and coordination had been weak after the tsunami. They concluded that although immediate needs during the emergency phase delayed the initiation of integrated planning, now - during the transition from relief to long-term rehabilitation - and hereafter, the adoption of a well-coordinated and integrated approach to coastal area management would best serve the long-term development of the tsunami-affected areas.

The workshop generated recommendations to improve coastal area planning and management during this important period. Prominent themes included:

- Integrating disaster management with coastal planning and management by developing and linking early warning systems and promoting initiatives to support disaster management e.g. establishment/rehabilitation of buffer zones or greenbelt;
- Establishing and strengthening regional and national level coordination mechanisms and frameworks in support of coastal planning and management e.g. ASEAN and SAARC, and by encouraging national initiatives and supporting national focal points;
- Improving coordination through development of an agreed framework to identify roles of regional/international organizations;
- Developing improved knowledge based systems to support coastal planning and management and gathering and sharing information beyond impact assessment for strategic planning and decision making during and following the rehabilitation phase;
- Supporting good governance to facilitate coastal planning and management, considering political commitment and legislative reform, including adoption of land/resource use rights and participation of key stakeholders including communities, NGOs and the private sector.
- Building capacity for coastal planning and management at all levels and particularly through strengthening communities and local-level institutions.

Several of these recommendations are centred on improving integration and coordination. These activities may take place on many levels: across local, provincial and central government, among economic sectors and between agricultural, fisheries and forestry production systems. While there are many benefits associated with integration and coordination, it is also recognised that moving in this direction can impose additional costs. There is, therefore, a need to strike a balance - a balance that provides rightful stakeholders with both short- and long-term benefits whilst also protecting coastal resources for future generations.

Pitching management in coastal areas at the right level therefore requires knowledge of these alternatives and identification of the appropriate degree of integration. It also requires the recognition that, in these dynamic coastal zones, decisions that provide short-term benefits may lead to higher costs in the future and therefore decision-making process involving a wide range of stakeholders is preferable. Although, integrated planning can yield many desirable outcomes the question is not simply how to make integrated plans but how to bring together divergent ideas and systems to produce equitable benefits for now and for the future. This is the challenge that lies before the region's countries as a new and very different century of natural resource management begins.

Outputs from workshop including the country papers and recommendations are available at the following address: [www.fao.org/forestry/site/35734/en](http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/35734/en).