

Photo by Torben Berner, Pakistan



People and the Sea

Experiences and Partnerships in ICZM Development in South Asia

It is obvious from a short boat trip in the Korangi Creek Area, in Pakistan that the communities living and fishing in the Indus Delta are not doing very well. Having fished for generations or migrated to this area for better livelihood options, they are unfortunately, now faced with dramatic declines in fish stocks and reductions in the size of previously large and extensive stands of mangroves. At the global level, some of these changes may be attributed in part to habitat conversion, pollution and increasing population pressure. Whatever the reason, this rapidly changing context has already taken its toll in terms of an increasing number of poor people and a dramatic increase in health problems experienced here. The Korangi Creek, Sind Province has been selected as one of Pakistan's High Priority Areas in the coastal zone.

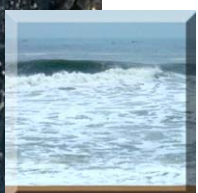
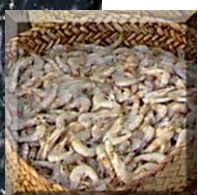
While the coastal seas of South Asia harbour examples of some of the richest and most diverse marine and coastal habitats and species in Asia, many of these valuable species are now endangered and threatened. These seas also provide an important resource for coastal communities, especially where a substantial proportion of the population is either vulnerable or living in poverty. In many instances these communities depend on these resources, not simply to make a living but for survival.

Increasing levels of resource exploitation have had the effect that coastal zones and watersheds in South Asia are increasingly being converted for agriculture and urban development, resulting in indirect pressures on coastal areas from elevated nutrient levels, sediment loads and changes in coastal configurations. In turn, these demographic and economic changes have increased demands on coastal resources and more people than ever are generating at least part of a livelihood from activities that directly affect, or are affected by, changes in the coastal environment. Extractive uses for food, income generation, medicines and building materials and non-extractive uses such as unplanned tourism developments continue to degrade coastal ecosystems in many locations. In addition resource-use and institutional and policy conflicts in the coastal area create conditions for environmental degradation and social inequality. In

such conditions, livelihoods become increasingly more vulnerable, as the poor frequently become marginalized from access to resources.



Photo by Snimer Sahni, ADB, India.



In recognition of the severity of the problems posed against the coastal zone in South Asia and the importance and need for immediate ameliorative action, the ADB, in partnership with IUCN - the World Conservation Union and the Governments of India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have initiated an ambitious effort to address these issues, through an 18 month Regional Technical Assistance project on Coastal and Marine Resources Management and Poverty Reduction in South Asia. The project, that commenced in October 2002 is a collaborative initiative between IUCN and the ADB, with IUCN being the implementing agency for the project. Given the regional implications of the work and the importance of effective pro-active Government coordination and action, the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme is a key partner to the project. In India, focus has been the Kerala State supported by the Centre for Earth Sciences Studies in Trivandrum.

Using Integrated Coastal Zone Management as a planning and development tool, the participating countries have made significant headway towards long-term coastal zone planning in their respective countries. Through a systematic categorization of issues and threats in the participating countries and the development of a compendium of High Priority Areas in their respective countries, ICZM Plans are being developed in selected sites with a specific reference to the sections of the coastline which have a concentration of poorer communities. The final outcome of national site specific activities which have included concise analysis of institutional and policy barriers and constraints to effective ICZM, study of the interrelationships between poverty and the environment (see Fig) will be a South Asian Regional Strategic Plan of action.

Improving information exchange has been key to the success of this project and the establishment of a project web-site and Mail list server (www.iczm-sa.org) has provided an important avenue for exchange of lessons learned and experiences, both amongst project partners and also more widely to ICZM Planners and Practitioners across the globe. This effort has been led by the Sustainable Development Network of Pakistan supported by the regional and national focal points of the project. Key themes, integral to the project such as poverty and the environment and sustainable fisheries are and will be regularly posted on a debate forum, which forms part of the web site in order to initiate discussion and share country experiences and opinions.

The engagement of national agencies and other key stakeholders throughout the process has been instrumental in gaining ownership and informing the development of the project. Regular meetings and updates have taken place through consultative regional and national workshops, site visits have been frequent and though the project is drawing to a close in terms of RETA deadlines, much momentum has been gained and commitments to build on the progress made thus far have been expressed.

It is hoped and expected that by addressing key sites of national importance, improved management can be promoted and demonstrated, lessons learned for replicability to neighboring areas disseminated. Hence, the activities should be viewed within a long-term perspective and commitment to a process extending beyond a preparatory phase, but commitment to



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implement recommendation of planning efforts. In this respect, formation of new partnerships with both local communities, national stakeholders and continuous government engagement are key elements in addressing the needs of the poor and the environment in these sensitive areas.

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