

ECOTOURISM AND CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS IN THE SOUTH EAST DRY ZONE OF SRI LANKA

G Tantrigama

Department of Business Administration
University of Sri Jayewardenepura

ABSTRACT

Areas dominated by natural vegetation, wildlife, or forest are referred to as natural areas. Ecotourism is undertaken in largely undisturbed natural areas with a view to study, admire, and enjoy the scenery and wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations. Tourism in the South East Dry Zone (SEDZ) of Sri Lanka has been developed in an ad-hoc manner which has resulted in adverse impacts on specific attractive sites, natural vegetation and wildlife as well as on local communities.

The objective of this paper is to assess the potential for ecotourism in the context of conservation and proper management of natural areas in the SEDZ. It is based on the work carried out as a part of a broader study on Natural Area Conservation in SEDZ under UNDP sponsorship for the Regional Development Division of the Ministry of Policy Planning & Implementation.

While promoting ecotourism in this region, tourism activities should be viewed as a means of generating revenue to enhance conservation efforts. In addition to a series of site specific and area specific proposals, the need for a regional tourism plan, which recognizes natural areas in SEDZ as systems, is stressed. In this regard, the coordinated effort of the Ceylon Tourist Board, the Department of Wildlife Conservation and the proposed Southern Area Development Authority is highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing tendency for interest to be directed towards an alternative form of tourism that apparently has emerged in response to the growing dissatisfaction with mass tourism and its associated negative impacts on host nations (Fennel and Smafe, 1992). This new phenomenon, which has been broadly termed "Alternative Tourism" or "Ecotourism", has evolved as a popular response to the emphasis on consumerism and the exploitation associated with mass tourism especially in developing nations (Cohen, 1987).

In recent literature, a number of related terms have also appeared including "Nature-oriented Tourism", "Green Tourism", "Adventure Tourism" and "Rural Tourism". The Ecotourism Society (1991) defines the term as "responsible travel that conserves natural environments and sustains the well-being of the people". This definition recognizes the importance of tourism activities in the context of the conservation of the natural resources on which tourism is based. A broader definition has been provided by Butler (1991) "ecotourism is travelling to largely undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestation". Filion, Foley, Jacquemot (1994) used a simpler definition; "ecotourism is travel to enjoy and appreciate nature".

Although there is a growing market for tourism in Sri Lanka, in most cases tourism activities have not been able to ensure that attractive sites have been properly managed in order to provide maximum satisfaction to the tourists. In the Sri Lankan context, tourism is largely oriented on mass tourism at selected attractive sites. For example, tourist visits to the Hikkaduwa coastal area has had an adverse impact on the Marine Sanctuary where damage to coral reef, sea water pollution, the garbage problem, collecting of rare fish species and the breaking of corals for sale have occurred (CRMP, 1994). Sigiriya is another example. Here, the number of tourist visits has far exceeded the carrying capacity of the existing facilities resulting in the degradation of the stone steps and archaeological assets. With increasing numbers of tourists intent on enjoying natural areas and wild life, historical, cultural and religious sites, and the coastal areas of Sri Lanka, the implications are that there will be a corresponding increase in pressure on these attractive sites. Establishing site specific strategies is one way of managing the increasing number of tourists in a sustainable manner. The other option is the diversion of tourists to unexplored tourist sites. Sri Lanka offers a large variety of natural vegetation, wild life, bird life and marine resources, natural forests, hidden historical sites etc. which provide a large potential for tourism and which can reduce the pressure on existing attractive sites.

The South East Dry Zone (SEDZ) is considered to be the birthplace of one of the ancient civilizations of the country (MPPI, 1985). There is historical evidence of human settlements, large irrigation systems, ancient paintings and monasteries that existed in the SEDZ in ancient times which suggest that this area had been a well developed region in Sri Lanka (WTO/UNDPa, 1993). Even today, SEDZ is well endowed with large areas of natural forest cover, rivers, wild life, and other natural vegetation, which offer potential for tourism activities. However, it should be recognized that tourism activities should not be allowed to become another calamity of natural areas and wild life, natural environment and the local community. Any strategy aiming at making use of these resources for development in the area should ensure that proper attention is paid to the conservation of the natural areas while these are being tailored into development strategies. If not, the balance between

human activities and the continuance of the existence of natural areas will be lost and the sustainability of the tourism activity cannot be assured (Fennel & Smale, 1992).

In the context of the present day, the domestic tourist visits to SEDZ are mainly oriented to cultural and religious sites. Kataragama, Maligawila, Kirinda, Tissamarama, Situlpawwa are the main tourist attractions for domestic tourists. Tourist attractions for foreign tourists visiting SEDZ are mainly oriented towards safari trips to Yala and occasionally to the Bundala National Park. This means that, although there are a variety of opportunities to offer to both domestic and foreign tourists, existing tourism activities are confined to a small area of the SEDZ.

It should also be recognized that since tourism in this area has been developed in an *ad hoc* manner, in certain instances it has had adverse affects on the conservation of attractive sites. Therefore, while promoting ecotourism activities, efforts should be made to minimize all harmful effects. Attention should be paid to planning tourism activities to generate economic benefits to the tourism business sector from which a certain share should be re-invested in conservation efforts. The present paper is based on a study made earlier by the author as part of a research project on Natural Area Conservation in the SEDZ of Sri Lanka sponsored by the UNDP for the Regional Development Division of the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation.

The objective of this paper is to assess the potential for ecotourism in the context of conservation and the proper management of natural areas in the SEDZ. The paper looks at the development of the tourist industry as a means of generating economic returns that benefit the people of the local area and at the same time enhance the natural areas and wild life conservation efforts.

More specifically, the paper will focus on existing tourist attractions; the nature and demand for tourism activities; the negative impact of tourism on natural areas; and the potential for further development of ecotourism. Proposals for overcoming development problems as they relate both to the tourism sector and conservation of natural areas are also made.

Existing attractive sites for eco-tourists are investigated in terms of historical and archaeological sites; religious and cultural sites; coastal areas; natural forests; wild life and bird watching and other attractive sites. The impact of tourism activities on natural areas and the potential for development of ecotourism are investigated. Proposals are made in respect of development of ecotourism with due consideration to conservation of natural areas and bringing a significant share of the benefits of tourism activities to enhance the conservation efforts and raising the standard of living of the local community.

Information for this study was collected from existing literature as well as from field investigations. In addition to site visits, discussions, observations and sample surveys were carried out to gather information from: foreign tourists; domestic tourists; tourism establishments; and residents of the areas situated close to the attractive sites. The surveys were carried out during the month of September, 1995. The total number of respondents to each of these surveys were: 43 foreign tourists;

55 domestic tourists; 19 tourist hotels and guest house owners/managers; and 38 residents of the areas close to attractive sites. These surveys were carried out at Kataragama, Situlpauwa, Kirinda, Tissa, Yala, Bundala and Udawalawe.

SURVEY OF ATTRACTIVE SITES AND TOURIST TRAFFIC

Four categories of attractive sites are recognised (Figure 1).

Historical and Archaeological sites include:

- Urusitawewa sluice - the tanks which date back to the 3rd century B.C.
- Uggalkaltota - an ancient river diversion.
- Tissamaharama - the city founded by King Kavantissa in 2nd century B.C.
- Thiriwanara Aqueduct - an ancient irrigation structure.
- Bisokotuwa - the ruins of the ancient Kaniyapallama wewa (Bisokotuwa Wewa)
- Bundala Sand Dunes - remains of a human settlement 28,000 years old.
- Kudumbigala - an ancient monastic site of 2nd century B.C.
- Bambaragastalawa and Bowattagala - two ancient monastic and historical sites near Kudumbigala hermitage.
- Karabagala - ancient paintings of 2nd Century B.C.
- Hambegamuwa Wewa - the sculpture of a five headed cobra.

Cultural sites and cultural activities include:

- Kataragama - Devala visited by devotees of many religions throughout the year, particularly during week-ends.
- Kiri Vehera at Kataragama - Built by King Kavantissa.
- Sella Kataragama - village of Walli Amma - consort of God Kataragama
- Maligawila Statue - a Buddha statue about 40 ft tall carved out of solid rock.
- Dambegoda Bodhisatva Statue - a colossal image of a Bodhisatva.
- Mahagama - kingdom of King Kavantissa - dates back to 2nd century B.C.
- Kirinda - the point at which Viharamahadevi was washed ashore.
- Magul Maha Vihara - the venue where King Kavanthissa married princess Viharamahadevi
- Nimalawa Hermitage - birth place of King Dutugamunu.
- Yudaganawa Dagoba - the place where King Dutugamunu (161-139 B.C) and his brother Prince Saddathissa fought each other.
- Dematamal Viharaya - the place where Prince Saddathissa is supposed to have hidden after the battle with King Dutugamunu.
- Buduruwagala - impressive Mahayana Buddhist Sculptures of 6th Century.
- Sithulpauwa - archaeological remains and temple.
- Telulla - pre-historic site about 3000 years old.
- Budugallena Hermitage
- Godavaya Temple - a dagoba constructed by King Gotabhaya.
- Madunagala Temple - a jungle hermitage of ancient times.
- Ramba Vihara - an ancient Buddhist monastic complex, believed to have been constructed by King Mahanagha, brother of King Devanam Piyathissa during the 3rd century B.C.

Nature based Tourism Sites

The SEDZ is sparsely populated and there are large areas of natural forests and chena cultivation. As the lowest rain fed area of Sri Lanka, this area represents varieties of natural vegetation, wild life and water bodies which are specific to dry areas. The most significant attractive sites in terms of nature based tourism are:

- **The coast line:** the characteristics of the coast line vary considerably in this zone. Flat, wide beaches with lagoons occur from Tangalle to Kirinda. Some features of this zone include the lagoons at Kalametiya, Kahanda and Mawella. The beach area of Yala and East Coast possess wide tropical beaches, which are at present largely inaccessible. There are wide sandy beaches with sand dunes, large and small lagoons and bay features. Yala has 67 km of beach and these are generally deep with high waves. Clean and unpolluted beaches for both passive and active recreation are available in the region.
- **The marine habitat:** coral reefs are located off-shore at Yala and the east coast. Turtles are found in the Palatupana and Patanangala areas.
- **Fauna and flora:**

National Parks and Sanctuaries

- Ruhuna (Yala) National Park - declared a national park in 1938 and considered to be one of the most popular national parks in the world.
- Pallemalala and Bundala Bird Sanctuaries - offer large concentrations of migratory birds.
- Uda Walawe National Park - declared a National Park under the Fauna and Flora Act of 1972. It is the National Park closest to Colombo.
- Yala East (Kumana) National Park - is renowned for its abundant bird life.
- Weerawila-Tissa Bird Sanctuary - an extensive network of lagoons centred on a large tank, with a wide variety of birds.

Other protected areas

- Lunugamvehera is under consideration by the DWLC to be declared as a national park.

Nature based tourism activities

- The Great Basses Reef is located 10 miles south of Kirinda where the reef rises to about 3 feet above the sea level. The Lighthouse is more than 100 years old. The sea bottom here is considered to be one of the most scenic places in the world.
- Mahapellasse - a place where mineral rich thermal water is used for bathing for curative purposes.

Other attractions

Masks, brass, gold and silver-ware produced by the craftsmen in this area are very popular with tourists. Important towns like Tissamaharama and Hambantota have become tourist shopping centres. Distinctive silver, brass and gold-ware from Angulmaduwa, and Beligalla, are also highly appreciated by tourists.

Tourist Traffic

Two main categories of tourist are recognised; foreign and domestic.

For foreign tourists the main attractions are related to natural areas which include natural forests, wildlife, birds, and other environmental resources. The main foreign tourist activity within the SEDZ is to go on safari in Yala and Bundala and watch wild life. The duration of stay of foreign tourists in this area is limited to a maximum of two nights. They stay at Tissa or hotels at Yala. It was found from the survey that most of the tourists are from Western countries. As in the other areas of Sri Lanka, seasonality is a significant factor determining the volume of tourists visiting SEDZ. The high season falls in the months from December to April during which period most of the hotels and accommodation units operate to about 80 percent of their capacity. During the low season occupancy drops to about 20 percent.

The survey of domestic tourists visiting SEDZ revealed more than eighty percent were religion and cultural sites oriented. The places of most interest were Kataragama (Maha Devala, Kiri Vehera, Vadesiti Kanda), Sella Kataragama, Kirinda, Tissa, Situlpauwa, Maligawila, Yala and Bundala. Kataragama has become the main destination of domestic tourist groups. According to the survey, more than 50 percent of domestic tourists have visited Kataragama 10 times or more. Some respondents have indicated that they have visited Kataragama 25 times or more. About 20 percent of the tourists visiting Kataragama take the opportunity to visit the Yala National Park, Kirinda, Maligawila and Situlpauwa. But all of these other sites play a secondary role in their tour arrangement when compared with Kataragama. The average number of days any tour group stays in Kataragama is 2 nights.

Middle income and high income domestic tourist groups prefer to visit Yala and Bundala to watch wild life as a recreational activity. According to the information provided by the park authorities at Yala National Park, 95 percent of tourists coming to the park bungalows are domestic tourists of middle income and high income groups. The remaining 5 percent are foreign tourists but in most cases they are accompanied by their Sri Lankan friends.

Visits to other cultural, historical and religious sites are only occasional. There is an emerging demand for visits to other sites such as Maligawila, Situlpauwa and Buduruwagala.

Tissamaharama has become a centre from which tours to Yala National Park, Kataragama, Bundala etc. are organised. For both foreign and local tourists, the average duration of stay in the SEDZ is comparatively low, the maximum being two nights.

IMPACT OF TOURISM IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS

According to the surveys and observations related to ongoing tourism activities in the SEDZ, tourism has had an adverse impact on natural areas, attractive sites and wild life.

Impact on specific sites

Impacts on specific sites are basically caused by two parties - namely the visitors themselves and the tourism business sector. The following adverse influences on specific sites have been identified.

Over-visitation

Although this occurs only during peak seasons, over-visitation exceeds the carrying capacity of the attractive sites causing harmful effects to the sites themselves as well as to the surrounding areas. Some examples of such damage are the environmental pollution caused by crowds of people visiting Kataragama during the peak season. Since there are no proper facilities to dispose of garbage and waste materials, it is visible everywhere during peak seasons.

It is observed that soap and other consumable items used in bathing, cleaning and washing in Menik Ganga at Kataragama Devala Area cause pollution of water which affects the wild life and fish population downstream. A similar example is that over-visitation at Block I of Yala National Park has caused disturbances to wild animals.

Disturbances at hermitage sites

Large crowds visiting hermitage sites have become a problem for the maintenance of the peaceful environment required for meditation. Two examples of such sites are Nimalawa and Buduruwagallena Hermitage sites. There are occasions when these sites are crowded, particularly by Buddhist devotees, and the areas can become bustling places with lorries, busses and vans crowded with people who disturb the monks meditating in the nearby jungles.

Violation of the sacred nature of sites

Places like Sithulpauwa and Buduruwagala are subject to visits by large crowds with various attitudes. The behaviour of such large crowds can disturb the sacred nature of the site and go counter to the purpose of devotees visiting the area.

Impacts on Natural Areas and Wild Life

Large crowds travelling by vehicles

The main impact on the wild life in natural areas is caused by large crowds travelling by motor vehicles. It is observed that between 50 to 200 jeeps with foreign and local tourists enter the Yala National Park each day. The noise and dust created by four wheel drive vehicles creates unsuitable habitats for wild animals.

Familiarization of wild animals to humans

Another effect that tourism has had and of which villagers complain is that animals, particularly elephants, are emboldened and become less fearful of humans. Consequently, when such elephants raid cultivated areas it is difficult to chase them away.

Removing tree branches

Observations revealed that tree branches, particularly Kohomba, are removed to decorate vehicles occupied by domestic tourist groups. This unnecessary practice, which damages local vegetation, is increasing and should be addressed.

Killing wild animals for meat

The survey revealed that animal meat is served to tourists in guesthouses and restaurants. Deer and wild boar in particular are killed for meat. Although there is no evidence to prove any hunting by travellers themselves, they indirectly encourage the killing of wild animals by eating animal meat.

Litter and garbage

The throwing away of litter and garbage by tourists has become one of the serious consequences of tourism in the natural areas. Plastic cans, polythene bags, chocolate wrappers are all to be seen along the tourist routes and in places where tourists have stopped.

Adverse impacts of the tourism establishments sector

Due to weak law enforcement and monitoring by the relevant authorities, tourism establishments themselves contribute to the harmful effects of tourism in the natural areas. A very pointed allegation was made by residents of Tissa, that one large hotel disposes waste water and garbage into the adjoining Tissa Lake.

Impact on the Local Community

Misbehaviour after liquor

Although local tourists visit the sacred city of Kataragama and other holy places, they lose their self control after taking hard liquor - which is prohibited within sacred areas. The survey revealed that, in certain instances, local residents have objected to such practices and that this had led to quarrels. Despite the fact that local communities also benefit from the visits of outsiders to their area, such harmful behaviour creates situations where local people can view tourism with suspicion. According to the Kataragama Police Station residents have, on occasions, made complaints about such incidents.

Socio-cultural impacts

The general allegation against the development of tourism is that it affects the traditional socio-culture of local people (King, Pizam & Milman, 1993). Since the SEDZ is not considered to be a place for long stays, the socio-cultural impacts on the local community is minimal. But attempts to encourage visitors to stay longer in this area will have repercussions on local culture. Tangalle, which is located on the boundary of SEDZ, is already considered to be subject to drug trafficking, homo-sexuality and other undesirable activities.

Minimum financial benefits to the local community

While tourism generates a considerable amount of income to tour operators and hotels, villagers do not receive much benefit. For example, in the Bundala area a potential market has been identified in setting up rest-stops or cafes where locally made cloth and crafts could also be sold. But the market is

believed to be small and few people have the capital to test it. Curd is sold along the road-side at Bundala and Hambantota, but the demand mainly comes from local pilgrims to Kataragama, and not from foreign visitors (CEA, 1993). Field investigations revealed that hardly any attempts have been made to sell site specific handicrafts or souvenirs at these sites.

PROMOTION OF ECOTOURISM IN THE SEDZ

The development of ecotourism with minimum harmful effects to natural areas requires attention to unplanned tourism development which might neglect any potential adverse consequences. There is an increasing demand from both domestic and foreign tourists which will result in a natural growth of tourism. If market forces are allowed to determine the supply of tourism facilities, it will neglect the adverse implications arising from an unplanned tourist industry which will be harmful to the conservation of natural areas (WTO, 1993).

The Tourism Master Plan (WTO/UNDP, 1993b) indicates that the tourism industry in this region should be based on wild-life and cultural sites offering a high quality tourism product. But no reference is made in the Master Plan either to ecotourism or to the maintenance of a balance between tourism development and the conservation of natural areas in this Zone.

There is a clear potential for attracting high spending tourists and a need to develop tourism products (i.e. meals and accommodation, transport, shopping and recreation) with regard to attracting these as well as domestic tourists to the region.

The Master Plan proposals provide general guidelines and also development proposals for certain selected sites. In the context of the development of ecotourism in the SEDZ these guidelines do not provide the necessary foundation to make sure that further development of tourism will not have harmful effects on the natural areas. If only the development of quality tourism product is addressed, it will certainly undermine conservation efforts and neglect adverse implications. Therefore, proposals should be based on offering quality ecotourism products while at the same time facilitating conservation efforts.

Tourism should be viewed as a means of generating revenue to enhance conservation efforts. Although tourism is an important sector in the overall economic development of the country, in the development context of SEDZ, ecotourism should be viewed not only as a way of generating revenue to the tourism business sector, but also as a means of financing conservation efforts. It is important that the tourist business sector should understand well the fact that the tourist industry should pay for the use of natural areas as a main attraction to their tourists (WTO/UNEP, 1992). Budowski (1976) has noted that the tourist industry should support conservation organizations financially as an investment to further its own interests in sustaining natural areas as an attraction for tourists.

Longer stays will generate more economic benefits to local economies. Since the duration of stay by both foreign and local tourists in the area is relatively low, their expenditure within the area is also low. Therefore, although the number of tourists visiting the area is relatively high, the impact of these visits on the local economy is very low. While focusing on attracting high spending foreign and domestic tourists, steps should also be taken to increase the duration of their stay within the region.

Because of variations of features in different attractive sites, planning efforts should also be site specific. Various attractive sites in the area have unique features. Each site is surrounded by a natural area and local community with different features and problems. For example, Buduruwagala and Situlpauwa are two religious places. Situlpauwa is located in the Yala National Park and Buduruwagala is situated near a traditional village. Therefore, site specific proposals are more important than general guidelines.

ISSUES AND PROPOSALS RELATED TO LINKING CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS WITH PROMOTION OF ECOTOURISM

Poor road conditions are a feature of the SEDZ although the network of roads is satisfactory. However, the time taken to reach the area from other resort centres is long, due to poor road conditions which result in tourists seeking alternatives, as time is very precious for visitors. More than 50 percent of the respondents to the foreign visitors' survey have indicated that the main difficulty they faced during their travel in the SEDZ was poor road conditions. The main complaints were: narrow roads, slow travel, no road signs and bumps on the roads.

Although there are name boards in certain places, these are not properly maintained and are often not visible to visitors. The name board installed at Bundala junction to indicate the entry to Bundala National Park is a case in point.

Regarding improvements to the present roads, it is proposed that:

- Road conditions should be improved significantly for the tourist to enjoy convenient travel. This requires the improvement of the national road network as well as the condition of roads within the region. The roads requiring immediate improvements are: main roads from Matara to Tissa, Tissa to Ratnapura via Tanamalwila, Nonagama Junction to Embilipitiya, Tissa to Wellawaya via Tanamalwila, Wellawaya to Buttala. See Figures 2 and 3.
- Name boards should be installed at all important places. Road directions are necessary at all important junctions. The condition of existing name boards and direction indicators requires immediate attention.
- Details of the sites which can be visited on the same route should also be available at each site.

Development of the regional road network requires linking the main tourist attractions through a local area road network and connecting it to the national grid. The national road network connecting the Southern area provides better accessibility to all parts of the country except the Eastern Coast. The local area road network is

given in Figure 3. The following proposals to develop a local network of roads are made:

- Construction of the proposed bridge over the Kirindi Oya at Siriyagama in Bundala area. This bridge will link the Bundala Bird Sanctuary and Yala National Park. If the bridge is constructed, as shown in the Figure 3, tourists can start the journey from either Hambantota or Tissamaharama and cover both parks in one trip.
- Improving the road from Situlpauwa to Kataragama. The present road cannot be used by small two wheel drive vehicles. If the road condition is improved, as shown in Figure 3, local visitors to Kataragama can go directly from Kataragama to Sithulpauwa without touching Tissamaharama. In order to ensure minimum traffic inside the park, only small vehicles should be allowed to travel on this road. This can be monitored by the wild life guards already stationed at entry points.
- Improving the road between Buttala Town and Maligawila via Dematamal Vihara as an alternative road to reach Maligawila Statue. At the time of writing, this road was in very poor condition. By developing this road, tourists would have a more direct route to Maligawila (See Figure 3).

Tour packages need to be developed. There is a high potential for offering comprehensive tour packages to view attractive sites in SEDZ. Private tour operators could organize such tours, based on three categories of travellers, as follows:

- **Foreign tourists:** these are considered to be high spending and arriving at Tissamaharama either from Nuwara Eliya/ Badulla or from Hambantota. The package could include a journey within SEDZ in a safari jeep hired from Tissamaharama. The tours could cover watching wild life and birds at Bundala, Yala national parks, guided tours to traditional villages, natural forests etc. There is a potential for arranging nature trails in collaboration with the local inhabitants. Such nature trails can be extremely informative and interesting and comparatively cheap to set up (TCSP, 1990).
- **High spending domestic tourists:** these take accommodation at guest houses at Tissamaharama or Kataragama and are interested in visiting wild life areas as well as religious and cultural sites. The tour should cover: Bundala, Yala, Situlpauwa, Kataragama, Maligawila and Buduruwagala. Transportation facilities should be offered by local vans/jeeps.
- **Low spending domestic tourists:** this group is more interested in cultural and religious visits. The tour would cover Kataragama, Sithulpauwa, Nimalawa Hermitage, Yala, Budugallena Hermitage, Maligawila, and Buduruwagala.

For these packages to be successful, however, it is essential that a good road network be developed as indicated earlier.



Legend SEDZ Boundary

Figure 2 National road network linking main tourist attractions

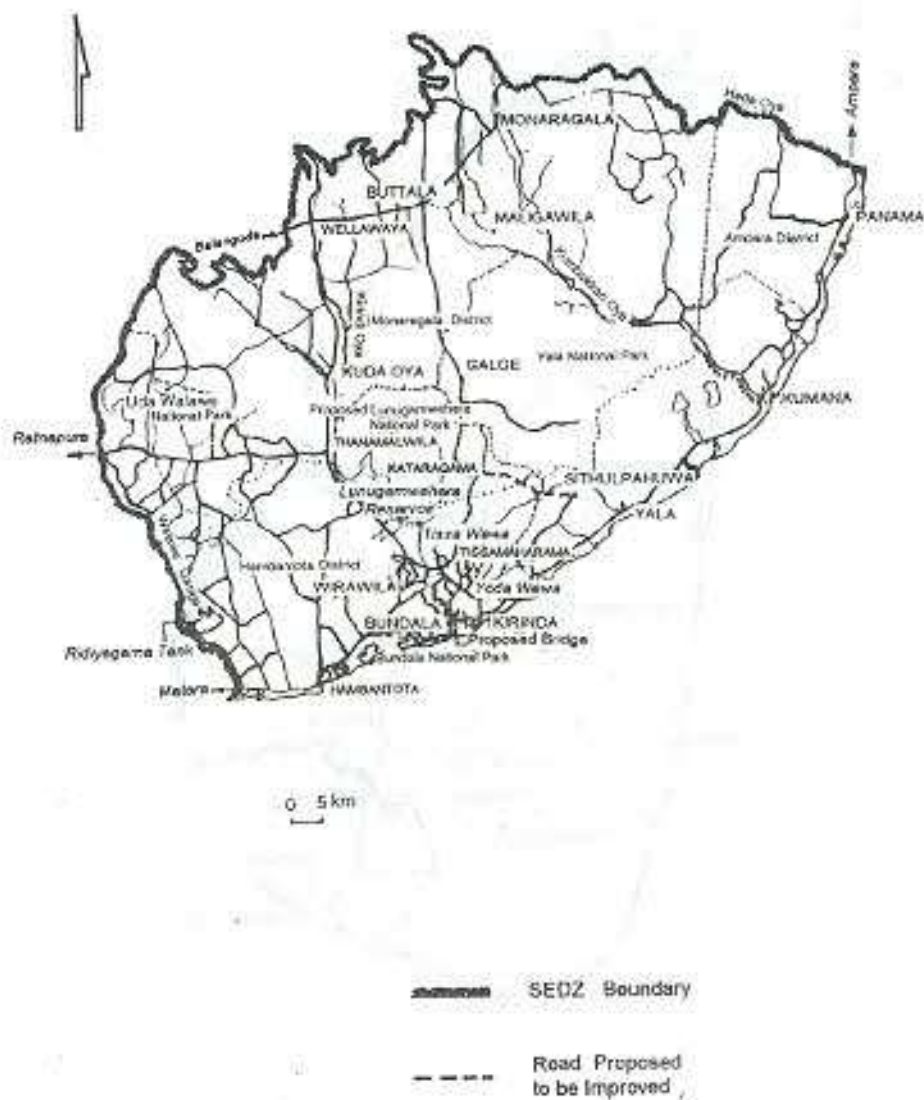


Figure 3 Road network of the South East Dry Zone (SEDZ) of Sri Lanka

Garbage disposal facilities need improvement. There is a marked lack of garbage disposal facilities at tourism sites which is one of the main reasons that garbage is being thrown everywhere by visitors. This has been a serious problem at all tourist sites, particularly during festive seasons.

Regarding garbage disposal, it is proposed that:

- Garbage bins be placed in all public places.
Relevant Pradesheeya Sabhas should initiate schemes to install suitable garbage bins in public places. Suitable schemes to clean bins regularly are equally important. The Pradesheeya Sabha or the municipal authorities should be responsible for ensuring proper maintenance.
- Garbage be collected at attractive sites.
In places like Yala, Bundala, Udawalawe, Situlpauwa, Maligawila, bins and collection of garbage should be the responsibility of the agency involved. For example, in Yala National Park, the Park Warden should take the initiative and make arrangements to site suitable bins and collect garbage regularly. It should be his responsibility to maintain an adequate number of bins in park bungalows. Efforts should also be made to see that garbage is properly handled by bungalow keepers and by tourists staying in bungalows.
- There should be public participation in garbage handling.
Proper facilities should be provided and visitors should be well informed on proper garbage handling. This could be done with suitable signboards and directions to garbage disposal points.

Toilet facilities are inadequate. The lack of proper toilet facilities is an acute problem at all attractive sites. Concerning toilet facilities, it is proposed that:

- an adequate number of toilets for the use of visitors should be constructed at each site. This could be carried out on a commercial basis. The Pradesheeya Sabha or the Divisional Secretariat can install such public toilet systems and ask visitors to pay a nominal fee for using the facilities. If the toilets are maintained properly, they could serve all categories of tourist i.e, foreign and domestic, high income and low income etc.. The number of toilets and their specifications should be determined after investigating the needs and existing facilities at each site.

Basic information on attractive sites has not been compiled and thus is not available for the use of tourists. Apart from the few brochures on National Parks prepared by the DWLC, none of the attractive sites have site specific information sheets.

Regarding the availability of basic information, the following is proposed:

- Information panels should be installed in three languages (Sinhala, Tamil & English) with an adequate description of the historical background of the site, significance of the site etc.. This has to be undertaken by the responsible authority (DWLC, CTB, or Provincial authority).
- Site specific souvenirs and picture postcards should be prepared by relevant agencies.

- Site specific souvenirs can be prepared as a handicraft industry by residents of the area.
- Visitors should be provided with information regarding the archaeological/historical value of the sites, natural areas and wildlife. Information should also be available to schools, Universities, and similar groups, thereby raising awareness and contributing to conservation efforts.

Accommodation facilities for low spending domestic tourists are lacking. Since the majority of the visitors to the area are low-spending Sri Lankans, accommodation units at cheaper rates are essential. Most of the present accommodation units in the area cater mainly to foreign tourists and high spending Sri Lankans.

Regarding low cost accommodation, the following is proposed:

- Adequate information on existing accommodation units should be gathered (types, capacities etc.) and the expected demand by different groups in the future be predicted. This information would provide guidelines for a planned expansion of accommodation units at each site.

Facilities inside national parks must be expanded. The existing number of bungalows inside national parks is completely inadequate and unable to satisfy the demand. The expansion of the number of bungalows inside parks should encourage the enjoyment and appreciation of wild life by larger numbers of the low income tourists.

Regarding bungalows inside national parks, the following is proposed:

- Detailed studies should be carried out to plan the expansion of the number of park bungalows and camp sites - increasing the accommodation units in an *ad hoc* manner inside parks can have adverse impacts on wild life.
- Suitable sites for park bungalow construction should be identified at Lunugamvehera, Tanamalwila and Weerawila.

Opportunities for local participation should be created. At present, although tourism in National Parks is a relatively major industry, it has only a minor impact on the local economies. Unofficial guides and four wheel drive vehicles are hired from a few tour operators in Hambantota, Tissamaharama and Weerawila to take visitors to view wild life. There is no incentive for the local community to support conservation of attractive sites as they themselves do not gain benefits from such activities.

Regarding opportunities for local participation, the following is proposed:

- Efforts should be made to encourage the tourist business sectors, including park authorities, to recruit more local employees.
- Tour operators should be encouraged to allow tourists to interact with local people. This can be done by providing tours to cover local settlement areas adjacent to attractive sites. Special tour packages organized in consultation

with the inhabitants are proposed. This could take the form of nature trails where interested tourists could be guided by inhabitants and shown the interior of forests, chena cultivations, traditional life styles etc. This has been tested as village tourism in other countries and has been very successful by bringing economic benefits to the villagers, including the employment of young people which is an incentive for them to stay rather than to migrate to urban areas (WTO, 1993).

- Locally educated youth should be encouraged and given the facilities to organize environmental awareness programs - for the local people as well as to visitors. Local NGOs could take the initiative in this regard.
- Local youth could be trained to offer tour guide services to visitors. This practice is prevalent in the Cultural Triangle where the CTB register local youth to work as tour guides. The CTB could initiate this by offering a similar service in SEDZ.
- Local NGOs could form village level groups to deal with any harmful behaviour to the environment by locals as well as visitors. For example, the selling of wild animal meat to shops could be controlled by such groups with the help of the local police and other relevant agencies.

There are no incentives for field staff, particularly for the staff in parks and sanctuaries. They physically see and handle the large amounts of cash collected daily at parks and at sanctuary entrances. This is transferred to the General Treasury and used for development of other parts of the country with no improvements or benefits accruing to the money-earning sites. Lack of essential services like housing, uniforms, toilets, equipment etc. are badly felt by field staff. For example, at the entrance to the Yala Park, field staff have to use the same toilets as guests - also, these toilet facilities are badly maintained.

Regarding field staff, it is proposed that:

- Close supervision by authorities of the DWLC is required. Minimum standards for field staff should be set and maintained. These minimum standards should include, uniforms, proper lodging facilities, necessary equipment, and financial incentives.

Re-investment in site improvement must be stimulated. The present system of income generation through tourism does not encourage re-investment in site development. This situation is applicable to all government run national parks and sanctuaries in the SEDZ. For example at Bundala, by following the existing rules and regulations, the revenues received do not enter the DWLC accounts to support road maintenance, enforce regulations or perform management and conservation activities. Revenues are remitted to the General Treasury where they flow to development and maintenance activities over the entire island.

Regarding funding for site improvement, the following is proposed:

- A percentage of the daily collection should be allocated to site improvements at each site,
- Service charges collected from tourists should be directly paid to the employees involved. Since under existing financial regulations there is no provisions for such payments, financial regulations should be amended accordingly.

There is a lack of coordination among the major agencies responsible for law enforcement and implementation is an obstacle to planning and the implementation of proper policies that should link tourism and conservation efforts.

To improve this situation it is proposed that:

- The proposed Southern Area Development Authority should form a committee consisting of all relevant parties (DWLC, CTB, CEA, RDA, Coast Conservation Department (CCD) Provincial Councils etc.) and should have at least monthly coordination committee meetings to deal with matters pertaining to the conservation of natural areas in the SEDZ.
- The CTB, in consultation with the DWLC and the Southern Provincial Council, should prepare a local level Tourism Development Plan with long term strategies and short term actions. This should incorporate all aspects relevant to conservation of natural areas and wild life, environmental impacts and site developments.
- Implementation of this plan should be undertaken by the proposed Southern Area Development Authority. For financing the implementation of the plan, a fund should be created from (i) local revenue collection from attractive sites, (ii) revenue collected by local authorities from local tourist business sector, (iii) contributions from Central Government and other local and overseas agencies.

The Environmental Act should incorporate local level and specific issues. The present Environmental Act provides an umbrella type protection for environmental resources in the country. Since it has no provisions to go into details of regional and local level specialties, the Environmental Act should incorporate local level and specific issues. There are weaknesses in law enforcement. For example, the law enforcing agencies and the police face difficulties in handling visitors whose behaviour has a negative impact on the environment.

Regarding legal and institutional provisions, it is proposed that:

- The Environmental Division of the proposed Regional Development Authority (i.e. Southern Area Development Authority) should have a clear mandate to deal with the conservation aspects of natural areas in the SEDZ. It should also provide legal guidance for developmental activities.
- Punishments and penalties should be strictly enforced regarding the purchase and transport of wild animal meat, the disposal of garbage on roadsides etc. These should be regulated with the coordination of the governmental agencies involved.

Concerning public participation and awareness, it is proposed that:

- Resource profiles prepared for Pradesheeya Sabha Divisions in 1990 by the Ministry of Policy Planning and Implementation are either not complete for certain Pradesheeya Sabhas or incomplete regarding the incorporation of environmental resources and tourism assets. These Resource Profiles should be updated and improved to provide the background information required for formulating local level development activities and research.
- A tourist information centre should be established at Tissamaharama in association with the CTB and Southern Provincial Council. This would provide information for domestic as well as foreign tourists, research groups and other interested groups such as NGOs, students etc.
- Awareness programs should be organized jointly by CTB, DWLC, CEA. The value and conservation aspects of environmental resources, wild life, attractive sites should be the topics of such awareness programs.
Awareness programs should be developed to suit different participant groups. For example, seminars and workshops should be run for residents and government and non-governmental officials and boards and panels, handouts, leaflets, awareness campaigns, etc. could be used to educate tourist and pilgrim groups.

PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO SELECTED ATTRACTIVE SITES

The following site specific proposals are made for Situlpauwa, Yala, Bundala, Maligawila, Tissamaharama, Kirinda and Udawalawe.

Situlpauwa

- The sacred nature of this place should be preserved. This can be done either by displaying instructions to prevent any unacceptable behaviour, or by employing monks and volunteers to verbally instruct visitors (in places like Dambulla Vihara, Kandy Dalada Maligawa, special arrangements have been made to ensure that visitors are suitably dressed before entering the sacred sites).
- More accommodation units with water and electricity facilities for the use of devotees and low spending visitors should be constructed. The required number of units should be determined with due consideration being given to the need to preserve the natural areas and wild life.
- New accommodation units should be constructed outside the sacred premises in order to preserve the religious quality of the site.

Yala

- Additional park bungalows should be constructed within the park. The number of bungalows and locations of such bungalows should be determined with due consideration to the free movement of animals and their behaviour.
- Construction of bungalows close to each other, as has been proposed on occasions, is not recommended as it can create situations where too many tourists are concentrated in one area which can disturb the movements of wild animals. Although it may be economical to construct a few bungalows in

close proximity rather than in isolated sites, in practice such complexes will be environmentally harmful. Problems of garbage, water pollution, noise pollution, and too many vehicles will certainly occur.

- The condition of all existing park bungalows should be upgraded in terms of water, power supply and day to day maintenance. Authorities should make sure that the essential items for the bungalows are provided, but not modern conveniences like, TV sets, telephone facilities, etc. If bungalows are provided with too many sophisticated items tourists may not be able to enjoy wild-life tourism which has to be undertaken in a truly isolated environment.
- Camping within the park should be encouraged by providing the necessary equipment. Equipment such as tents, cutlery, gas cookers, bedding etc. should be available for hire at the park entrance at a reasonable fee.
- Seasonal fishing activities taking place within the Park should be properly managed and regulated by park authorities.

Bundala

- The construction of an adequate number of park bungalows within the park is recommended. Locations of such bungalows should be determined with due consideration to preserve bird and wild animal habitats.
- The office of the Park Warden should be improved with resting facilities for guests.
- Camping within the park should be encouraged by identifying suitable places for camping to supplement existing sites.
- The required equipment for camping should be made available for hire at the park entrance.
- Bird watching can be facilitated by providing platform facilities.

Maligawila

- The condition of the road from Buttala to Maligawila via Okkampitiya should be improved.
- The road from Buttala to Maligawila via Dematamal Vihara should be developed as an alternative to the above. (See Figure 3).
- Street lighting along the road from the car park to the site of the statue is necessary.
- Toilet facilities for visitors should be constructed in the vicinity of the site. This could be done under the supervision of the Pradesheeya Sabha.

Tissamaharama

- Develop Tissamaharama as a resort centre for tourists seeking recreational activities.
- Construction of accommodation units to cater for middle class tourists.
- Construction of at least one star class tourist hotel to serve high spending foreign tourists.
- Since there is no intervention by the Pradesheeya Sabha on prices charged by safari jeep operators, they try to exploit tourists - a practice that will lose them

this market in the long run. Intervention by the Pradesheeya Sabha is required to maintain fair prices for safari trips. This can be done by registering all safari jeeps with the Pradesheeya Sabha and imposing a maximum rate per passenger. Safari trip rates should be displayed in suitable places, (i.e in front of Tissa Rest House etc.)

- The Pradesheeya Sabha should make sure that all safari jeeps maintain safety measures for travellers.
- Measures should be taken to prevent pollution of Tissa Wewa by hoteliers and travellers.
- A museum to display cultural/historical heritage and wild life in SEDZ is proposed. This should be managed by the proposed Southern Area Development Authority in association with DWLC, CTB and Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

Kirinda

- Provision of clean drinking water for tourists as well as for residents is essential.
- Measures should be taken to secure the safety of the visitors climbing Kirinda rock by providing platform facilities.
- Private entrepreneurs should be encouraged to construct toilets for the use of visitors. A toll can be introduced to cover capital and operational costs incurred by the investor.

Udawalawe

- Construction of more park bungalows is proposed - but the number of bungalows, types and locations should be determined after careful evaluation of their impact on wild life.
- The condition of the existing park bungalows should be improved by arranging for proper daily maintenance by bungalow keepers.
- Conditions of the camping sites should be improved by maintaining proper toilet facilities.

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