



Tsunami Mitigation: Nature Conservation pays off

Rolph Payet (*University of Seychelles*)

Alain de Comarmond (*Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources, Seychelles*)



Crushed coastal vouloutier in front of the dense coastal vegetation which provided solid protection. Anse Royale beach, Seychelles, hours after the Tsunami struck with 4 m high waves. (photo: A. de Comarmond, 26 December 2004)

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Summary

The Republic of the Seychelles pays particular attention to maintaining its vegetation on the mountains slopes, the coastal plateau and in the coastal areas offshore.

Protecting the vegetation helps protect the population against hazards and reduces the potential impact of climate change. At the same time, the valuable natural resources provide the basis for attracting tourists making a considerable contribution to the national income.

The coastal vegetation belt absorbed the waves associated with the major 2004 Tsunami, provided effective shelter for the people living close to the shore and prevented large scale flooding and erosion.

An holistic vision for sustainable exploitation of the coastal resources is in place, based on legislation and cooperation.

Preparing for future global changes is a challenge for the island community as a whole and international cooperation is actively pursued.

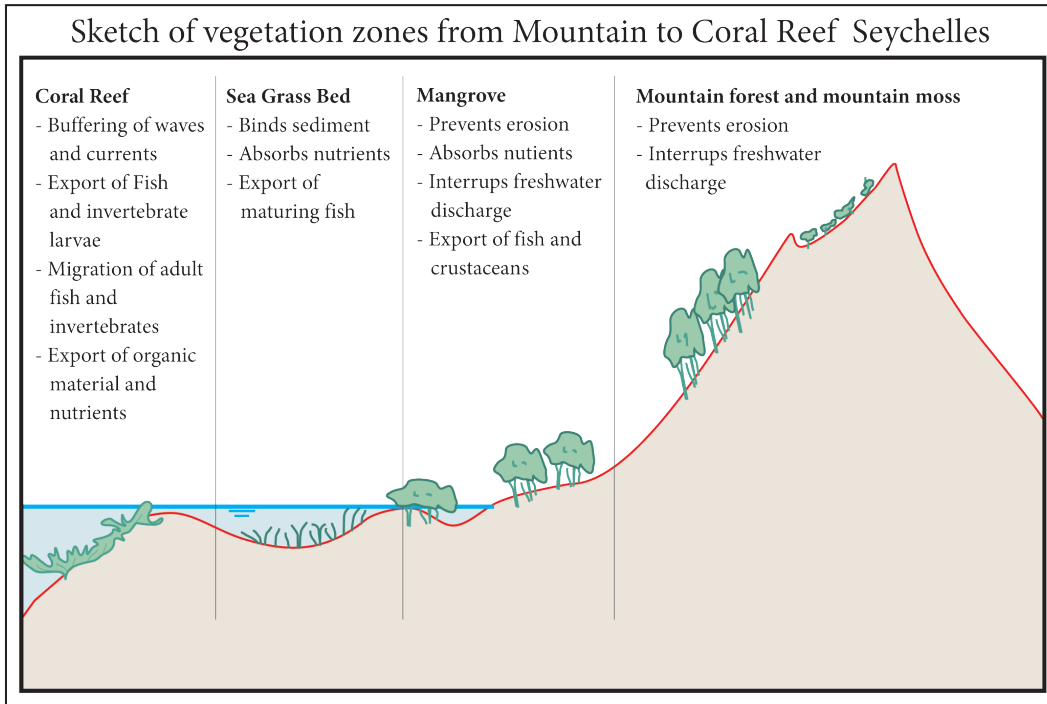
The Department of Environment is the responsible agency in the Seychelles for the management of coastal vegetation through its day-to-day activities. This management is covered by several managerial instruments, policies, regulatory measures, legislatures and management programmes. One of the day-to-day activities is directed to plant annually about 50,000 coastal plants, which are prepared in nurseries.

There is a broad public understanding of the natural values that need to be preserved. This includes the awareness of the ability of coastal vegetation to reduce the impacts of hazards, such as were demonstrated during the 26th of December 2004 Tsunami, and adapt to future impacts of Climate Change.

The Seychelles provide a good example of integrated coastal cooperation in an effective economic and ecologically beneficial way.

Valuable ongoing integrated coastal management endeavours will be strengthened. This will involve increasing training of young professionals, improving the capability to monitor the anticipated impacts of climate change, developing adaptive responses and creating a legal framework as an umbrella for these long term and complex activities. The recent creation of the international Sea Level Rise Foundation by the President of the Republic of the Seychelles is an example of the high-level awareness and commitment to preparing adaptive strategies in the face of future global change.

Sketch of vegetation zones from Mountain to Coral Reef Seychelles



Sketch of related vegetation zones from Mountain to Coral Reef – Seychelles. (source: Robbert Misdorp)



Upto 1.5 m 'cliff' erosion of back beaches at Anse Kerlan, north east Praslin Island, Seychelles, demolished turtle nests and palm trees - six weeks after the Tsunami struck the coast. (photos: Robbert Misdorp, UNEP Tsunami Damage Assessment Mission)