

**Management of coastal resources: lessons learnt from two coastal communities occupying the west coast of Sri Lanka**

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The livelihood of the coastal communities is mostly dependent upon the natural coastal resources. Questionnaire based field surveys were carried out focusing on the communities in two coastal towns on the west coast of Sri Lanka, Negombo and Chilaw, with an objective of evaluating and assessing the governance and the sustainable utilization and management of coastal resources there. The survey was carried out in December 2013, and consisted of face-to-face interviews and gathering information from households along the beach border that were selected through systematic sampling approach and from randomly selected stake holders on the beach, to satisfy the questionnaire. The chief executive officers of local government authorities *viz.* regional office of the Coast Conservation and Coastal Resources Management Department, Municipal Councils, Police Stations, and where necessary the incumbent of the Catholic Church in the area, were also interviewed to evaluate their role over the governance and management of the coastal resources.

The analysis of survey data revealed that the major resource based income generation activities in Negombo beach was tourism (68%) while in Chilaw it was fisheries (75%). The major environmental issues in Negombo beach were pollution (35%), littering the beach by local tourists (27%) and illegal building constructions (20%), while those in Chilaw were pollution (43%), illegal house constructions (25%) and coastal erosion (26%). Therefore, the Negombo beach was cleaner (76%) than the Chilaw beach (27%). Since the major income generation activity in Negombo beach was tourism, the local government authorities paid special attention in maintaining law and order, carrying out beach cleaning programmes, daily removal of litter and waste, carrying out community awareness programmes on the importance of beach on tourism and usage of soft and hard engineering techniques to prevent coastal erosion. In addition, every tourist hotel was found to clean the beach façades under their purview, and beach vendors also supported these programmes. In fisheries dominated Chilaw, the inputs by the local government authorities were minimum except the Urban Council collecting household waste on weekly basis from the roadside bins. However, the village has a very strong community based management strategy led by the Catholic Church. The church plays a pivotal role in harmonizing the village, educating villagers on the proper disposal of garbage, preventing sand mining and use of harmful fishing practices, and coordinating the local government authorities to maintain proper sanitation as well as law, order and peace in the area. In contrast, the tourism dominated coastal zone in Negombo is managed by a strong co-management strategy that involves the contribution of the local government authorities and major stakeholders on the beach such as tourist hotels and the local community on the governance and sustainable management of the coastal zone.

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