



Project Proposal
on
Proposed Ecotourism areas for Rural Poverty Alleviation in Sri Lanka

One success factor in Sri Lanka is that tourism has remained closely linked to the society. A considerable percentage of the population depends on the tourism especially in remote rural areas. Hence the industry has the ability to alleviate poverty..

The ministry is promoting the village tourism concept with the objective of creating economic opportunities for the rural community. Encouraging village folk to produce saleable handicraft and agricultural products and assisting them to market those products at reasonable prices are major concerns.

Sri Lanka Tourist Board has completed a comprehensive action plan for ecotourism development in southern region for Maduganga, Kiralakale, Rakawa, Udawalawa and Unawatuna with the involvement of the village community. Under this development projects it is hoped to address community development, community/private sector joint ventures, government/ private sector partnership, nature and marine conservation.

Maduganga Wetland Park/ Community development Concept

Madu Ganga falls within the South-west tourism area and consists of a large lagoon and 16 islands. The largest island is Maduwa with 830 families living there. For the future socio-economic development of the area and to promotion a quality tourism product, it will be important to conserve and enhance its natural and recreational value. Therefore, the development project is among to establish proper management of the lagoon and provide benefit for the resident community and surrounding villages. The benefit arises from employment, the creation of new businesses and the provision of better facilities at local level.

The main strength of the area are considered:

1. A gateway to the Southern Region providing an attractive landscape and waterfront setting for ecotourism development.
2. Proximity to main tourism areas of Benthota and Hikkaduwa.
3. Good road access to the main land and good boat access to the islands.
4. Proposed Southern Highway which provides direct access to the area.
5. Significant landscape and ecological value, high bio diversity, wetland and mangrove communities
6. Strong cultural heritage significance.

Kirala Kelle Nature Park/ Community Development Concept

Kirala Kelle is located within the south west tourism area about three kilometers from the town of Mathara. It is a “mangrove forest”, agriculture and paddy lands occupy the surround land.

The aim of this project is to establish a biodiversity reserve and ecotourism centre for the benefit of both visitors and local community, providing interpretation and awareness of the environment.

The main strength of the area are considered :

- (1) A gateway to the South west Coast, providing an attractive landscape and waterfront setting for ecotourism development.

- (2) Proximity to the urban area of Mathara, tourism areas to the west, and parks and protected areas to the north and east.
- (3) Good road access.
- (4) Substantial wildlife.
- (5) The abundant aquatic macrophytes in the water bodies make the area an excellent habitat for birds-68 species of birds has been identified.
- (6) Rich butterfly communities exist with 48 species identified (13 are rare)
- (7) Small existing community-about 25/30 families live along the boundaries.

Unawatuna Marine Conservation/ Community Development Concept

Unawatuna is one of the most well known and popular beaches in Sri Lanka. It is located within the South-west coast tourism area, about six kilometers from Galle.

The aim of this project is to promote a greater understanding of the marine resource among the local community, dive community and both domestic and international visitors, together with the conservation and management issues implicit in increasing use. In this project the active participation of community and private sector in the planning and management of the area will be essential for long-term sustainability. The focus of the plan is on community involvement, economic generation, preserving and developing the cultural values of the area, and preserving the natural resource and biodiversity.

The main strengths of the area are considered:

- (1) A beautiful beach and waterfront setting- the beach is well protected by the reef and therefore safe for swimming and water sports.
- (2) An attractive landscape including the adjacent area of Rumassala which has an ecologically important natural vegetation with many indigenous plants.
- (3) Proximity to the urban and tourism centre of Galle.
- (4) Proximity to the proposed Southern high way which will give direct access to the area.
- (5) Strong cultural heritage.
- (6) Strong local community who are interested in marine conservation and management.

Udawalawa Ecotourism Site Development Concept

Udawalawa National Park is located within the Dry Forest Tourism Area and falls between the two districts of Rathnapura and Moneragala. The park is renowned for its scenic beauty, viewing elephants and birds watching.

The project aims to identify and develop a site for a quality ecology in close proximity to elephant transit home/ proposed visitor centre. The proposed community development programme will provide support and encouragement to local people to become actively involved in the activities of the ecology and transit home, and provision of tourist support facilities including the possible establishment of camping sites.

The main strengths of the area are considered:

- (1) Proximity to one of the most scenic National Parks in Sri Lanka.
- (2) Substantial wildlife- besides elephants and a wide variety of birds, other wild species include leopards, wild buffalo and wild bores
- (3) An attractive landscape with potential sites offering extensive views of the park and elephant transit home activities.
- (4) Ease of access and good transport links-on route of main tourism circuits.
- (5) Availability of existing infrastructure.

Rekawa Ecotourism Site Development

The site falls within the South tourism area. The coastal zone is ecologically fragile, protected in part by Bundala National Park. The remaining streets are coming under increasing pressure from coastal development.

The aim of the project is to conserve and promote effective management of the coastal zone and to identify and develop a site for a high quality ecolodge, to help sustain and reinforce the community and economy of the area.

Community development component of the project will provide support and encouragement to local people to become actively involved in the activities of the ecolodge and provision of tourist facilities including the possible development of visitor accommodation. Under this project favourable conditions will be given to small scale tourist development, particularly where they will be owned and managed by residents and will provide local employment and economic benefits for local people.

The main strength of the area is considered:

- A quality beach and natural lagoon setting.
- An attractive landscape and scenic view of surrounding countryside.
- Proximity to adjacent Bundala and Yala National Parks.
- Substantial wildlife-five of the seven endangered marine turtles come ashore to nest and a variety of shore birds.
- A major tourism attraction of turtle nesting-throughout the year.
- Proximity to other tourism attraction – visitor centre, mangrove interpretation center, bird observation tower.
- Proximity to local villages.