

## CASE STUDY: COASTAL MANAGEMENT IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is an island state with a 1560 km-long coastline. Nearly half the country's population lives in the coastal zone (Figure 2.37). The most densely populated and urbanised part is the south-west coast between Colombo and Galle. The coast offers tourism which plays an important part in the Sri Lankan economy.

Problems include:

- pollution of inshore waters caused by the discharging of untreated sewage from coastal towns and cities and from tourist developments
- reclamation of mangroves and coastal wetlands to create land for tourism, housing and agriculture
- the loss and degradation of coral reefs as result of pollution, the 'mining' of coral and sand for building materials, and unsustainable fishing and recreational diving
- the damaging impacts of aquaculture on the marine environment.

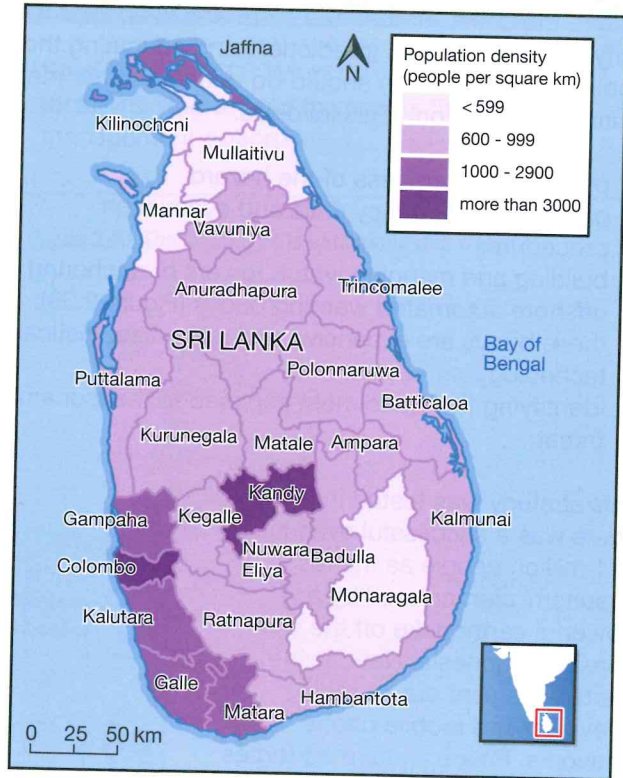
In addition to these serious conflicts, Sri Lanka faces two physical challenges.

- Serious coastal erosion along the south-west coast, where many people live and where much of the country's economic wealth is concentrated.
- The exposure of much of the coast to tsunamis and storm surges. The risks associated with this exposure are increasing as a result of global warming. The Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004–05 was a sharp reminder of this hazard (Figure 2.38). More than 30 000 Sri Lankans were killed (either by drowning or by the infectious diseases that followed). Over 1.5 million became homeless. Two important parts of the Sri Lankan economy were badly hit: tourism and agriculture. Coastal roads and railways, particularly in the south-west, were washed away or badly damaged.

Since 1990, Sri Lanka has had a Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP). While it recognises all the conflicts and challenges described above, its objectives are rather broad, such as:

- to improve the quality of the coastal environment
- to promote economic development based on coastal resources.

It does little to provide the money and technology needed to manage those conflicts and challenges. It does not prioritise and fails to state what needs to be done most urgently. Nor does it specify where and how action should be taken.



▲ Figure 2.37: The distribution of population in Sri Lanka, 2012



▲ Figure 2.38: The impact of the 2004-05 Tsunami on Sri Lanka