



SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Proper management practices could contribute towards the attainment of social and environmental sustainability. However, determining proper management practice require an understanding of the attitudes of those involved. This paper examines the Sri Lankan context of community tourism initiatives that is integrated with participatory natural resource management programmes. Focusing on participation readiness of the community in terms of their attitudes towards tourism development, their commitment, and the existing community capacity, the study employs a mixed method with predominantly qualitative approach to obtain data and analyze two communities of similar nature. It critically evaluates the efforts of community empowerment programmes delivered by the state institutions and non-governmental organizations in the selected areas. It also discusses of repercussions of generic issues in existing policy and legislation of the country that can have significant bearing on community empowerment efforts as well. The findings reveal that in the study context, the 'community capacity' and 'community commitment' factors are very subjective and can affect the success of community participation considerably despite the community's positive attitudes towards tourism development. Thus, empowering local communities to become self-reliant in tourism, and helping them to raise incomes and improve their standards of living has become a key challenge in this context. The findings draw attention on the pressing need for understanding inherent weaknesses of rural communities and external factors affecting the success of these initiatives. The implication is the need for change in technicalities in the present approach of community tourism development – one that provide policies that recognize, and facilitate community's participation in tourism development.

KEYWORDS :Community Tourism, Community Participation, Participation Readiness, Environmental Conservation, Sri Lanka

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The role of tourism is undeniable for socio-economic development of communities, provided that they have the motivation for productive involvement. In addition, they should possess or should have access to resources with tourism potential. In a context where new forms of (alternative) tourism are emerging, community heritage and resources are now increasingly becoming decisive inputs for this form of tourism development in particular. In order to bring in the best out of this available opportunity, it needs to turn efforts of the community and other stakeholders into successful collaborations and

partnerships encouraging good practices in community tourism wherever possible. Sri Lanka's perception on alternative form of tourism is not clearly evident and therefore, the position of community participation in nature based tourism is quite susceptible. It needs to reassess the efforts of tourism development, adapting properly to case specific local conditions in order to address the aspirations of the communities affected. When promoting alternative forms of tourism in particular, it has been assumed that community participation is needed to be harnessed as such development demands community inputs of different

nature. Thus, there is a pressing need of recognising opportunities of environmental conservation efforts that could develop into successful participatory nature based tourism initiatives

Community based nature tourism (CBNT) development could play a vital role in linking and achieving multiple objectives as mentioned above. However, the concept of participatory tourism development approach appears not to have been fully considered in the context of developing nations (Tosun, 2005). Despite community participation in tourism, aspect of natural resource management is also a critical concern in designing and managing of community tourism initiatives since resource ownership is more often collective. The success is achieved not only from repeat patronage, but preservation of the physical and social environments of the locals utilized for development (Wearing & Neil, 1999). Despite the rising expectations regarding the value of community tourism in many fields of expertise, the decisions about community tourism are being made in a relative vacuum of research data and knowledge. Thus, there are great gaps in the information necessary to plan and manage initiatives of this type and, apparently, it requires further research in order to bridge the above said gaps (Boo, 1990; Valentine, 1993). Thus, the case specific knowledge on current practices is vital to have and such contribution is primarily expected to deliver by studying the problem especially defined and described above.

Goodwin and Santilli (2009) claim that, whilst many community tourism initiatives have been funded in developing countries, their success (or otherwise) has not been widely monitored and, therefore, the actual benefits to local communities remain largely un-quantified. Thus, this has been a subject of much debate at policy, planning, and operational levels as far as realisation of objectives are concerned. And still there are existing gaps in the case-specific knowledge necessary to reach full potential in performance of those initiatives by overcoming impediments. According to a study undertaken by Goodwin and Santilli (2009) by considering 116 community tourism initiatives from all over the world which have been nominated by 134 participants who replied in a survey, found only four of initiatives were only economically sustainable. These observations substantiate that the link between the conservation objective and the objective of local socio-economic development is inadequate. For instance, there has been a great deal of discussion about the contributions of tourism to community well-being, very little is visible in rural Sri Lanka as well. The backdrop of these thoughts provide some meaningful way in identifying

the problem within the context where CBNT initiatives failed to deliver and sustain expected benefits consistently; but notably certain cases demonstrate interest and sensible success in protection and conservation of environmental values but their future may be quite susceptible with unrealised community expectations. However, this understanding largely depends on surface level observations. Therefore, it demands for an in-depth study in order to comprehend nature of the issue, its cause and associations.

This study aims to identify the conditions under which the participation of the local community can be improved and challenges that the stakeholders must overcome to make this possible. CBNT is used here as an umbrella-term to portray various initiatives with and by the community in the field of participatory natural resource management that linked with community based nature tourism development in Sri Lanka. The objective of CBNT development generally covers various aspects, such as, establishing alternative sources of income for communities through mobilizing resources available, diversification of local economy, conservation possibilities through economic impacts, and promotes sustainable use of resources with collective ownership.

Many CBNT initiatives of the country have experienced failures. For example, Ranasinghe (2009) states that, Walathwewa community tourism initiative was out of operation even before the participatory natural resource management project has been completed. And according to the President/SLETF (personal communication, September 22, 2009), Bundala community camping initiative and Nilwala community tourism initiative can also be claimed as failures. These evidences substantiate the weak relationship between the objectives of conservation and rural socio-economic development. Despite the great deal of discussion about the contributions of tourism to community well-being, very little is visible in rural Sri Lanka. Although superficial observations indicate commendable success in the protection and conservation of environmental values, success for community values is still largely unrealized. Thus there is a need to understand why CBNT initiatives have failed to deliver and sustain expected benefits consistently; such understanding entails an in-depth study in order to comprehend nature of the issue, its cause and associations.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the study, both primary and secondary data have been used. The primary data collection was mainly based on semi-structured and

unstructured interviews. Those were conducted in the Sinhala language, except the interviews with the respondents from CEGA, Arugam Bay Tourism Association (ABTA) and foreign resource persons, which was conducted in English. In addition to interviews, field notes were taken wherever necessary and a self-completion questionnaire that has been used for the community survey on a selected sample from each community (used only for major case studies) also contributed as primary sources of data collection. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, except for the interviews with respondents from governmental institutions. The files containing digitally recorded interviews (voice data) were transferred to the computer and saved in separate folders. The format of audio tracks was compatible to playback using the windows media player. The procedure has been initiated for producing a written version of the interviews, which is called transcribing. Accordingly, all semi-structured interviews have been transcribed. Thus verbatim of transcripts of conversations were developed manually, first in Sinhala and then translated into English. As a result, the documents in text format were created by using MS Word software. This tape analysis was performed for the unstructured interviews. While listing to the audio tracks of those interviews, the notes were taken of the sections which contain particularly useful information and key quotations for the use of analysis.

Examination of existing documents such as research reports, grants proposals, development plans, constitutions & by-laws, agreements, and statistical compilations have been used as secondary sources of data subject to the availability. It was also expected to obtain general demographic data from the community survey. To understand the general socio-economic background is important, because its main focus was to have an idea on attitude of the community about potential tourism development in their locals. In order to achieve this objective, in addition to the primary data obtained from the survey, the use of secondary data has been considered and such data which were available at officers in each Grama Niladari Division (GND) have been accessed (GND) (the smallest civil administrative unit available at village/local level.

The questionnaire and an interview protocol were developed based on the research questions, findings of the literature review, background information including the general industry behaviour and awareness on CETIs. However, few revisions were made to the initial interview protocol during the data collection phase, to adopt it to each research site because CETIs vary in terms of

organization, structure, functionality, and as well as those initiatives are at different stages of development as well. The questionnaire consisted of five attitude measurement statements (multi-item scale), on which five-point summated rating scale has been used with- 1, 'strongly disagree' to 5, 'strongly agree'. Apart from that, one opinion indicator was also included in the same questionnaire, for obtaining the opinion of the each community surveyed on expected future development of tourism in their locals. This self-administrative type questionnaire was used at two research sites, on which the major cases were developed. This survey was conducted to complement the major inquiry which has been conducted qualitatively. The respondents were invited to a place in their respective villages as previously arranged and the survey was carried out.

Validity and reliability are ensured by referring closely to previous work undertaken in assessing host community attitudes in the field of tourism, WTO's (1995) guide on development and the use of indicators, the context in which they are going to be used. The measurement scale developed for the attitude survey consisted with five items and used appropriate wordings in order to ensure positive correlation among them. A pre-testing of the instrument was carried out on 30 households selected based on a convenient sample for the purpose of both testing and further refining the instrument. Reliability test was run by using SPSS and calculated the Cronbach's alpha for the indicators included in the questionnaire used for the community attitude survey (except for the opinion indicator). The results of the reliability test are: Cronbach's alpha = 0.797; Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items = 0.791; and No. of Items 5. According to the "rules-of-thumb that use to interpret alpha value" (Hair et al., 2007: 244), the value of 0.79 is considered as "good" in terms of the strength of association is concerned. Thus, it can be concluded that five-items can be combined to measure the degree of positive attitudes of a local community towards their involvement in tourism in a consistent manner. Based on the household registry, the sample sizes for above two research sites were selected as 105 and 85 respectively (including approximately 10 percent of additional selection) and the simple random sampling method was used for selecting the respondents.

A summated rating scale attempts to measure attitudes or opinions and often use a five-point or seven-point scale to assess the strength of agreement about a group of statements that typically all relate to a single concept (Hair et al., 2007). 4 "Cronbach's alpha is a reliability

coefficient that indicates how well the items in a set are positively correlated to one another. Cronbach's alpha is computed in terms of the average inter-correlations among the items measuring the concept" (Sekaran, 2003: 307); "Coefficient alpha ranges from 0 to 1. ... Researchers generally consider an alpha of 0.7 as a minimum, although lower coefficients may be acceptable depending on the research objectives" (Hair et al., 2007: 244).

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A community is a vital element as it plays a dual role in tourism development. First, tourists have often attracted by the distinct life styles of the host community. Second, the participation and support of the local community in numerous ways in tourism is essential to its long-term sustainability. This relationship is developed when communities interact either directly or indirectly with both visitors and the industry. Hence, the local communities cannot simply be avoided in tourism development of a country, particularly when it takes place in marginalized or in remote rural areas. Moreover, community tourism improves avenues to mobilize social capital available in communities, sustains local knowledge, socio-cultural values, and traditional lifestyles and fosters on value addition opportunities for the tourism industry of the entire destination.

The notion of alternative tourism is being in the centre of discussion, in most occasions when community development takes place provided that tourism potential resources are available. Repositioning of Sri Lankan tourism product is also a current requirement of the industry. It demands quality potential resources as it depends on them for long term sustainability. The contribution of the local community must be an important consideration in the context since there are potentials and prospects of developing community tourism based on available resources. Because, it is easy to obtain the rights to access natural resources that are under the management of state agencies when collective community participation is concerned.

CBNT is based on natural resources that fit well into sustainable resource management principles. It can be positively contribute to conserve natural resources and as well as benefiting the community by promoting alternative sustainable livelihoods. Being world's one of bio diversity hot spots, Sri Lanka has tremendous advantage for promoting alternative forms of tourism. In order to make this possible, there must be considerable shift from command and control approach to participatory approach where active community involvement is taken into consideration as a vital input in the process of natural

resource management. From tourism industry point of view, there is a growing concern for product diversification as well. Given this background, there is very conducive environment for developing and promoting community tourism in Sri Lanka.

In community development literature, positive attitudes, resource availability, and commitment of the community members are considered as vital inputs. The same inputs are also required in any effort to develop CBNT initiatives. Table 1a and Table 1b show the findings of community attitude survey. The results of the survey have been revealed that attitudes of the community vary according to their understanding, experience and exposure to the tourism industry. For example, both communities have showed that they have positive attitudes towards tourism while Rekawa community is relatively significant on the same aspect due to their exposure to tourism in their local setting.

Community attitudes that favour tourism development is highly essential, without which, community tourism may not be successful. Community awareness is a key element that could make a substantial attitude change in this regard. According to this study's findings, positive attitude of the communities that prefer conservation and sustainable use of resource was a result of awareness programmes that disseminate the knowledge on environmental consequences, particularly on undesirable impacts that they are mainly responsible for. In other words, these programmes were successful in improving their understanding on natural resource conservation issues. Both cases of this study have showed substantial evidences to prove this. However, community's attitude about tourism, on the other hand, was quite different from this and varies substantially among community members even prior to awareness campaigns or gaining any experience. The study further reveals that negative perception of certain community members was basically due to misunderstanding about foreign tourists rather than tourism. Their reluctance to welcome tourists was mainly because of perceived negative impacts of international tourism to their culture.

From economic point of view, resource endowment is the base of the process of developing CBNT. The marginalised communities are more often not in a position to find the right combination of resources enabling them to develop their own livelihoods. For example, the use of and substitution of labour has its own limitation within the context of those communities. As the study recognises, the use of volunteer labour as an input in community development activities is no longer

successful. Since there is an obvious opportunity cost which is highly influential in communities who are depending on rural subsistence agriculture. In most occasions, it has created unrest among the communities. This means that the use of volunteer labour for community development beyond a certain level is not practical and this must be taken into consideration wherever community involvement is taking place in a development. In addition to labour, land tenure of the community is also a determinant of the degree of potential community participation. However, most coastal communities in particular are losing property rights day by day, making land tenure a complicated issue. Both local investors and foreigners purchase properties (lands) belonging to members of such communities. Those lands are often of high commercial value being located on to the coastal belt which is ideal for tourism development. Since most of the locals in these areas do not have the capacity to invest in tourism, they were compelled to sell. As a result, those communities are losing their position in bargaining over the development decisions that take place in their locality.

The interactions of enforcement agencies are obvious in marginalised communities living adjacent to natural resources like forests, wildlife, or marine ecosystems. Since controlling aspects of natural resources have been prioritised, this regulatory framework is relatively rigid. However, "considerable change in the approach now hopes for better community participation than before. But still we experiencing too much technical and regulatory limitations that difficult us to adapt to certain contexts" (Deputy Conservator of Forests/DF, personal communication, December 15, 2009). The community participation in CETIs should be encouraged by means of supportive legislation and regulatory mechanism. It is important that rights of the community to access natural resources be given to avoid unsustainable and illegal use of the resource.

In addition to positive attitude and community capacity, commitment is also a driving force behind a successful community tourism development. It is therefore, vital to understand how committed the community is in engaging with their own development activities. CBNT initiatives of this study have demonstrated outstanding commitment by the respective communities, particularly at the initial stage of their development. They are typical examples for the achievement of this nature. However, maintaining such commitment has been proven difficult among these communities. And misguided and less performing these initiatives have experienced complications in maintaining community commitment

requiring them to reorganise themselves before any success is to be attained.

Empowerment is another influential factor in community development. Understanding power relationships among various community members are important in order to empower communities because meaningful empowerment requires changes in power relations. In other words, if power can change, then empowerment process can be easily accommodated. Therefore, the concept of empowerment depends upon the idea that power can expand and this reflects our common experiences of power existences in relations between people and places. Power is a factor that determines most deliverables in development processes and as well as potential access to those by various stakeholders. Moreover, power is of direct relevance to participation readiness. Since power exists and occurs within individuals and groups of the community for various reasons; as Spear and Hughey (1995) state, "...most important is the understanding that a reciprocal relationship exists between development of power for community organizations and individual empowerment for organisation members" (729). This reflects not only the ability of the community and its individuals to be involved and have influence in collective decisions, but also how well they are able to take decisions that affect their lives, their ability to bargain over development decisions, their responding ability, their willingness to take calculated risks, their access to necessary information, their competencies in mobilizing social capital, and their ability to bargain with external parties and deal with supportive mechanisms.

However, power imbalances that exist among community members are a common occurrence. The traditional power patterns in rural communities may resist or may not support collective decisionmaking due to heavy dominance by local elites or existence of traditional community or religious leadership. In most Sri Lankan rural communities, traditional power bases are still in dominance. In this context, development process of CBNT, like any other collective economic activity that takes place in rural settings requires power sharing. Therefore, empowering communities is inevitable. Participation readiness of the community largely depends on a successful empowerment process. As observed during the study, such empowerment processes are rather ad-hoc or less comprehensive. Therefore, they have not been able to deliver the expected. This issue has been discussed further under the 'inconsistent facilitation' by the convener below.

In absence of many successful stories in CBNT, this is an attempt to identify possible conditions that would determine the success of those initiatives. In other words, the idea here is to review factors (both internal and external) that inhibit the success of CBNT. The review gives particular attention to shortcomings in the present policy and tourism development approaches, and issues related to the establishment of strong institutional support, the role of convener, the scope of CBNT, multiple uses of natural resources, the implementation/organisational weaknesses, the community leadership and management issues, and the lack of entrepreneurial market orientation.

Facilitation, regulation and control (where necessary) by enforcement and sectoral agencies are still inadequate. This is mainly because of the lack of recognition for developing and promoting recreational facilities within the existing legal and policy framework. As a result, tourism related opportunities have not been exploited and objectives of CBNT were not reached fully. Government recognition of alternative tourism is essential to ensure formulation and implementation of effective policy measures with suitable organisational and administrative setting. As found in this study, institutional support at the time of the fieldwork was not at best. Tourism policy and planning, inter-sectoral coordination and poor relationship issues among line ministries (for example, line ministries of central and provincial governments) have not been adequately addressed or improved to give room for community tourism growth.

In certain cases attention has been paid to address generic issues in the legislative environment related to the protection and conservation of natural resources. However, not much attention is given to the issue of alternative tourism. This creates confusion among the community which discourages them from participating actively. As Deputy Director/DWC says, "authorities need to improve understanding in order to work collaboratively with the community" (personal communication, August 22, 2008). This is a considerable fact in fields of natural resource management where the involvement of state agencies is significant. Similarly, it is also vital to maintain proper coordination among different state agencies as well.

The failure of relevant authorities to establish an administrative or an implementing unit under the given provisions in the current Specified Tourism Services Code of the Tourism Development Act had some significant bearing on the success of community tourism initiatives. According to President/SLEF, this need has been recognised by the Advisory Committee, appointed by the

Minister of Tourism in 2008 on community tourism. The committee has further recommended establishing this unit under the Ministry of Tourism or Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (personal communication, September 22, 2009). If such institutional support exists, CBNT efforts can improve via well designed guidelines, standards. The positioning of a regulatory mechanism will also help potential communities in the country to offer quality products. Unfortunately, to the time of this study's fieldwork, tourism authorities have not been able to make any significant contribution by taking appropriate action.

Some preliminary measures have already been taken by the Sri Lankan Ministry of Tourism by selecting several sites (villages) in the country for developing a pilot programme for community tourism (President/SLEF, personal communication, September 22, 2009), but conventional planning approaches involved may minimise the chances of community to get involved meaningfully and, therefore, expected progress of this programme is uncertain. As Mowforth and Munt (1998) note, the significance of participation of local community as one of the criteria often agreed as essential to the condition of sustainability in any 'new' tourist project.

From the community point of view, their capacity development is deemed essential for pushing CBNT forward. NGOs and the private sector could contribute in numerous ways for capacity development of the community, since at initial stage communities are greatly lacking skills required to plan, design, and operate tourism initiatives. Because of this reason, community initiatives are heavily donor or convener dependent. Involvement of external agencies is usually in the areas of funding, skills development, and awareness building. In the area of awareness building, the most successful method would be field demonstrations (study tours) organised by the convener. This type of study tours includes both local and foreign exposure on community tourism. In addition to study tours, training opportunities are also provided to community members at various stages. However, this approach seems to be mostly ad-hoc due to lack of proper planning and existing capacity limitations, mainly funding. Assistance delivered in this form is often termed as 'projects' and execution is often informal. Thus, they lack a holistic, more comprehensive approach.

Another salient feature in Sri Lankan CBNT initiatives is their narrow scope of operation. In other words, these initiatives are confined to few service areas, such as provision of guided nature tours, interpretation services, provision of camping facilities, recreational boat rides etc. To become a more versatile organization, CBNT

initiatives need to exploit other ways of involvement like provision of supplementary lodging, tourist transportation, promoting excursions (outside the community) for visitors and so on. This would enable them to capitalise on existing flows of tourists. In addition, these initiatives are not in a position to accommodate guests for long stays or even for a couple of days due to inapt organisation of facility or inadequate capacity in operations. Revenue generation is relatively low due to low value addition. Community heritage has not been properly recognised as an asset that could substantially improve value addition. There is much more to be done to make use of community heritage in total tourist product offering. This can be identified as a common inherited weakness of CBNT initiatives. Consequently, poor value addition and poor product diversification are key challenges and that must be dealt with using appropriate strategies.

Socio-economic development in a community is largely dependent on the availability of natural resources. Tourism potential of such resources should be a decisive factor for development of CBNT. Ownership or access to natural resources is also necessary to stimulate community participation in tourism. For example, forest resources are vital inputs for forest based recreation which, if properly promoted, could benefit the surrounding community. As community in Sri Lanka is largely less dependent on forest resources (Wickramasinghe, 2009), natural resource management programmes with active participation of the community can be developed in order to benefit them while maintaining conservation priorities. But lack of mechanism to educate the community about non-consumptive use of natural resources pose as a threat for the successful implementation of this objective.

Prioritizing natural resource management poses problems for multiple use of a given natural area. The controversy of using Rekawa lagoon for recreational purpose is a typical example. It is noteworthy to mention that the resistance came from different interest groups within the same community, who are members of the Lagoon Fishermen Society. Similar situations have been observed when using inland water bodies such as tanks (reservoirs) which are purpose-built for agriculture. Prior approvals from relevant authorities are needed in order to use these water bodies for recreational purpose. Lack of institutional coordination is responsible for this situation. The weak coordination among stakeholders particularly between government organisations, rigid rules and regulation, too much bureaucracy as well as attitude and lackadaisical working culture among officers are common issues in Sri Lankan intersectoral administration

(President/RCTI and Ex. President/RCTI, personal communication, June 15, 2008 and August 02, 2008 respectively).

Consequently, projects that promote sustainable livelihoods including CBNT were also negatively affected. A recent community outreach programme launched by the Department of Wildlife Conservation in its recent Protected Area Management (PAM) project for example, failed to select its beneficiaries for its fund mobilisation which led to failure of reaching its efficiency targets (Deputy Director/DWC, personal communication, August 22, 2008). It is also noteworthy that they encountered methodological issues when selecting the beneficiaries for Sri Lanka Australia Natural Resource Management Programme (SLANRMP), in Walathwewa village. As President/SLETF mentions in a similar case, Kirala Kele CBNT project has also failed due to implementation weaknesses and wrong attitudes of the officers involved in decision-making (personal communication, September 22, 2009). Apparently the realities on the ground have not been properly studied during the planning stage which leads to irrational decisions during project implementation. Misuse of resources including voluntary labour (of community members) is another serious consequence of this issue that warrants appropriate planning process before implementation of any future project.

Dedicated and visionary community leadership is also a vital factor in the success of CBNT. Communities always enjoy the benefit of having good leaders. According to the cases studied, this factor alone has been able to play a decisive role and contribute positively towards the emergence of leadership from the ordinary community members. "In certain cases, we were highly impressed when there were dedicated and hardworking community leaders who play a vital role in their own initiatives. They are the driving force behind the success. The more they contribute, the more they get" (Tourism Officer/Mercy Corps, personal communication, August 15, 2008). However, the community leadership of WCTI has not been able to put a genuine effort due to poor leadership and lack of vision that allowed the community to be cheated by a greedy individual (President/SLETF, personal communication, September 22, 2009).

The study findings also highlighted that community leadership is almost always non-remunerative due to poor revenue generation of those initiatives. Another observation is that members including community leaders of CBNT initiatives are almost from the same age group. Participation by youths of those communities is not very impressive. "Our youths are not prepared to wait

and see, because they are usually motivated by quicker results. Poor economic background also does not encourage them to involve in less productive activities or if benefits are unpredictable" (Ex. President/RCTI, personal communication, August 02, 2008). Such attitude of the community youth has considerable bearing on participation of communities in the long-term. Therefore, they must be encouraged to get involved.

There is a long list of shortcomings among communities who engaged in CBNT. These include lack of technical skills (for example, managerial skills required for planning, managing resources including cash flows, skills required for service quality, communication skills etc.) and lack of transparency and monitoring. Programmes for transferring necessary technical skills have often been delivered by the convener. But as described earlier, these programmes were more often ad-hoc and less comprehensive. The case of technical assistance provided by relevant authorities for the construction of RCTI's visitor centre was an example. This project was unable to complete for many years as it started with wrong estimations of available funding (Ex. President/RCTI, personal communication, August 02, 2008). In the case of WCTI, misuse of funds and assets due to lack of monitoring were some of issues blamed for its failure (President/SLETF, personal communication, September 22, 2009).

Since CETIs are being commercial ventures, the success rests largely on effective marketing strategy. Weak marketing effort and insufficient backing of the state-of-the-art information and communication technology (ICT) are also common characteristics of CBNT. As a result, those initiatives seriously lack organisational strength by not linking with external institutions or other similar community tourism initiatives (Travel Journalist/Lonely Planet, personal communication, April 22, 2008). He also added that it is important for CBNT initiatives to focus well on special interests market segments and as well as repeat visitors, since they might need to explore Sri Lanka in depth. The success in these marketing activities largely depends on efficient use of ICT. The use of free media publicity is also an option for those initiatives.

In the field of natural resource management state agencies are key stakeholders. Their functions are governed by the respective legislative frameworks which makes them ineffective as conveners of community development. As Deputy Director/DWC says, "a broader understanding on ground realities (of the communities) is essential in order to overcome these limitations" (personal communication, August 22, 2008). This issue has been highlighted particularly in the case of WCTI. In WCTI, members of the respective community claim that the failure

of entering into an agreement with the DF has greatly jeopardized the future of the initiative (Secretary/WCTI and Ex. President/WCTI, personal communication, July 22, 2008 and July 23, 2008 respectively). Thus, the most important aspect is to recognise and define clearly the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and better negotiate for a win-win situation that helps to surmount impediments that discourage community participation.

When communities started to experience the consequences of unsustainable livelihood practices, they began to realise that something fundamental had gone wrong and started to demand action from relevant authorities. This study reveals that improved awareness has substantially changed community attitudes in connection with environmental repercussions. However, participation of the community in conservation activities was generally motivated by monetary rewards. Conservation projects usually bring substantial funding where participatory approaches have been established. Direct labour from the community was often paid-labour. SLANRMP technical assistance under AusAid programme was an example. According to respondents of WCTI, it helped them to earn some income which was badly needed at that time as they were experiencing severe drought for a period of three years which affected their livelihoods especially agricultural pursuits (Treasurer/WCTI and Member/WCTI, personal communication, July 24, 2008 and July 23, 2008 respectively).

The study findings also indicate that welfare mentality of the community members has a considerable impact on their contribution for participatory development activities because communities are often motivated by one-way welfare handouts. According to President/SLETF, "this is nothing but hand-to-mouth, an approach that most communities are interested in" (personal communication, September 22, 2009). Quite a similar situation can be seen in tsunami affected coastal areas of the country where the welfare-dependent mentality of the community becomes a critical social issue at present. Mismanagement of post tsunami relief missions was mainly responsible for creating this situation (Ex. President/RCTI, personal communication, August 02, 2008). In addition, lack of tendency to improve entrepreneurial capabilities among the community members also worsens the matter. However, active participation in nature conservation initiatives has enhanced the awareness of the community on the importance of protection and conservation of natural resources.

Participation of the middle aged members of the community has been highlighted as committed as well as

eager for results. They are particularly sensitive towards maintaining socio-cultural values. As the younger generation is mostly attracted by material benefits, their participation was insignificant. As already emphasised, youths will stay longer in the community and their participation is essential to maintain the link with future generation in transforming traditional skills, beliefs, values and so on. Since both initiatives are not producing attractive results at present, young people feel discouraged from getting involved, despite the importance of their involvement for the long-term success. The findings of the study highlighted that certain demographic factors have influenced differently on community attitudes towards tourism. These factors include level of education received and major source of income. The community members who possess relatively less education levels prefer tourism much compared to those who have higher educational levels. Similarly, those who have inconsistent income sources such as fisheries, self employment, and informal sector have preferred tourism development rather than those who have permanent income sources such as public and private sector employment. However, in general, the attitude towards tourism in communities considered for the study is positive and it is an encouraging factor for policy makers and tourism planners.

Community participation in tourism is challenging since its inception. With the general emphasis on community approach, Hawkins and Cunningham (1996) identify the importance of community participation during the early stages of the planning process as critical in tourism development. However, this process itself is associated with issues and limitations particularly during the stages of planning and implementation. During the study, it has been also identified various such issues and limitations such as absence of specific policy framework; constraints in planning approaches; issues of land use planning, ownership and tenure; cultural and institutional/bureaucratic constraints; weak collaboration; negative attitudes of community; lack of participation readiness; existence of local power bases, political factors and so on.

Another observation is that the potential access to externally available sources of funding for such initiatives has stimulated stakeholder interest and participation to a greater extent. These initiatives essentially look for establishing links between local people and tourism to sustain their long-term wellbeing. Communities who are more dependent on natural resources for their living are mostly subject to the development of this nature. As far as the performance is concerned, the most initiatives are still progressing at a

slower rate and some other are almost out of operations. Low level of operational capabilities and limitations in available opportunities hinder more community members to involve directly even though they are willing to do so. Indirect benefits are being mostly offered to nonparticipatory community members as a compensation for the use of resources of collective ownership. However, indirect benefits are mainly confined to the delivery of social welfare, therefore, it is almost one-way. In general, there is weaker participation by women, particularly in active or direct participation. But their participation is relatively visible in indirect ways. Thus, they mainly have access to indirect benefits and for them it is a part-time source of income.

It has been questioned whether these types of initiatives are capable of generating enough revenue for environmental conservation in the long term. However, it is required to look at this from a different angle. Basic fact is that these initiatives are not having lucrative sources of revenue generation or any generation of revenue is not consistent. Even if they do, the context studied is not demanding high level of environmental conservation efforts that essentially require critical funding to maintain environmental values. Rather, those initiatives were successful in changing attitudes of the community towards environmental conservation, which is more beneficial in the long term. According to Kiss (2004), tourism can generate support for conservation among communities as long as they see some benefit. However, the case of Sri Lanka is quite different from this. Even if such initiatives are not capable of generating much benefit, the study shows that the conservation attitudes of the communities have not been affected considerably. Once strong attitudes have been established towards conservation of natural resources, communities believed that they are primarily benefited from it rather than secondary rewards that the introduction of community tourism would bring. In other words, in this context, community tourism of this nature in Sri Lanka is a secondary response that has been taken up in the process of conservation and natural resource management.

One might argue that, existing situation of the Sri Lanka's tourism industry in general, is responsible for not generating adequate number of visitation for community tourism initiatives. It may be valid to a certain extent but not a very significant factor. Therefore, it is not a reason to discourage. It is important to understand the real volume and value of community tourism and its potential to diversify and induce local economies, create linkages, stimulate multiplier effects, and foster

sustainable resource utilisation. Tourists began incorporating environmentally friendly and culturally protective activities into their travel plans. In other words, the demand for alternative tourism including community tourism exists, because there is a clear prospective market. Hence, no reason can be produced to justify for any failure for such initiatives from market point of view. Lack of organisation at each initiative level and no proper establishment of a network at national and international levels have been recognised as a long-felt weakness of those initiatives. Therefore, Sri Lankan community tourism initiatives are still not in a position to be linked with both national and international community tourism networks for effective marketing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

During the study, there are certain aspects considered, such as, organisation and internal functionality of community tourism initiatives; the role of the convener; inter-organisational relationships; and participation readiness of the community. The findings of the study are leading to some important implications as described above, which can be also recognised as ingredients for best community tourism practices, such as, inputs with right combination (efficient resource mobilisation); visionary community leadership; sound stakeholder collaboration; and responsible intervention by the convener are important consideration. Findings of the study also reveal that resource potentiality, social, and cultural factors are favourable and can contribute immensely to induce community tourism development but not certain economic, political, and technological factors. Moreover, dependency on exiting mass tourism market generally reflects the weakness of marketing effort by each initiative as well as lack of collaborative effort among the initiatives on the same propose. Those who have already accessed to the benefits or at least at the door step of reaping benefits consistently are the ones who possess more understanding, sense of change and responding to it, ability to work collaboratively than others initiatives studied.

It is also important to recognise ways and means that not only the community can benefit from tourism but also how tourism could benefit from community. Therefore, it is crucial to improve measures, in order to place community on right track through a planned process for sustaining their well-being without any failure and before it is too late. The opportunities will not remain same in the future as competitiveness is always on the rise, thus creating challenges of different nature. Hence, if appropriate measures will not be taken responsibly in order to make the basics correct, community tourism could be a missed opportunity in Sri Lanka.

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