

ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITY FOR SMALL ISLAND STATES

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Small Island Developing States and islands supporting small communities are a special case both for environment and development. They are ecologically fragile and vulnerable. Their small size, limited resources, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, place them at a disadvantage economically and prevent economies of scale. For small island developing states the ocean and coastal environment is of strategic importance and constitutes a valuable development resource.

Small Island Developing States have all the environmental problems and challenges of the coastal zone concentrated in a limited land area. They are considered extremely vulnerable to global warming and sea level rise, with certain small low-lying islands facing the increasing threat of the loss of their entire national territories. Most tropical islands are also now experiencing the more immediate impacts of increasing frequency of cyclones, storms and hurricanes associated with climate change. These are causing major set-backs to their socio-economic development.

To tackle such environmental problems, a proper monitoring and vulnerability assessment system is a top necessity. Vulnerability assessment measures the seriousness of potential threats on the basis of known hazards and the level of vulnerability of societies and individuals. Hazards are those events and processes that can adversely affect the biological integrity or the health of ecosystems.

Assessments of vulnerability can be made for both people and the environmental systems that provide goods and services. They should identify the location of vulnerable populations, the threats to their wellbeing and the extent

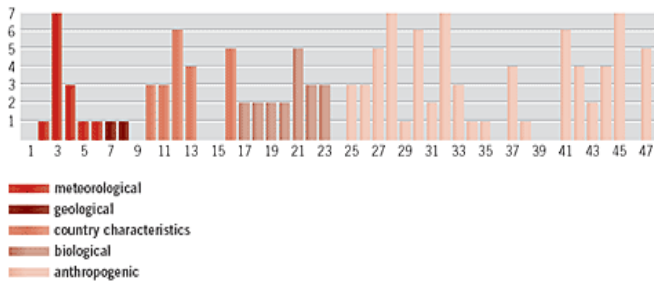
of their vulnerability; the risks to the environmental capacity to provide goods and services; and the preventive steps that can be taken to improve environmental conditions and reduce the negative impacts of human action on the environment. This information is then assembled into a knowledge base that is accessible, scientifically reliable and easy to use, which can help policy-makers and planners seeking to formulate adequate responses.

Environmental Vulnerability Index (evi) for Small Island Developing States (sids)

The South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission (SOPAC) is developing an index of the vulnerability of the environment to both human and natural hazards. SOPAC identifies three aspects of environmental vulnerability: level of risks (or pressures) on the environment; resilience of the environment to pressures, or intrinsic vulnerability; and the level of degradation of ecosystems, or extrinsic resilience. A total of 47 indicators are used: 26 indicators of risk, 7 indicators of resilience and 14 indicators of environmental degradation. The indicators are also classified by category; meteorological, geological, biological, anthropogenic and intrinsic country characteristics. Data were collected for five countries (Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Australia) for initial testing. The environmental vulnerability of small island developing states arises from interplay of factors such as remoteness, geographical dispersion, vulnerability to natural disasters, ecological fragility, a high degree of economic openness and small internal markets, and limited natural resources.

The objective of the project is to promote the use of environmental vulnerability considerations in national development planning and thereby encourage sustainable development. The Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI) provides a relatively quick and inexpensive way of characterizing the vulnerability of natural systems at the level of a region, state, province or island.

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The figure above shows the scores obtained by Fiji for each of the 47 indicators in the EVI. Areas of vulnerability can be easily identified, information that could lead to better management and possibly better vulnerability scores in the future. A score of 1 is the least vulnerable, 7 the most vulnerable.

Sources:

- <http://www.grida.no/publications/other/geo3/?src=/geo3/english/512.htm>
- <http://islands.unep.ch/da21c17g.htm>
- SOPAC 1999 and 2000, Kaly and Craig 2000, Pratt and others 2001

TREE PLANTING EVENT HELD AT SULTAN PARK



Staff of the Ministry of Housing and Environment carried out a tree planting event at Sultan Park on 15th January 2011 to help make the place greener and more environment friendly.

Under the initiative of Minister Mohamed Aslam, the event was participated by families of staff from different areas of the Ministry and UNDP. Young and old planted different types of trees at various locations of the park from morning till noon.

Trees were gifted by those who attended the event. The event was also carried out with assistance and cooperation of State Trading Organization (S.T.O.), Island Aviation, Thilafushi Corporation and Male' Municipality.

The event was fruitful with over 100 new trees planted while the families and staff enjoyed a fun time together. Minister Mohamed Aslam, State Minister Dr. Mohamed Shareef, Deputy Minister Mohamed Faiz and Permanent Secretary Ahmed Saleem actively participated in the event with family members.

WORKSHOP ON IDENTIFICATION OF OPTIONS FOR REGULATING THE ENERGY SECTOR OF THE MALDIVES



A workshop organized by the Ministry of Hosing and Environment on identification of options for regulating the Energy Sector of the Maldives was held on 25 January 2011 at Dharubaaruge.

The participants of the workshop included Energy Sector related government bodies, utility companies and private sector parties. In the workshop a report on options for regulating the energy sector developed by the World Bank consultant was presented to the participants. The consultant for this project was appointed by the World Bank to provide technical assistance to the World Bank South Asia Energy Team for a specific activity under the Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP) Trust Fund titled 'Developing a Regulatory Framework for the Maldives Energy Sector'.

The workshop was inaugurated by the Hon. Minister of State for Housing and Environment, Mr. Abdulla Shahid. During his remarks, he highlighted the Government's target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2020, and how strengthening the energy regulator will help the Maldives achieve energy independence; safeguarding our future growth with reliable and affordable energy from renewable resources and energy efficiency programmes.

He also noted that the present institutional setup is very basic and does not cater for the major developments coming to the energy sector and he stressed that the experience from other countries suggests there should be transparent market rules enabling fair, open and non-discriminatory access to all market players to enable more private sector investments in the sector.

Mr. Malcolm Cosgrove Davies, the Acting Energy Sector Manager for South Asia Region for World Bank also provided his views regarding the importance of energy sector regulatory framework. He also noted the importance of proper regulations in order to attract the private sector to invest in the country. Moreover, he motioned the uniqueness of Maldives and the options for regulating the sector of the Maldives need to be identified first.

The working session of the workshop included a group discussion on the various regulatory options in the draft report. Feedback obtained from the participants will be incorporated into the final report which would act as a guiding document to develop the regulatory framework of the energy sector of the Maldives.

SAFE PLANET FILM FESTIVAL

The Safe Planet Film Festival was held at Olympus Theatre from 27th to 29th January 2011.

The three day environmental film festival was a collaboration between Ministry of Housing and Environment, the High Commission of India, Technology, Education, Research and Rehabilitation for Environment (TERRE), Maldives Entertainment Company (MEC) and Maldives National Broadcasting Corporation (MNBC), and was inaugurated by the Minister of Housing and Environment, Hon. Mohamed Aslam.



The inauguration session was attended by the High Commissioner of India, H.E. Mr. Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay, the President of TERRE Policy Centre, Mrs. Vinitaa Apte, the Managing Director of MNBC, members of the Climate Advisory Council, students and staff from the High Commission of India and Ministry of Housing and Environment.

A large number of films on nature, environment, biodiversity conservation and ozone layer protection were screened within these three days, which included “The Eleventh Hour” (starring Leonardo DiCaprio) and the Academy Award winning documentary “The Cove”.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON CLIMATE RISKS RESILIENT ISLAND PLANNING

Hamza Khaleel (ICCRIP Project)

A Training of Trainers workshop was held on the 16th and 17th of this month at the Nasandhura Palace Hotel; as part of the awareness and capacity building of province, atoll and national level planners under the Integrating Climate Change Risks into Resilient Island Planning in the Maldives Project. The project is funded by the Global Environment Fund, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Maldives.

The programme for the Training of Trainer's workshop kicked off with a presentation on the findings of a recently concluded adaptation measures survey

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conducted in 40 islands by the project's consultant Dr. Ahmed Shaig.



The participants mainly from the planning and development sections of the Province, Atoll and island offices representing 6 provinces were present along with members from different stake holder Ministry's and departments.

Participants were exposed to the main three topics of Soil/Beach erosion, Land Use planning and Training Skills. The focus was to understand the different climate risks in relation to land use planning and erosion, and understand the different existing solutions being used at different parts of the Maldives. Participants shared their views on these issues and listened to others with different experiences. They were to understand the issues and be able to train other members of the community in being aware to the climate risks in the development of their islands.

One of the most useful activities was to plan an ideal island amongst groups. Each group presented their properly planned islands with climate risks in mind, and two land use planning experts judged and commented technically. There were all winners ensuring that participants were quite aware and educated on the issues at hand.




The Training of Trainer's component was delivered by the project consultant Ms. Fathimath Shehezinee, who with an educational background was able to provide the ground work of an effective trainer. She explained the different techniques used in making people understand and listen more actively and how to present difficult issues to different types of audiences.

The two day program ended with a distribution of certificates and creation of a group of very promising trainers, who will work with the project staff, to ensure their knowledge is updated and are able to share it amongst their communities. It is the ICCRRIP projects hope that the communities become much more knowledgeable on the issues of climate change risks and how to carry out resilient planning in their communities.



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