



Wise Coastal Practices for Sustainable Human Development Forum

"Operationalizing" sustainable coastal development / Alexandria-Egypt.

Posted By: Samir Riad.

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MANAGING COMPLEX SYSTEMS

The coastal zone - where land meets sea and where fresh and salt waters mix - contains many of the earth's most complex, diverse and productive ecological systems. It functions as a protective buffer and filter between the land and the sea, and is increasingly valued for recreational and aesthetic purposes.

The ecosystems in the coastal zone are important for biological and economic productivity, storm protection and erosion control. Reefs, mangrove, wetlands and tidelands are vital breeding, nursery and feeding areas for the majority of the known marine species. Worldwide, over two thirds of all marine fisheries species depend on coastal systems.

About 60% of the world's population - more than 3 billion people - now lives within 60 km of the coast. This number is increasing rapidly due to a combination of population growth, migration and urbanization. Two thirds of cities with population over 2.5 million are situated near estuaries.

The unrestrained pursuit of multiple activities in coastal areas inevitably leads to competition for finite resources, environmental degradation and often environmental and social conflict. Furthermore, development practices, which ignore the dynamics of coastal systems, can be catastrophic, as evidenced by the increasing loss of lives, property and investments due to coastal flooding and erosion.

If coastal areas are to maintain their productivity and natural functions, there must be major improvements in the way we plan for and manage coastal development. Effective coastal management must be based on a solid scientific foundation, taking into account the limitations of natural systems, while balancing and integrating the demands of the various sectors, which depend on these systems for their livelihoods.

TOWARDS AN OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Five years after the 1992 Earth Summit (Agenda 21), it was apparent that the basic concept of sustainable development in general and specifically for coastal zones, is still not well understood and the policies and structures required for its implementation are still not in place. One of the major impediments to more progress is the fact that many of the organizations and individuals working for sustainability in their own communities and sectors continue to work in isolation from each other.

It is necessary to work on how to "operationalize" sustainable development at the local, national and global levels.

ALEXANDRIA PILOT PROJECT

A marina in [Alexandria's Eastern Harbor and offshore Qayet Bay area](#) is an important issue for UNESCO, as it fits within its mandate to promote the integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas, which includes, among other things, the need to conserve coastal (onshore and underwater) cultural heritage.

The [pilot project in Alexandria](#) originated from the [International Workshop on Submarine Archaeology and Coastal Management \(SARCOM97\)](#) co-organized by UNESCO Cairo Office and the University of Alexandria, held in Alexandria in April 1997.

In response to the workshop's recommendations, a cross- sectoral mission of experts in coastal erosion and cultural heritage was sent to assess the erosion problems which threaten the medieval Qayet Bay Citadel, and the erosion control measures which disfigure the [underwater Lighthouse site](#).

Experts found that the site is of principle significance and is of unique importance on a global scale.

It is, therefore, feasible to establish a submarine museum on the site. It is also feasible because of its proximity from the shore, and from the other underwater archaeological remains in the Eastern Harbor.

Also the Qayet Bay Fort could be a convenient place to house support facilities and to function as an orientation centre for the proposed underwater museum. And the fort can become a living museum in its own right.

STRATEGY

- An integrated sustainable operational approach combining different partners and players involved in the Alexandria project has been figured out and formulated. This consists of the UNESCO Cairo Office (UCO) working in close cooperation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), which is the main player in the Alexandria Pilot Project. According to a recommendation of a meeting co- organized by SCA and UCO in

Alexandria in September, 1998, a follow-up Consultative Committee was formed including representatives of the following organizations: The Supreme Council of Antiquities, The Underwater Archaeology Department, Alexandria Government, Alexandria University, Coast Protection Authority, Sewage Authority, Military Authority, UNESCO Cairo Office (UCO).

This Committee has appointed a Task Team (about 13 members) for collecting historical, archaeological and technical data needed for the preparation of a comprehensive report on previous studies and data available. UNESCO contributed to this step by contracting consultants in three fields: preparation of plan of action, collection of oceanographic data, socioeconomic and environmental data. All reports will be available for evaluation at the expert meeting in September 1-2, 1999. Another meeting in the form of a workshop will be jointly organized in October 2-3, 1999, involving wider participation for an overall evaluation and to recommend further steps to be followed.

- UNESCO support will be given to ensure a well developed and well prepared project document that will meet the CSI requirements and that will be positively received by funding agencies and donors.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Information and data that will serve for future monitoring and management programs to be collected.

- Studies required for stabilizing and protecting the Qayet Bay Fort, which is threatened by erosion, to be prepared and proposed immediate and long-term actions to be implemented.

- A well-prepared project document that will serve as a further step towards the realization of the underwater museum to be prepared.

- The underwater museum, integrating offshore sites at Qayet Bay Citadel and the Eastern Harbor and the onshore museum of the Citadel itself to be established.

- An interdisciplinary team to serve as a technical advisory group for the project to be established.