

Development of Sustainable Ecotourism Capabilities: A Case Study in Mandaitivu Island, Jaffna

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In spite of degradations of natural resources by anthropogenic activities and lack of apparent options, there are potentials for ecotourism development in Mandaitivu Island. The ecotourism improves the livelihood of local communities and conservation of natural resources. The major objective of this study was to analyze the potential of sustainable ecotourism in Mandaitivu Island. The study was conducted through a field survey using convenience sampling method interviewing 120 target participants (i.e.60 locals and 60 tourists). According to the study, the main potentials for ecotourism opportunities available in the Mandaitivu Island include diverse species of birds, some mammals, scenic landscapes, mangrove forests, sea grass beds and stunning beaches. Mangrove encroachment, sand mining and expansion of farming activities were revealed as the major problems caused to the degradations of natural resources of the island. The study has identified the income generating alternatives through potential ecotourism opportunities which could help to reduce the present degradations of natural resources. The analyses of the study exposed that there is a positive attitude among the 68.3 % of the local community towards ecotourism. The potential for protection of natural resources showed a significant relationship (P: 0.0007). The potential employment opportunities for youth is significantly and positively (P: 0.0000) influenced by ecotourism. The development of ecotourism will bring benefits and creating job opportunities for members of local communities with tourism involvement. The local residents agreed with the proposed sustainable ecotourism significantly and positively as they needed more environmental education (P: 0.0000) to support the ecotourism practices. Tourism will improve access to attractive ecotourism locations and stimulate the development of new facilities and services mainly infrastructure and communication. However, some negative impacts mainly cultural modification and waste accumulation also could be identified. Finally, introducing sustainable ecotourism is an important strategic direction for sustainable management of natural resources and improving alternative economic opportunities in Mandaitivu Island.

Key words: Opportunities, Community, Mandaitivu, Natural resources, Ecotourism