

LIVELIHOOD ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ECOTOURISM IN SRI LANKA

Abeywardhana D.M.Y.^{1*} and De Silva K.N.L.²

¹Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

²Department of Sociology, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

*dinuyapa93@gmail.com

Maduganga estuary is the third wetland that has listed under the Ramsar wetlands in Sri Lanka. Ecologically and socially it has a specific capacity that can be strongly contributed to sustainable development of the country. Eco-tourism is the most popular approach promotes the tourism industry in the country as the world tries to achieve economic development with environmental development. Consequently, this sociological study was particularly utilized under the problem statement of "How does the eco-tourism of Maduganga estuary impact on social and environmental wellbeing?" Along with this background, recent exploratory research was conducted use questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth interviews to collect data from respective field of Balapitiya in the Galle District. Maduganga estuary based tourism industry directly constructed the environmental beauty and specific natural species such as endemic fish species, natural mangrove system, aquaculture, and fish caging. Thus the environment has become the main livelihood requirement for this community. Balapitiya area has a traditional culture which combines with number of myths and a newly erected culture going along with the tourism industry. Drug usage of the said area has arisen with the development of hotels and pub houses for tourists. Even though the tourism industry strongly bound to national economic stability, it also has negative impacts on the environmental and social life of the people. Since this ecosystem supplies livelihoods to number of people; it creates an aesthetic value to the environment inside of people's minds. However, emerging of environmental issues has increased because of human activities which grounded of political economy.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Environment, Livelihood environmentalism, Political ecology, Political economy*