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A preliminary inquiry in to constraints to the effective implementation of ecotourism practices at the local government.

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Abstract

Tourism is a fast growing sector in the International market, while Ecotourism is the growing sector in sustainable tourism. Most of the tourists visit natural and cultural areas for leisure in a particular destination. Ecotourism also offers educational and new experience to tourist, and it has to be developed and managed in environmentally sensitive manner while protecting the environment. In Sri Lanka tourism is a seasonal industry. Mass tourism impacts highly on the environment while ecotourism does not. It is based on the principal of conservation action and management of the environment for local benefit.

In Sri Lanka Ecotourism is a vital sector in economic and environmental aspect. Ecotourism process embraces a huge range of participants, doing different parts of the whole development stage. Some of the participants are government sector, private sector and Nongovernmental organizations. Under the government sector urban council/Local authority /Pradeshiy sabha can play a major role in uplifting the infrastructure facilities and promotion to enable better practice in ecotourism.

Information required to ensure the successful operation of ecotourism venture is scanty. This study is a preliminary inquiry in to the nature of ecotourism in Sri lanka, to make it more effective, at the local level. Primary data has been collected from five provinces at local level by interviewing local government. The significant problem faced by all these agencies was the lack of knowledge on ecotourism and their aspects. Some agencies have good potential to do or assist the ecotourism practice but they don't see the benefits they receive from this. Some agencies have initiated ecotourism practices but they have not proceeded beyond this stage. Considering issues it has been recognized that (a) information needs (b) provide ecotourism infrastructure and (c) Method of disbursement of benefit are the main constrains, to achieve best practice.

As a part of this research we have identified that it is better the institution participate as ecotourism stakeholders .Suggestion for enabling these organization to implement required practices for achieving hire standards are discussed. Among them are the use of (a) knowledge on Ecotourism (Management, Operation and Maintenance) (b) Identification of ecotourism sites in local areas, (C) provide financial assistance to local agencies for infrastructure development, (d) giving publicity for promoting selected sites, and (e) arrange new visitors packages for existing sites and new sites.

Keywords: Ecotourism, ecotourism and stakeholders