

The Biodiversity Conventions and the Indian Ocean Tsunami

Presentation at the Montecatini Side event.

What have you done for water today?

What are the issues?

Major **human impacts** included:

- ◆ massive loss of life,
- ◆ destruction of coastal settlements and infrastructure,
- ◆ loss of fishing boats,
- ◆ loss and degradation of agricultural lands and forests, salinisation and contamination of water sources

What are the issues?

Major **ecosystem impacts** included:

- ◆ Loss or degradation of mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds,
- ◆ Silting and degrading of coral reefs,
- ◆ Sedimentation of coastal waters, algal blooms,
- ◆ Major changes in intertidal flats and coastal lagoons.

Who responded?

International Organisational response:

- ◆ UN and NGO Humanitarian organisations
- ◆ Conservation IGO's and NGO's
- ◆ UN agencies
- ◆ Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Balancing Human needs and ecosystem restoration

- ◆ Providing new, sustainable livelihoods in affected communities,
- ◆ Role of wetlands in recovery, securing water supply, fisheries, protection against storms,
- ◆ Protecting remaining coastal ecosystems and rezoning development,
- ◆ Use of soft engineering versus hard structures.

Balancing Human needs and ecosystem restoration

- ◆ Rehabilitation of degraded coastal wetlands,
- ◆ Development of coastal greenbelt (mangroves and coastal forests) for tsunami and storm damage protection,
- ◆ Climate change implications and coastal zone management.

The information needs

- ◆ Standardizing assessment methodologies,
- ◆ Joint assessments and sharing of information,
- ◆ Early warning and preparedness, communication,
- ◆ Partnership framework for prevention needed.

Conclusions from 26/12/04

- ◆ In extreme events natural systems may mitigate extreme events,
- ◆ With the increasing frequency of unusual climatic events, healthy natural systems have key roles to play,
- ◆ For natural disasters in general we need multipurpose strategies which incorporate the resilience of natural systems.

A way forward

- ◆ Any strategy must include rational land use planning incorporating communities' views, sensitivity and promoting sustainable livelihoods.
- ◆ The ecosystem approach, incorporating conservation and wise use of natural resources, and based on adaptive management, is key.

A way forward

- ◆ Develop predictive guidelines on natural greenbelts,
- ◆ Establish and enforce “no construction zones” in vulnerable areas and manage them to enable sustainable use by local communities,
- ◆ There is a clear need to utilize existing legislation, or create appropriate new legislation.

A way forward

- ◆ More data, knowledge and understanding are needed and efforts must be made to obtain knowledge on dynamics and ecosystem functions and services,
- ◆ Such data must be made freely available,
- ◆ Education, training and capitalization on past experiences and a comprehensive outreach programme must be part of the recovery and prevention strategy.

Cooperation for the Future

- ◆ Build on and strengthen the regional/international cooperation mechanisms to connect governments, agencies, institutions, communities and individuals.
- ◆ Combine their competencies in assessment and in developing and implementing action plans, related to the tsunami response recognizing the need for increased preparedness for climatic changes.

In the end.....

We cannot prevent tsunamis or violent coastal processes from impacting humanity,

BUT

We can lessen their effects, and help human populations by maintaining biodiversity in protected environments, managed within a stable coastal ecosystem matrix.

So.....

the Multilateral Environment Agreements
and the guidance they develop have a role
to play in stemming loss of life and
ecosystem services in future

Protected areas, enmeshed
in a matrix of wisely
managed Landscapes
are the crux to ensure
future events are not so
dramatic,
And people can live
safely with nature....

http://www.ramsar.org/sc/key_sc31_doc30.htm

gives more information in a document submitted to the Standing Committee meeting of the Convention, held last week.