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**Public Participation in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Selected Projects****Dias, A.A.S.D.\****Central Environmental Authority, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka**\*samudias24@gmail.com***Abstract**

Public Participation is a key aspect of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process in Sri Lanka. However, existing literature on the level and effectiveness of public engagement in the EIA process of Sri Lanka is limited. Addressing this gap, this study focuses on evaluating public participation during the public review stage of the EIA process in Sri Lanka. The objectives include studying the level of public participation, examining the importance of public participation, and proposing suitable recommendations for effective public participation. Secondary data were collected from the Central Environmental Authority of Sri Lanka for fourteen development projects spanning seven sectors: industrial, irrigation, mixed development, power & energy, sewerage, solid waste management, and transportation. Public comments received for each project during the public review period were collected and analyzed. Public comments submitted for each project were collected and examined to identify patterns of engagement, the types of participants, and the nature of issues raised. The varying degrees of public engagement, types of public and types of issues highlighted by the public are identified for each sector. The results reveal considerable variation in participation of the fourteen projects reviewed, five from the industrial, mixed development, sewage and solid waste management sectors received no public comments. Five projects in the power & energy, sewerage, and transportation sectors received between 1 and 10 comments. One power & energy project received 49 comments, while three projects in the irrigation and solid waste management sectors received more than 100 comments. The types of the public identified are residents in the area, non-governmental organizations, local organizations, non-residents, experts, and environmental organizations. The issues raised by the public can be categorized as environmental concerns, socio-economic matters, incomplete or inadequate reports, requests for public hearings, cultural & aesthetic issues, and other comments. The findings indicate that the current engagement of the public in the EIA process of Sri Lanka is unsatisfactory. To improve the effectiveness of public participation, measures such as increasing public awareness, providing accessible feedback platforms, and ensuring transparency are essential. By addressing these challenges, Sri Lanka can promote the effectiveness of the EIA process, leading to sustainable development outcomes and a socially accepted and environmentally responsible decision-making process in the country.

**Keywords:** *Public participation, Environmental impact assessment, Sri Lanka, Sustainable development*