



COASTAL 2000 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY -A Review

THE first generation coastal zone management programmes were mandated by the Coast Conservation Act of 1981, which provided the legal base and entrusted the Coast Conservation Department with primary responsibilities for policy formulation, planning, research, administration of the permit programme and the construction and maintenance of shoreline protection works. The last responsibility had of course been the primary concern of coast conservation authorities from early times. The 'Coastal 2000 Strategy' signifies a second generation coastal resource management programme with a broader vision. While recognizing the successes of the first generation plans under the direction of the CCD, the Coastal 2000 is based on the realization that, the scope of on-going coastal zone management activities could be expanded through an identification of long-term goals and made more holistic and multi-disciplinary.

The Coastal 2000 Report is both diagnostic and prescriptive. In its first volume it provides the rationale for a second generation coastal resource management strategy and outlines the present status of coastal management in Sri Lanka.

It analyses the demographic, economic and environmental context which sets the conditions for resources management. The present population of around 18 million is projected to reach the 25 million mark before the middle of next century creating unprecedented demands for food, fibre, energy, land and other natural resources. Even at present much of the human settlements and economic activity are concentrated in the coastal zone. Thus one-third of the population, two-third of urbanized lands, 90% of the industrial establishments and nearly 80% of the tourism related infrastructure is found in the coastal Pradeshiya Sabha Divisions. It is likely that, particularly with the end of civil disturbances,

these human activities will continue to aggregate along the coast. Therefore, coastal resources will come under increasing pressure causing greater competition and conflicts of use, while predicted global changes in sea level may add another dimension.

In its second part, the Coastal 2000 Report highlights the outstanding issues in coastal resource management with a view to identifying necessary strategies for their solution. They involve, among other things, issues such as the lack of adequate institutional arrangements, lack of clarity in the definition of coastal zone boundaries, environmental degradation caused by accelerated development activity, and the unrealized potential for economic alternatives.

The most interesting and perhaps the most innovative and important part of the Coastal 2000 document is that which deals with policies and strategies. Here the report identifies five major policy directions and discusses their implementation strategies. The identified policy directions are as follows:

- Policy I: Adopt a national as well as a regional and local approach;
- Policy II: Implement a research programme directed at better understanding of ecological processes and social issues of critical importance;
- Policy III: Launch a monitoring programme to

keep track of conditions and use of the coastal ecosystems; and the impacts of development projects;

Policy IV: Strengthen institutional and human capacity for more efficient management of coastal ecosystems;

Policy V: Enhance public awareness of the management strategies undertaken.

This is undoubtedly an impressive array of policy directions that are expected to address many of the predominant resource management issues in the coastal region. An underlying assumption behind all policies appears to be that, many of the actions to be implemented will have catalytic and multiplie effects. Thus the adoption of policy I would result in the decentralization of the management processes leading to focussing of planning and management efforts on geographically distinct sites. Thus the Special Area Management Plans (SAM) will address unique combinations of problems and opportunities of specific places deriving community support and participation.

The Policy I as outlined above is an undoubtedly rational and academically elegant approach. The translation of it into actual practice in the context of our socio-political realities and existing administrative structures may however prove to be a challenging task. The present provincial structure which was introduced recently under the 13th amendment to the Constitution



was an attempt at decentralization of political decision making, as distinct from administrative decentralization which had been attempted earlier. However, there are many uncertainties about the whole future of provincial governance. Even if it gets entrenched in the future, four out of the nine land-locked provinces inherited from the colonial past may not have much interest in coastal resource management. Out of the other provinces, northern and eastern provinces, if merged as proposed by some political parties, will have to manage around 60% of the total length of the coast line of the Island. In such a context even the location of the CCD may be more appropriate in Trincomalee than in Colombo! The ethnic and other socio-political and even strategic implications of a policy of decentralization as envisaged in the Coastal 2000 Strategy are hard to imagine.

Similarly, the Districts as administrative units are rapidly losing their former status. Unlike the Provinces they have little statutory standing except for the electoral purposes. The Government Agent system has already ceased to be operative from this year and their current status as District Secretaries is only an administrative arrangement which is hardly comparable with their role as former Government Agents. Therefore, any decentralization of coastal management functions at District level is beset with lack of proper executive authority. The only viable administrative unit for decentralization at present seems to be the Divisional Secretaries (former A.G.As) division which is coterminous with Pradeshiya Sabha areas and which is increasingly strengthened as a matter of Government policy. Therefore while accepting the rationality of Policy I of Coastal 2000 to proceed with coastal management programmes at national as well as sub-national levels, it is likely that the work at Divisional Secretaries level as well as under special area management (SAM) are likely to have a greater degree of success and sustainability than at provincial and district levels.

With regard to Policy II for implementing a research programme, a few areas of critical importance has been identified. These include shoreline stabilization, sustaining habitats, sustaining fisheries, promoting mariculture and protected area management. Many research issues related to these areas tend to surface often in seminars and symposia on coastal management. Although the potential for coastal research is vast and virtually untapped in Sri Lanka, the above identification certainly covers a wide spectrum. One area which should have received greater emphasis is related to social issues pertaining to land tenure,

relocation of people and the problems of locating alternative forms of employment. The Strategy also lacks a coordinating mechanism for research at the centre either at the CCD or in a chosen university or a research institute which can function as a lead agency in this respect. As it is now CCD's functions are primarily technical and regulatory than research for which it may need special arrangements. Similar comments may hold true for the monitoring programme which may ideally be combined with research.

Strengthening institutional and human capacity to increase the efficiency of coastal management is a vital policy in the Coastal 2000 Strategy with long-term benefits. This is often felt with the occasional changes in the management personnel. As generally assumed in the administrative service, the belief that no one is indispensable may not hold true in coastal management since it requires special skills and aptitudes. There is certainly a need to promote some professionalism in this field.

The fact that the CCD has achieved certain commendable success in many areas of its activity such as in technical and promotional fields in recent years cannot be refuted. These are functions that the CCD can continue to perform with competitive efficiency. When considering the great expectations of the Coastal 2000 Strategy however, one tends to harbour the doubt as to whether it can shoulder all coordinatory responsibilities that would be set upon it. As another Government Department it has its own limitations particularly where conflicting interests begin to push and pull and tend to rock the boat. A dynamic leadership may be able to pilot it through stormy waters with great courage and personal sacrifice, but then such persons are rather rare.

No Action Policy [NAP]

Coastal 2000 should also have considered the possibility of promoting no action in certain coastal areas. This is based on the following thoughts;

- * No Action can also be a rational option.
- * It may not be just worth to invest in the protection of some coastal areas (may be 75%)
- * Ecologically coast is the domain of waves; keep away from it or pay for it.
- * Beneficiaries of coastal protection are primarily the investors and local communities. Let them look after it with little intervention from the state, except in a supervisory role.
- * In some areas only, partial action is needed. No technical action but social action: relocation of people land use adjustment etc.