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Wetlands and foreshores: The solution to all your challenges

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Nature-based solutions have become tremendously popular over the past few years. They are popular among large financing institutions such as the WorldBank and the Asian Development Bank up to very local governmental bodies that have heard of the many benefits these Nature-based solutions deliver. However, the supposed benefits of Nature-based solutions depend strongly on how, where and with what purpose these solutions are designed. The massive introduction of Nature-based solutions has led to many interesting and innovative projects that created multiple benefits. On the other hand, it has also led to projects in which the Nature-based component was not so clear, and the benefits were uncertain. This leads us to the question: are Nature-based solutions a way to solve all your challenges in the coastal zone and if they don't, can we still call them a Nature-based solution? And, what do we actually mean with a Nature-based solution. We would like to tap on these questions with some examples of real projects and conceptual designs.

The projects and designs are all based in coastal areas where Nature-based solutions often take the form of wetlands or extended foreshores. These wetlands consist of mangrove systems in the tropics and salt-marsh systems in more temperate regions. The projects had different goals and different scales, they provided different benefits, but they all have in common that they were called a Nature-based solution. Depending on the goals and specific demands we encountered various interesting challenges. The final designs show that Nature-based solutions come in many sizes, shapes and forms. Sometimes they have the possibility to change livelihoods of people at a landscape scale and sometimes they only added a little green fringe.