

Strategies to Improve Tourism Potentials in the East Coast of Jaffna Peninsula

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Abstract - This research tries to explore the possible strategies of improving the tourism based on the potentials of natural and environmental resources in the Eastern Coastal belt of Jaffna Peninsula which stretches from Point Pedro to Chundikulam. Though Jaffna Peninsula has many potentials for attracting tourism, the tourist arrival and income from the tourism sector remain insignificant due to marginal growth of the sector. People live in many parts of the Peninsula experience difficulties in finding economic opportunities. The regional development must be complemented by many development potentials and tourism is one of such potential which can trigger the development is tourism sector to address this issues of poverty. The spatial data on natural resources that are potentials for tourism in the coastal belt have been collected using high resolution satellite images using GIS techniques. All walk of the coastal areas were visited and observed to comprehend the potentialresources that could support the development of tourism. Data on infrastructures such as road networks from high resolution satellite images, hotels, and financial institutions from statistical handbook of Maruthankerny DS Office were collected. In addition, discussion with the stakeholders were used to collect about the potentials and strategies to improve the tourism sector. The resources and potentials suitable for tourism development were analyzed using SWOT analysis techniques. The coastal belt is having great natural potentials such as deep ocean edges, blue ocean fronts, golden beaches, sand dunes, natural vegetation and marshy lands, bird sanctuaries. The resources have strong attraction potentials but now they are idling and underutilized due to lack of planning initiatives. There are no adequate infrastructure facilities to support tourism sector and harness the potentials. The eastern coastal belt is poorly connected and creates the areas less accessible to the potentials sites. The eastern coastal belt does not have accommodation facilities, restaurant and financial institutions at appropriate locations to serve the visitors. There are no institutional mechanism and systems to guide the tourists and promote tourism. There is no policy related to tourism which will pave the way for promotion of tourism and economic development. A tourism master plan need to be developed to guide the relevant developments in the region. The plan shall have provisions to protect the natural resources and improve the environmental quality by implementing

reforestation measures. Accommodation facilities at Kudathanai, Manalkadu, Ampan, Nargarkovil, Maruthankerny, Thalaiady, Vetilaikerny and Kaddaikadu will facilitate the tourists. The hotels with higher facilities can be accommodated in important places such as Maruthankerny and Iyakachchy and small hotels with less facilities can be established in other local places. There must be tourism informationCentre located in Iyakachchy and Point Pedro.

Keywords - ecotourism, tourism infrastructure, natural resources, SWOT Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

This research explore the possible measures to promote tourism in the eastern coastal belt of Jaffna Peninsula. The tourism sector receives substantial income and has become one the driver of economic development not only in Sri Lanka but all over the world. According to tourism master plan of Sri Lanka, It is expected to increase the tourists arrival by 2 million by 2020[1]. It is important to create suitable plans depending on the potentials to improve the conditions for tourism development throughout the country. The areas that are having potentials are easier to plan and develop and Eastern Coast of Jaffna Peninsula (fig: 1) is such an area that can be harnessed for tourism development.

There are abundance of natural resources in the Eastern part of Jaffna Peninsula underutilized and exploited for a long period of time. The people living in those areas are suffering from poverty and poor economic conditions.

Most of them are war victims directly or indirectly. Due to the underdeveloped conditions of the area, people tend to move to other parts of the Peninsula in search of economic and other benefits. People experience hardships due to lack of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities such as water, transport, drainage, education and health. Poor economic condition and infrastructure facilities push the people out of the areas and does not attract towards it. Nearly more than 42 % of the population lives under the poverty line [2]. More than 54% of the people are involved in subsistence agricultural activities[2]. Nearly 28 % of the population do labor works related to agriculture and fisheries. If ways and means are not found to develop the area, then the situation will further drain the people out of the area leading to declining

the conditions. There are many investment opportunities are created in other parts of the Peninsula which generates employment and economic opportunities.

The resources and potentials available in abundance in the area can be harnessed to generate employment and economic development. The resources available are potentials for tourism development. So far there is no any research was carried out to identify the resources and find measures to develop the area. The area has potentials for eco-tourism based on the natural resources in the eastern region. If the tourism is developed, it will create a multiplier effects from top to bottom. A detailed field survey were carried out from Point Pedro to Chundikulam. Officers and administrators concerned with planning and development in the region were interviewed with a view to understand the potentials, existing trends, and challenges in tourism sector and possible measures to improve the tourism in the areas. Some tourists who came from Southern Sri Lanka and abroad visited this areas were interviewed about their expectations in the areas to attract them. Descriptive analysis including SWOT techniques were applied to understand the existing situation and make decision on what to develop and how to develop in the area that will trigger the development in other sectors. Accessibility, accommodation and basic amenities are lacking in the area that need to be provided at appropriate locations such as Point Pedro, Manalkaadu, Maruthankerny and Chundikulam.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the existing tourism potentials
- To identify the existing tourism infrastructure facilities
- To identify the measures to improve the tourism sector in the area

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Various spatial and non-spatial data relevant to tourism were collected using different data collection methods to assess the existing resources and potentials for tourism development. Social, economic, environmental and physical data and information about the area were collected from primary and secondary sources. Land use land cover data were obtained from high resolution satellite images. Natural resources of the areas such as beaches, sand dunes, coastal vegetation and sand deposits were collected during field visits and observation. The existing connectivity and accessibility data were collected from digitizing satellite images using GIS software. Discussion also were conducted with local people to assess their aspirations and expectations with respect to the tourism development. The condition and resources of

Chundikulam bird sanctuary also were obtained from satellite images. The data on environmental conditions, ocean fronts, fishing activities, were visited in the field and potentials for the tourism were assessed. This research has been carried out descriptive analysis based on SWOT techniques.

IV. ANALYSIS METHOD

Since this study is about to find suitable strategies to improve the tourism industry, it has to be based on the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of existing environment and natural and resources in the region. The SWOT analysis is a qualitative techniques applied to assess the current situation and potentials to support a strategic planning. Based on the primary and secondary data relevant to the region, the strength of the region that can support the tourism were assessed. The strength that lies within the system in terms of physical, environmental social and economic capitals were evaluated to ascertain in which ways it can support the development. The identified strength must be further strengthened by looking at the ground condition of those facilities.

The weaknesses in the area with respect to the tourism development need to be assessed and the weakness must be turned into strength to support the tourism activities. If the weaknesses are not mitigated, then it will affect the performance. So it essential to mitigate the weaknesses. The opportunities that are coming from the outside of the region must be harnessed to promote the tourism development.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Potentials Factors for Tourism Development

The coastal belt of Eastern region of Jaffna Peninsula has very strong conditions to plan and promote tourism industry. The main strength of the resources for tourism is 60 kilometers of beach from Point Pedro to Chundikulam which fronts with Indian Ocean (Fig 1). The coast is linear and visibility is very high which creates a vista of natural beauty of the beach. The long beach can accommodate larger number of tourists and tourism related activities. The extensive areas are enough to absorb more number of people for recreational activities.

The entire stretches of the coast line is golden beaches which is attracting in nature. The purity and the naturalness of the sands are manifested in the gradient sands along the coast (Fig: 2, Fig: 3). Domestic and foreign tourists admire the golden beaches for sea baths and sun baths. The coastal region has suitable topographic conditions to host tourism related activities and infrastructure. The coastal belt has little elevation from the shoreline and low lying areas that are good for tourism related activities and the terrain condition also relative flat in the entire stretch.

The tourists whether domestic or foreign prefer clean beaches to visit and spend time leisurely. The entire stretch of the Eastern coast of Jaffna Peninsula is clean and free from garbage and odors. These are also very good conditions to attract tourists from other parts of the country and the world. The coastal line front with the Indian Ocean which provides great opportunity to enjoy the sea view and beach perspectives (Fig: 4). These scenario will attract the nature lovers and people who like to see and enjoy the waterfront.

The coastal region consist of natural vegetation specific to the locality and environment such as casuarina, palmyrah plants and mangrove plants. Since they are specific to the

region, they have potential for attracting tourists from local and foreign countries. The natural vegetation acts as a natural protection of the coastal environment and wind barrier. The natural vegetation is a source for collecting firewood and timber for the local community. The natural vegetation regulates the microclimate conditions

The eastern coast has low level of existing development which means the intensity of the development is less. The areas has more natural settings and has very few built structures. Since the area has more natural environment, it is more likely that the area

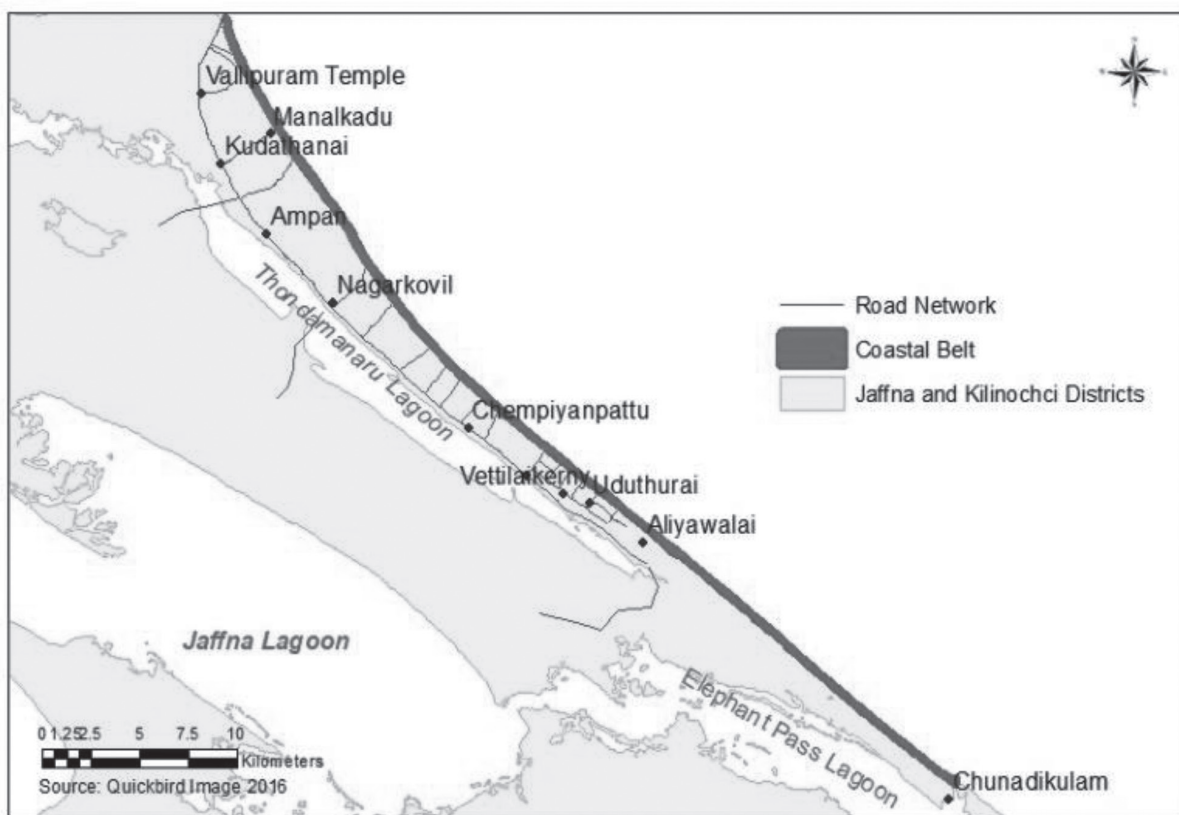


Figure 1 Research Area - Eastern Coast of Jaffna Peninsula (Point Pedro to Chunadikulam)



Figure 2: Katkoyalam Beach, Close to Point Pedro
Source: Field Survey, March 2018



Figure 3: Manalkaadu Beach, Vadamarachchi East Coast
Source: Field Survey, March 2018

will attract more people from outside. The natural settings consist of extensive sand, low growth vegetation, palmyrah plants and low lying partially dry areas.



Figure 4: Nagar Kovil Beach
Source: Field Survey, March 2018

and high quality. For instance, the crabs, prawns, cuttlefish are much demanded sea species caught in the areas. The fish products have high demands from local and foreigners and if the tourism industry is promoted, then there will be mutual benefits to fishing sector and tourism sector.



Figure 5a: Light House and Dutch Fort Vettalaikerny
Source: Field Survey, March 2018



Figure 5: Dutch Church in Manalkaadu
Source: Field Survey, March 2018



Figure 6: Casuarina Forest, Manalkaadu
Source: Field Survey, March 2018

The area is having the economy mainly based on agriculture. The agriculture specific to the area and different from other areas has potentials to attract visitors. The people in the area are cultivating the cash crops such as onion, chilies, tobacco and vegetable cultivation. Some section of the community involve in seeding palmyrah where the off spring of the palmyrah plants are dried or boiled and used for making various traditional foods. Those dried palmyrah off spring have higher demands in the market and people from the South and foreign countries prefer those products.

People in the area involve in fishing activities using traditional gears such as catamaran, small boats, driftnets catch substantial amount of fish products. Most of them are exported and little amount is locally consumed. There are high demand for these fish products because they are fresh



Figure 7: Mangroove Plants in Ampan
Source: Field Survey, March 2018



Figure 8 Mangrove Forest in Nagar Kovil

Source: Field Survey, March 2018



Figure 9: Traditional and Non Traditional Fishing Activities, Manalkaadu

Source: Field Survey, March 2018

Factors that require improvements

The area has weaknesses which can be strengthened to support the tourism and the local economy.

The area is most part of the year lying as dry because the geological condition of the areas is sand that lets the rain water to drain into the sea. The areas always look dry and are having dry zone low growth vegetation. If rain water harvesting and recharging of ground water are implemented, then the area will have more ground and surface water available for the green vegetation, environment and people. Certain areas in the Eastern region are vulnerable for scarcity of fresh water, ground and surface waters, due to the geological condition of sand beds. This condition becomes severe during summer season from March to August. This condition restricts the human economic activities in the area and people draw water from adjacent areas. There are issues of quantity and quality of the waters in the area during summer

time but the condition during the rainy season is favorable. The Eastern coast of Jaffna Peninsula has lower transport connectivity where the entire stretch of coastal areas are connected with the rest of the Peninsula and mainland through a single road that runs from Point Pedro to Chundikulam. The lower connectivity are there within and between the areas which means the coastal belt is not connected well with the rest of the Peninsula and the access to the coast line also restricted due to lack of connecting roads to the beach. The main road that lies parallel to the coastline runs nearly 3 – 4 kilometers away from the coastline. The road has connections at limited locations such as Ampan, Kudathanai, Nagarkovil, Thalaiady, Vettlaikerny and Kaddaikaadu. The Southern end of the road from Chundikulam is connected with Iyakachchi via a gravel road and there is another connection between Maruthankerny and Puthukaaduthat lies on A9 road. Except these three ends, Point Pedro, Maruthankerny and Chundikulam, there is no other connectivity to the area which reduces the accessibility. Poor connectivity restricts the accessibility of tourists to these areas.

The condition of the road in the area very is poor. The surface condition is dilapidated badly and relatively narrow throughout the area. The road surfaces have been damaged due to it was not renovated and maintained for long period of time. Due to the poor surface condition of the roads, the vehicle movement and speed are restricted. The poor condition restricts the mobility of the local people and the visitors.

The area lacks of infrastructure for tourism activities. There is no any single good quality accommodation available in the areas. People will have to find the accommodation in Jaffna. The accommodation facilities in Point Pedro are not adequate to accommodate the diverse visitors. There are low cost accommodation facilities Point Pedro which may cater certain category of visitors but there must be variety of accommodation for different types of visitors from high, medium and low income economic conditions.



Figure 9a: Mud Road in Kaddaikaadu

Source: Field Survey, March 2018



Figure 9b: Gravel Road in Nagaro Kovil
Source: Field Survey, March 2018

There are very few financial institutions such as banks for financial transactions in the area except branches in Maruthankerny which is a remote location for other places along the coastline. Due to the remoteness to Maruthankerny, people whether local or foreigners coming to the area have to go to Point Pedro for their financial needs. This is also kind of hindrance to the activities of the people in the area. The area has lower threshold of population and that is a weakness to support the development of infrastructures such as pipe borne water supply, electricity, storm water drainage, broadband internet connectivity and banking facilities to serve the local and tourist population. The entire areas, Manalkadu, Kudathanai, Nagarkovil, Thalaiady, Kaddaikadu and Vettilaikerny are not having these infrastructure facilities with full coverage. If the potential for tourism are to be improved, then these infrastructure facilities need to be improved because the tourists from other part of the country and the world may want certain facilities to visit, stay and enjoy the area comfortably. Many people will not like to come if the life is difficult in those areas.

The valuable natural resources, sands in the areas are being mined for construction purposes and depleted. There were larger number of sand dunes in many places in Vallipuram, Manalkadu, Kudathanai whose extend and heights were exciting. Most of those large sand dunes have been mined and excavated for construction purposes during the last two decades. Sands and sand dunes are the major important natural resources in the areas which have potentials for attracting tourists.

Though there are environmental regulations to control the sand mining, it did not protect the resources because of the lapses in the implementation mechanism, corruption and

bribery in the enforcing authorities. It is obviously seen that most of the sand dunes are vanished and in several places the surface has gone below mean sea level leading to sea water intrusion. Sand mining has depleted the resources that were in abundance in the entire areas. The sand mining has undermined the trees and plants that were on those sand dunes and they have fallen to the ground. The sand mining causes many environmental degradation in the area. The ocean waves tend to reach

several land areas which were created depression in many places by sand mining.



Figure 11a: Sand Mining from Eastern Coast
Source: Field Visit

It has been observed that the green vegetation though sparsely spread, has been disappearing due to human and natural factors. Palmyrah plants, casuarina and other wild species of plants are widely existing in the region. Palmyrah plants existing throughout the areas. In the Northern part of the areas, Manlkadu and Kudathanai are having relative larger areas of casuarina trees. People in the areas and outside tend cut trees for firewood and timber purposes. Though there are regulations to restrict the felling of trees, the destruction continues to be in progress.

There are unplanned development taking place in smaller scale due to the lower threshold of population in the area. Even though, there are Local Authorities enforce the planning and building regulations, they are violated by people frequently. There are unplanned and unauthorized developments in different nature such as houses, business structures. Due to the unplanned nature of development, those development are undertaken in unsuitable locations with substandard features. These unplanned development will cause negative consequences and incompatible developments. There are

cemeteries and crematoriums within the residential areas which may cause many inconveniences. The residential developments are undertaken with without toilets, wells, drainage provisions and substandard facilities rooms, windows and ceiling heights.

Opportunities for Tourism Development

Government has brought up a policy to promote tourism in Sri Lanka as a strategy to promote economic development. That policy has been designed to facilitate all types of investment and development related to tourism to take place without much difficulties. It is expected to encourage more tourists and various provisions have been embedded to facilitate this scenario.

Post war development drives are on motion targeting war affected places. Many investment on infrastructure development have been routed to remote places like Vadamarachchi east and this area also will be allocated. Now the war is over and the cause that hampered to the progress of the region has gone. So the strategic investment on infrastructure and economy will attract those who displaced to other places.

Diaspora is a great opportunities to attract foreign investment. There are Tamil people from Vadamarachchi and other parts of the peninsula who have interests in investing in the region. The palmyrah plantation, silica sands and marine resources are very valuable raw materials that will attract the investment from diaspora.

Threats to Tourism Sector

Eastern coastal belt is vulnerable for tsunami disaster since the coast is bordering with Indian Ocean where the active plates are converging below Indonesia. During the last tsunami in 2004, the entire stretch of the coast were smashed by giant waves. This vulnerability constraints the large scales investment along the coast line. If buffer zone is maintained for development, it will exclude the resourceful sand beaches from valuable development.



Figure 11b: Land Mined Areas in Nagarkovil
Source: Field Visit

Another threat is climatic Change and sea level rise. If the sea level rise, certain part of the areas will be absorbed by the sea. Another consequence of the climate change is that the existing crisis of drinking water will be aggravated further affecting all economic activities and settlements. The existing aquifer may dry up if the temperature goes up and rainfall decline in the region.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

If plants resilience to dry conditions are planted and nurtured, they will improve the environmental conditions better. If more areas are covered with green vegetation, it will reduce the impacts of dry condition. The water holding capacity of the soil is improved by increasing the organic contents of the soil, the moisture conditions will support plant growth and reduce the effects of dry conditions.

If the water flow into the sea is restricted, more ground water can be preserved for human consumption. The recycling and reuse of water must be promoted among the people in the area. Used water can be used for agriculture and irrigation purposes.

The connectivity needs to be improved by making new connections and extension of exiting road. The road that runs from Point Pedro through the coastal belt up to Chundikulam can be extended up to Mullaitivu. If this connection is created, the entire coastal areas will be opened for wider accessibility. The connectivity within the areas also need to be improved substantially. Regular and grid based connectivity between the main road and the beach is important to access the coastline at required points.

The road condition must be improved to facilities the mobility of the visitors. The width of the roads must be improved by widening and surface must be carpeted for fast movements. The road space must be supplemented with walking and cycling space. 3 meters of space for cycling and walking will facilitate the local people and tourist on foot. This will help to create a people friendly environment which do not depend on automobile. Due attention must be given when the condition and width of the roads are improved, the fast vehicle mobility will affect the movements and safety of local people. It is unfair to compromise the wellbeing of the local people for the sake of providing better facilities for tourists. Walking and cycling spaces are allocated in all roads that will more benefit the local people than the outsiders because, the local people rely more on bicycles and walking. Pedestrian crossing at required locations and at least in 400 meters interval where people tend to cross the roads.

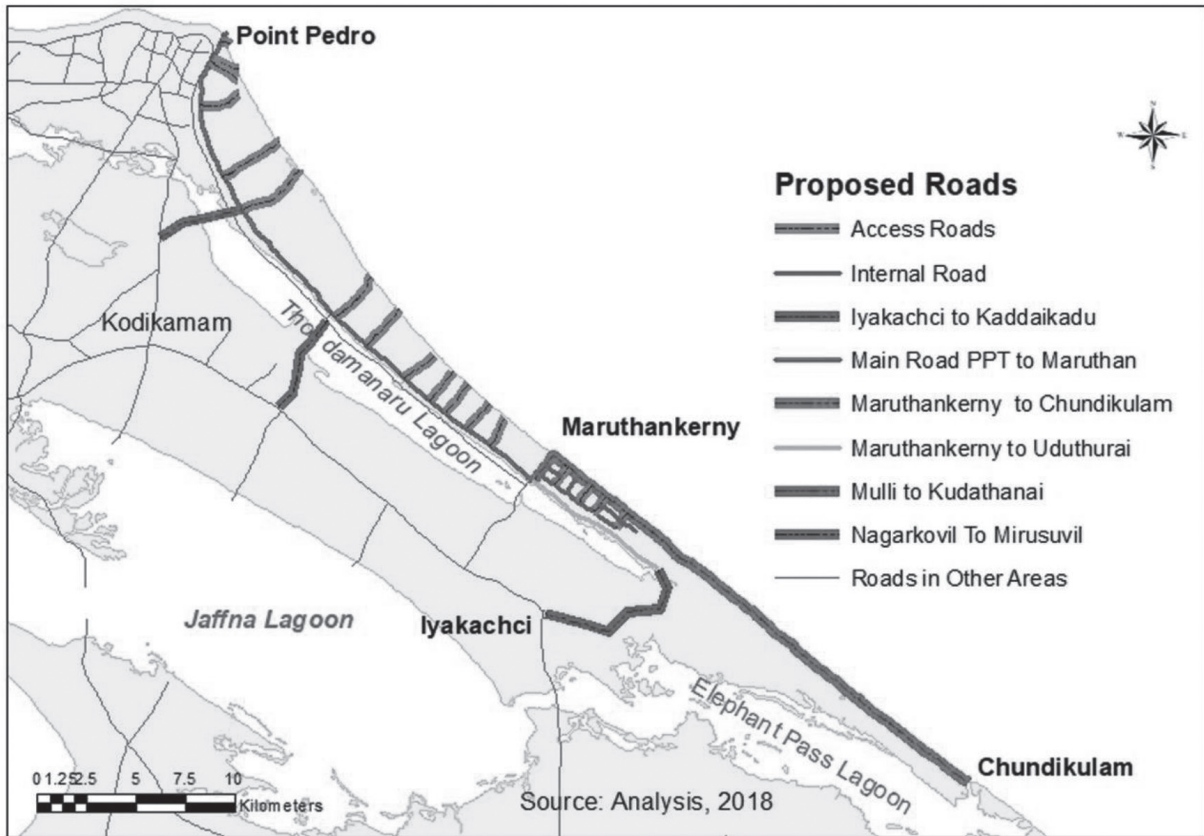


Figure 10: Road Network to be Improved in the Eastern Coast

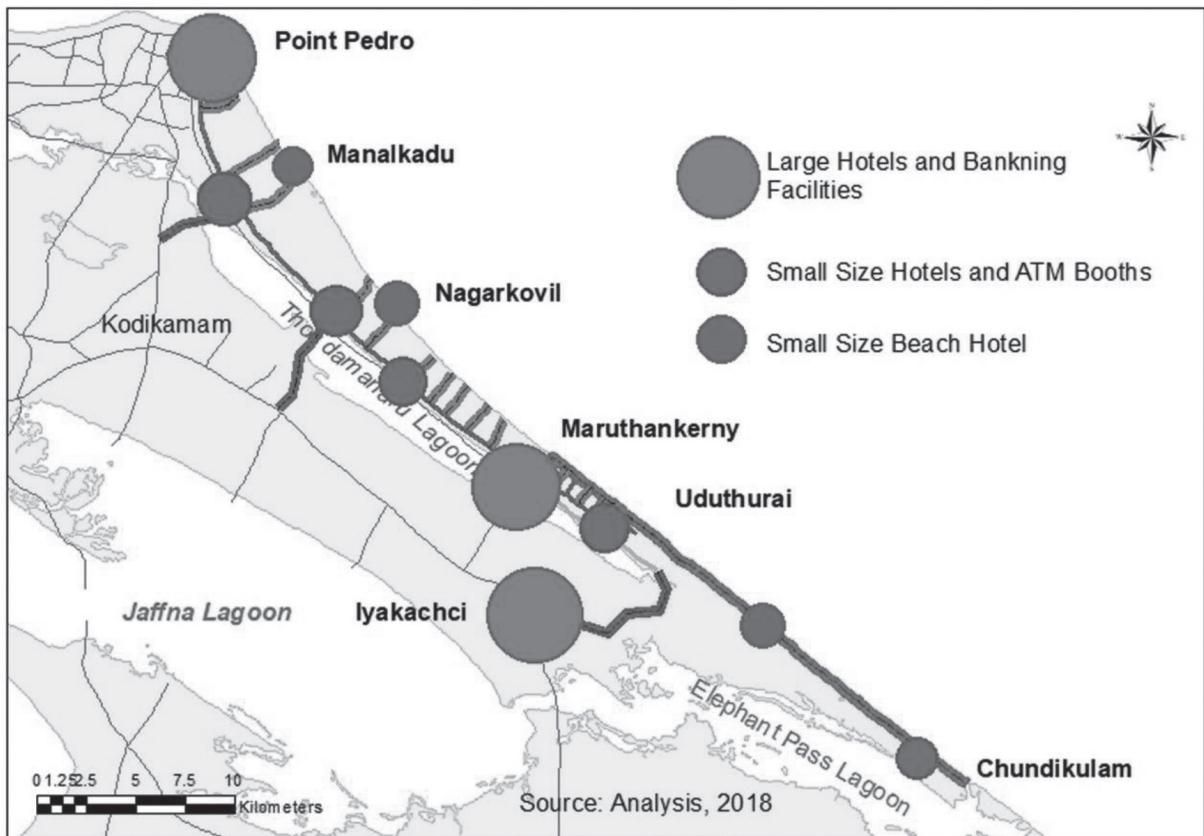


Figure 11: Proposed Tourist Hotels in Vadamarachy Est Region

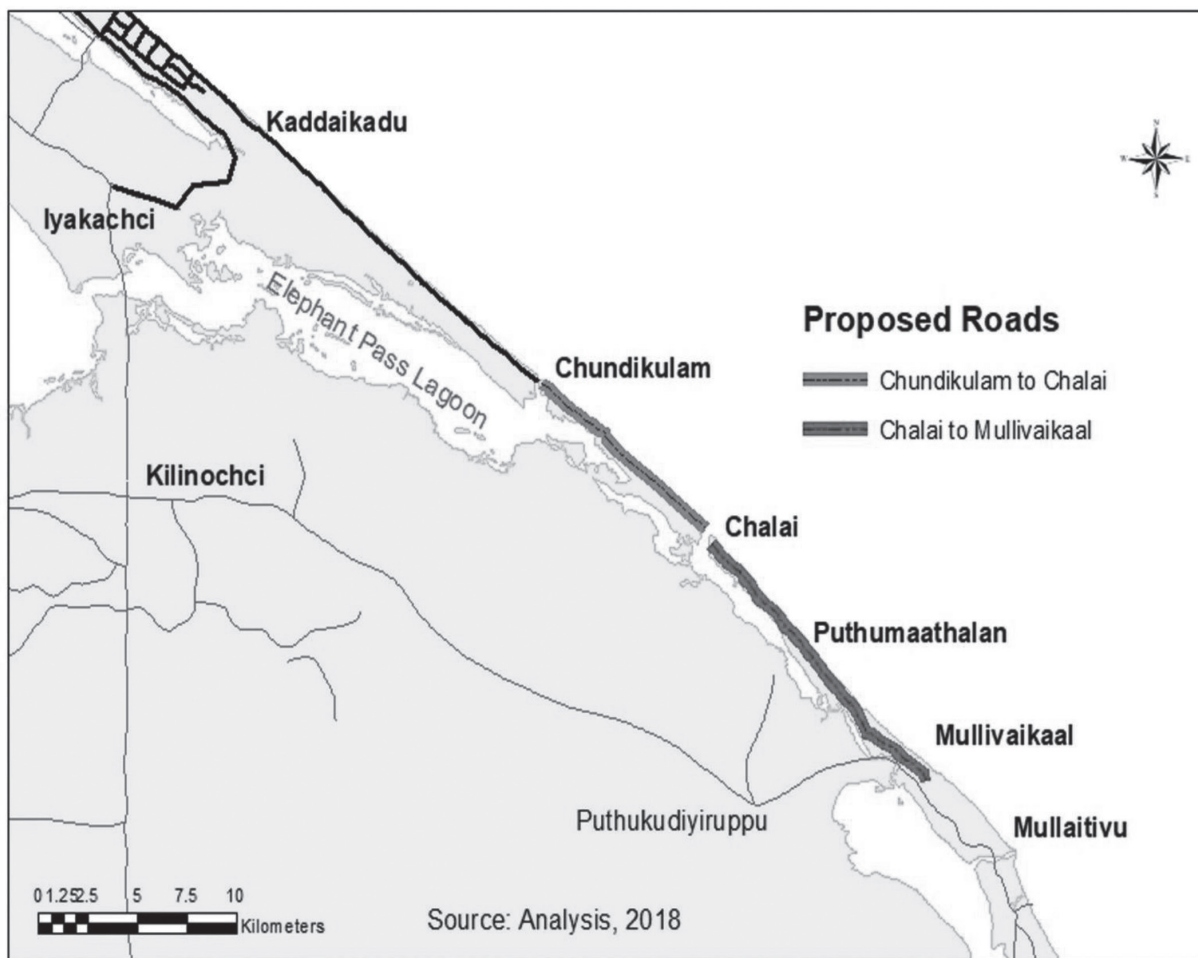


Figure 12: Proposed Road Connectivity to Mullaitivu

Accommodation facilities with different range of facilities must be made available in different locations for low, middle and high income people. The accommodation need to have swimming pools, liquor shops, cafeteria and laundry facilities. The hotels and other accommodation facilities need to have reliable broadband internet connections and wireless services.

It is necessary the hotels and accommodation places need to have electronic payment facilities.

These facilities such as ATM points needs to be installed in different places such as Manalkadu, Kudathanai, Ampan, Nagar Kovil, Maruthankerny, Thalaiady, Vettilaikerny, Kaddaikaadu. It is convenient if braches of banks in Kudathanai, Ampan, Thalaiady, Uduthurai and Vettilaikerny are opened which will serve the local and foreigners. The banks need to have account based transactions and provisions for changes of foreign currencies.

Creating those facilities in the area where population is very low may be a challenging tasks. Investment in some infrastructure development may require longer time

to recover. Therefore, there must be a public – private partnership to plan and invest in infrastructure development to support the tourism activities. The tourism sector can bring much investment and economic opportunities to the area which will have catalyst effects on development. If more employment and economic opportunities are created in the area related to agriculture and fisheries, it will attract people lead to increase the population. The improvement and development of educational health facilities will attract more people from adjacent areas and those displaced from these areas due to the war in the past or lack of those facilities. Local people and people displaced from these areas prefer to educate their children and that may be the reason they stay in other places because of the lack of facilities in the coastal areas.

There should be several measures to be undertaken to control the issues of sand mining. It is acceptable that there are higher demand for sands for constructions which need to be supplied through regulated means. There are number of areas in Jaffna where there are enough sand resources available which can be used with proper guidelines. There should be very strict

regulations to prohibit arbitrary mining of sands in the areas. There should be zones identified for sand

mining away from the coastal areas which may not lead to environmental degradation. The come accrued from the sand resources, needs to be used for the development of the local areas. Though the sales of those sand resources give substantial income, none of them are used for the development of local communities.

Replantation of different species of trees are necessary in many parts of the areas, Vallipuram, Kudathanai, Manalkadu, Ampan, Thalaiady, Uduthurai, Vettilaikerny and Kaddaikadu. It will improve the green cover and sustain, if native plants such as palmyrah are used for replantation. It is necessary to plant trees along the coastal belt that will minimize the effects of natural disasters such as tsunami and wind effects and windblown sands. The improvement of vegetation in the coastal areas will improve the environmental aesthetic qualities of the environment.

It is essential to create awareness among the people about the importance of planned development and the procedures of getting planning and building permission for their development. It is essential to keep the minimum lot size to 2 larcham, scale unit used for measuring lands in Jaffna, in order to maintain the environmental and aesthetic quality of the area. The larger plot size will maintain the optimum density of the settlements avoiding congested development.

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