



Mangroves for the Future
INVESTING IN COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

Policy Brief on Governance and Integrated Coastal Management

SEYCHELLES



Aerial view of the coast of Mahe, the main Island © M. Epps, MFF Secretariat

The Republic of the Seychelles is an archipelagic nation of 115 islands, located 1,500 km off the eastern coast of Africa. Forty one of the islands are granitic with mountainous peaks and narrow coastal strips. The Seychelles has an area of 455 km², a coastline length of 747 km and a population of about 85,000 people estimated during the last census in 2007. Most economic activities, including tourism, are located in the coastal plains. The Seychelles claims an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of about 1.3 million km² — more than 2,850 times its land area¹. Its coastal areas contain 1,690 km² of coral reefs with only 29 km² of mangroves, which have undergone little change in the past 30 years.

¹ Fisheries Centre, University of British Columbia, Sea Around Us Project at www.seaaroundus.org/eez/eez.aspx

What Is Governance in the Context of Integrated Coastal Management?

Governance, in the context of integrated coastal management (ICM), includes the laws and other norms, institutions, and processes through which power and responsibility are exercised to make and implement decisions affecting the available social, cultural, natural, technical, and financial and other economic resources available for development.

What Is the “Coastal Zone” in the Seychelles?

Because of its geography, size and homogeneity, all of the Seychelles is considered “coastal zone”. However, in Seychelles, the coastal zone is regarded as the “coastal strips”, the narrow

pieces of land extending up to 100 meters toward the land side from the high water mark.

What Authorities Exist for Coastal Management in the Seychelles?

There is neither a specific ICM institution nor a specific ICM co-ordination committee in the Seychelles. The mandate for coastal management is spread over several organizations and institutions. The Department of Environment and the Ministry of National Development are the primary authorities dealing with coastal management. The Planning Authority gives the final approval for all developments in the country.

The Department of Environment contains an Environmental Engineering Section that houses the Coastal Zone Unit. The Unit is responsible for promoting and implementing ICM and for dealing with all coastal management related issues in the country.



La Digue, Seychelles © M. Epps, MFF Secretariat

Since the whole country is considered a coastal zone, more than a dozen laws and regulations, administered by different Ministries, directly or indirectly provide the legal framework for coastal management. Even with so many laws and regulations, gaps in the regulatory framework for ICM still exist and several of the laws are more than 10 years old. No coherent integrated coastal management plan exists for the country.

The Environment Protection Act of 1994 and the Town and Country Planning Act of 1972 are the two most important laws that provide a legal basis for coastal management in the Seychelles. These two laws are administered and enforced by the Department of Environment and the Planning Authority respectively.

Are Public Officials Accountable for Their Coastal Management Decisions?

The Public Servant Order establishes general rules and regulations governing the behaviour of public sector officials. Individual institutions have

issued circulars outlining the standards of behavior expected from officials.

There are no indicators for monitoring ICM and/or determining the effectiveness of coastal management. Monitoring is usually done based on the availability of capacity such as human resources and funds available instead of need or requirement. The Environmental Engineering Section conducts the National Beach Monitoring Programme that is aimed at establishing a long-term monitoring system and a database so that effective shoreline and beach management is delivered. NGOs undertake monitoring of specific species and the activities of individual projects.

Does the Public Participate in Coastal Management Decision-Making?

The Constitution of the Seychelles, in its preamble, provides for the right of citizens to actively participate in social and economic development, to exercise individual rights and liberties, and to contribute to the preservation of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. It also guarantees a right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart ideas and information without interference.

The Environment Protection Act 1994 allows public participation in the environment impact assessment (EIA) process, but there is no statutory provision mandating public participation in coastal management in general. Existing policies and rules for different sectors mention the need for public participation during the formulation of sectoral plans. National taskforce committees or national coordinating bodies, whose members are stakeholders with particular interests or direct involvement, have been set up for particular projects.

Public participation in coastal management has historically been very low, due in part to lack of information and knowledge about the issues involved. People turned out in small numbers for consultation meetings and the same people tended to participate. Participation in consultation processes has increased as people have become more concerned about the state of the coastal environment and as district administrations and individual projects have encouraged it. There are few cases in which public participation has been documented, but the process of developing the EMPS 2000-2010 is a notable exception.

Private sector participation in issues related to coastal management has increased over the years. Several large-scale projects now have the private sector more involved in environmental protection. Some of the businesses have made donations to implement environmental projects, while others are collaborating with other partners in environmental awareness-raising.

Most government institutions are better prepared and staffed to facilitate participatory approaches than in previous years, but scope for improvement remains.

Is Information about Coastal Management Decisions Easily Available to the Public?

The Constitution guarantees an individual citizen's right to access information the government holds about that individual, but there is no constitutional or statutory guarantee of access to other kinds of information held by the government.

There is no centralized institution or database where information relating to ICM in the Seychelles can be accessed. Information held in various institutions and organizations that do not exchange information readily, unless there is a formal request. When information is available, it is usually free of charge, unless there is a charge for photocopies. The Department of Environment is responsible for disseminating environmental information and produces regular articles, television and radio programmes focusing on coastal management issues. Environmental NGOs also disseminate information on issues related to coastal management. Although government institutions and NGOs make efforts to disseminate information the general public is often unaware of these opportunities and does not, therefore, often make use of these facilities.

The internet is one of the most popular means of accessing information in the Seychelles. Most of the government agencies involved in coastal management have their own websites where information can be accessed, but in many instances the information is not updated very often and much of the published data relating to ICM in Seychelles is not readily available online at all.

Do All Citizens Have Access to Justice in the Context of Coastal Management?

The Constitution recognizes standing to sue when constitutional rights are violated. The Ombudsman's Office receives citizens' complaints and transfers them to the appropriate

institution or authorities for administrative remedies. There are no other official means for alternative dispute resolution. Not all people in Seychelles are able to afford court fees if they need to go to court, but legal aid is available for those who need it.



Hard corals, Seychelles © M. Epps, MFF Secretariat

Policy Issues and Recommendations

An anticipated rise in sea level due to climate change will affect almost all of the economic sectors of the Seychelles. Given the central importance of ICM to the island nation of the Seychelles, a more comprehensive and integrated approach to coastal management and to governance in the coastal context is urgently needed.

- There is no single piece of legislation covering all aspects of coastal zone management in Seychelles. ICM issues are administered by several institutions under various sectoral laws, many of which are outdated.

- *There should be consolidated, up-to-date, umbrella legislation that governs ICM comprehensively and harmonizes institutional jurisdiction for ICM issues.*

- There has been progress in achieving greater public participation in coastal management, which needs to be capitalized on and enhanced.

- *Public participation in all aspects of coastal management should be mandated in comprehensive ICM legislation. ICM legislation should mandate budgetary allocations to enable the institutions responsible for ICM to (1) build their capacity to facilitate participatory processes and (2) implement the processes.*

▪ Monitoring of ICM and public reporting on the results is not yet institutionalized in Seychelles.

▫ *Monitoring and making its results publicly available should be mandated in comprehensive ICM legislation. ICM legislation should mandate budgetary allocations to enable the institutions responsible for ICM to (1) build their own capacity to monitor and (2) facilitate the participation of civil society and the private sector in monitoring.*

▪ Access to reliable data on coastal resources and processes is indispensable for sound ICM decision-making.

▫ *Information management mechanisms should be introduced to enable institutions to share information with each other and with the general public.*

Acknowledgement

This policy brief is a summary of the findings of the national governance assessment, carried out under the MFF Preparatory Programme of Work on governance in the ICM context and completed in March 2008. The assessment was prepared for MFF by the Ministry of Environment, Government of Seychelles.



Norad

