



# Tourism and Coastal Development on the Southeast Coast of Sri Lanka:

Report of the Workshop held on 23 Dec 2010 in Pottuvil



IUCN Sri Lanka Country Office



Cover photo: Sunrise in Arugam Bay (R Mahindapala)  
Facing Page 7: Beach at Ullai-Panama (R Mahindapala)  
Page 15 : Arugam Bay beach (R Mahindapala)  
Page 16: Beach at Pottuvil (R Mahindapala)  
Page 22: Arugam Bay beach at sunset (R Mahindapala)  
Page 24: Sunrise at Panama (R Mahindapala)

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## PREFACE

IUCN Sri Lanka organised a short seminar on Tourism and Coastal Zone Management in Sri Lanka on 5 November, 2010 in conjunction with the Regional Steering Committee meeting of the Mangroves for the Future Initiative (MFF). The participants included Sri Lanka Tourism, Coast Conservation Department, Ministry of Fisheries, Hoteliers Association, and Arugam Bay Tourism Association. In the ensuing discussions, a strong need was expressed to examine the tourism development plans for the coastal stretch from Pottuvil to Panama, in the light of the current interest in tourism expansion vis-à-vis coastal zone management.

In response, IUCN in partnership with the National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka arranged a workshop in Pottuvil on 23 December, 2010 under MFF to initiate a dialogue between the various stakeholders. The Sri Lanka National Steering Committee of MFF supported the dialogue which covered subjects such as the current plans for tourism expansion, issues relating to tourism in the area, in particular Arugam Bay, the aspirations of the fisher communities, legislative aspects, and coast conversation aspects.

The dialogue was held with the participation of key government agencies (including district and local representation), fisher communities, and the local tourism sector.

The ready support of the Sri Lanka Tourism, Coast Conservation Department, Hoteliers Association of Sri Lanka, Arugam Bay Tourism Association and the Divisional Secretaries of the concerned areas is very much appreciated,

IUCN Sri Lanka  
January, 2011

National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Following the Seminar on Tourism and Coastal Zone Management in Sri Lanka held on 5 November, 2010 in conjunction with the Regional Steering Committee meeting of the Mangroves for the Future Programme, there was a discussion and a felt need to examine the tourism development plans for the coastal stretch from Pottuvil to Panama, in the light of the current interest in tourism expansion vis-à-vis coastal zone management.

In consequence, IUCN Sri Lanka under its Mangroves for the Future (MFF) Programme<sup>1</sup> together with the National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka<sup>2</sup> organised a workshop on 23 December, 2010 at the Conference Hall, Divisional Secretariat, Pottuvil. The workshop was expected to provide a forum for a dialogue between the various stakeholders, and the discussions were expected to cover subjects such as the current plans for tourism expansion, current issues relating to tourism in the area, in particular Arugam Bay, the aspirations of the fisher communities, legislative aspects, and coast conversation aspects etc. Holding the workshop in Pottuvil enabled the local level key government agencies (including district and local representation), fisher communities, and the local tourism sector to participate. The programme of the workshop is at Annex 1 and the participant list is at Annex 2.

## *Opening Remarks*

In his opening remarks, Dr Ranjith Mahindapala, Country Representative, IUCN Sri Lanka Programme traced the events following the discussions at the seminar held on 5 November, 2010 in conjunction with the Regional Steering Committee of the Mangroves for the Future Programme. He recalled the intense discussions at the meeting, and the need for addressing, as a matter of priority, the issues relating to coastal zone management vis-à-vis tourism development in the south-eastern coastal areas of Sri Lanka. The cessation of hostilities and a brought a new era for tourism in the area, and there are unplanned coastal developments which are causing concern. These concerns have been discussed at the National Steering Committee of the MFF Programme which is represented by both state agencies, private sector and NGOs and it was decided that IUCN should facilitate this discussion. IUCN partnered with the National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka which is able to bring

1 <http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org/>

2 <http://www.nassl.org/>

in the perspectives of national physical planning and other related aspects into the discussion, and as an independent scientific body is able to bring the outcomes of the workshop to the attention of authorities. Dr Mahindapala thanked the invitees, in particular the support of the Divisional Secretary, Pottuvil, the Director General of Coast Conservation, Director of Sri Lanka Tourism, Representative of the Hoteliers' Association, and the Arugam Bay Tourism Association for their presence and for their contributions.



Fig. 1 - Workshop in Progress (Ranjith Mahindapala)

Dr Locana Gunaratna, President of the National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka (NASSL) stated that the NASSL was pleased to be associated in this important national endeavour. He highlighted the importance of the Eastern Province for tourism development, but drew the attention of the participants to the fragility of the ecosystem. These special circumstances called for careful planning for tourism expansion, or for that matter any other development. He also highlighted the need for balancing development with conservation, and called for the support of all concerned in using the resources in a sustainable manner, as people in the area are relatively poor and are dependent on the fishery resources.

Mr U L Niyas, CEO/Divisional Secretary, Pottuvil, speaking on behalf of the District Secretary welcomed the initiative taken by IUCN and NASSL. He stated that he was personally keen on introducing sustainable tourism initiatives in the region, and recalled the discussions that have taken place at the Committee appointed by the Chairman, District Coordinating Committee (DCC), Ampara and chaired by himself. Several general issues as well as specific issues relevant to Arugam Bay have been discussed, and certain decisions have been made. He suggested revisiting these discussions in the light of the presence of important government agencies at this meeting. He also explained the special role he has, in particular in coordinating the important agencies such as the Coast Conservation Department and the Urban Development Authority.

## 2. WORKSHOP OUTPUTS

Five main presentations were made<sup>3</sup>, as follows:

1. Tourism Plans in the Southeast, **Mr P U Ratnayake, Director, Standards & Quality Assurance, Sri Lanka Tourism**
2. Perspectives from the Coast Conservation Department, **Mr Anil Premaratne, Director General, Coast Conservation Department**
3. Tourism Development from Pottuvil to Panama, **Mr Ravi de Silva, Hoteliers' Association of Sri Lanka**
4. Perspectives from the National Physical Planning, **Dr Locana Gunaratna, President, National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka**
5. Viewpoint from Small Hoteliers of Arugam Bay, **Mr M H A Raheem, President, Arugam Bay Tourism Association**

### Key Points from the Presentations<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. Tourism Plans in the Southeast

**Mr P U Ratnayake** in his presentation described the East Coast of Sri Lanka as a very attractive tourist destination because it has distinctive natural resources, an exotic culture, fascinating flora and fauna, a World famous natural harbour, breathtaking view of sunrise, good connectivity by sea, land and air, unparalleled scenic beauty, pristine sea and beach with opportunities for whale watching, safe swimming, and close proximity to national parks. The area also has a unique seasonality. Combined with the land availability, the area has a high potential for eco-tourism.

Arugam Bay has a population of approximately 20,000- 22,000 people, and is a multi communal and multi cultural society. In terms of infrastructure, the road network has improved with A4 road upgraded, and the Monaragala to Panama

3 The Director General of the Ministry of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Development was unable to attend the workshop.

4 Summaries of Presentation are at Annex 3.

stretch is in good condition. The closest aerodrome is at Ampara, and the lagoons in the environs of Arugam Bay can accommodate sea planes. The area is connected to the national grid and electricity supply is adequate; water supply is being improved.

Specific attractions of Arugam Bay include the best surfing beach in Sri Lanka, untouched lagoons, close to the Lahugala, Kumana and Yala east, and Galoya national parks, important archeological sites, farming and mix community and cultures, sand dunes, and rich biodiversity and ecosystems.

The area is visited by both local and foreign tourists, and the important surfing points are Potuvil, Peanut Farm, Arugam Bay Point, Komari and Panama. One of the key attractions of Arugam Bay is the possibility of year-round tourism, due mainly to the weather pattern.

The Government has already prepared plans for tourism development in Arugam Bay. These proposals include establishing a surfing facilities, wildlife Resort and Eco Tourism Facilities for Bird Watching and for Nature Lovers, a Nature Park, agro-tourism, home-stays and establishing camping and other facilities. Additionally, the Government has prepared plans for Sinna Ulla-Shastrawela Area and for Panama- Okanda Area.

## 2. Perspectives from the Coast Conservation Department

**Mr Anil Premaratne**, in his presentation highlighted that Sri Lanka's coastal contain 34% of the population and represents 25% of the land. The coastal regions have the majority of large cities and urban areas, and produce over 90% of the fish. There is high potential for tourism and recreation due to productive habitats such as coral reefs, estuaries, mangroves, etc. with significant mineral sources.

Although Sri Lanka has a coast line of 1520 km, 267 km are protected with hard structures. More than 650 km of coastal areas are wildlife parks or protected coastal areas. About 280 km are high sensitive areas where no other activities can be undertaken. Fish landing sites, anchorages and fishery harbours are about 35 km. Tourist areas are about 140 km. In addition, some areas cannot be further developed due to roads and railway tracks, urban centers and other settlements. Thus the available coastal area for further tourism development is not that high.

The tourism development targets require a proper understanding of the demand and supply. Successful tourism needs nice and clean unpolluted beaches, natural and simple accommodation, environmentally friendly infrastructures and no harassment. Arugam Bay needs to provide these.



Fig. 2 - Constructions abutting the beach at Arugam Bay and Fishery Boats (Ranjith Mahindapala)

The current issues in coastal development requires management solutions such as implementation of the setback regulations for both new constructions and existing buildings, implementation of the building guidelines, maintaining a green belt, preparation and implementation of the zoning plan, and a very effective cohesive and an inclusive awareness programme. The formulation of these solutions has to be a multi-agency task, and will be appreciated by all stakeholders. Mr Premaratne also apprised the participants on the current setback declarations for Ampara district.

### 3. Tourism Development from Pottuvil to Panama

**Mr Ravi de Silva** reminded the participants that many stakeholders are involved in tourism. These include planners, builders, regulatory authorities, skilled labour, managers etc. Tourism gives good returns, but it is necessary to provide a quality service to the tourists. The main question therefore is to know the characteristics of the expected tourists and to find out whether it is possible to supply their demands.

In terms of resources, it is necessary to clearly identify the resources as well as arrange access to it. In the Arugam Bay area, there are resources that would interest the tourists, but if maximum use is to be got, there needs planning, capacity building (say competent guides) etc.



Fig. 3 - Arugam Bay beach with Boat landings (Ranjith Mahindapala)

In terms of developing tourism in Arugam Bay, there are several aspects to be carefully considered. These included inculcating amongst the developers and others involved in tourism the need to conserve environment, strategise on the need for more tourists or better tourists which will have an effect on the need for new infrastructure, need to brand Arugam Bay's unique experiences, exploration of other avenues of tourist attractions using Arugam Bay's resources such as the windy seas, efficient use of energy and water, introduction of a proper Soil Waste Management strategy, adherence to beach reservation as per regulations, introducing suitable transport systems, involvement of the local community, fulfilling the aspirations of the fisher community to reduce conflicts, introducing sustainable fishery practices, and introducing ecotourism as a tool for conservation.

Mr de Silva concluded by emphasizing the need for sustainable development approaches for Arugam Bay as the area has several sensitive ecosystems. Equally, the aspirations of the authorities, developers, planners, suppliers, contractors, managers and communities, which are largely rural and poor, have to be carefully considered.

#### 4. Perspectives from the National Physical Planning

**Dr Locana Gunaratna** highlighted in brief the major components of the Eastern Province Physical Plan prepared by the National Physical Planning Department in 2004. The province is very aptly termed “The Sunrise Region”. The plan has been modified after the Tsunami.

The plan is consistent with the provisions of the National Physical Planning Policy and Plan that were approved by the National Physical Planning Council. Amongst the objectives of plan are to improve the socio-economic conditions in the region, restructure the regional economy with its resources, optimal use of physical and natural endowments in a sustainable manner, enhance economic growth in rural areas through development of non-farm activities, and to create an attractive economic environment for private sector investment.

Mention was made during the discussion on the presentation that plans had been prepared by the Urban Development Authority for some of the towns within the tourism development area. These included Arugam Bay. Considering the changes that have taken place since the cessation of hostilities in the region, it was agreed by all that there is a clear need to revisit these proposals with active participation of the stakeholders.

#### 5. Viewpoint from Small Hoteliers of Arugam Bay

**Mr M H A Raheem** indicated that Arugam Bay area has 54 hotels with about 400 rooms. Although it is a prime surfing area, accommodation facilities available are mediocre, and there is ample scope for development. Tourism is very active for about six months, but there is potential for local tourists. There is also considerable interest in new investment in tourism as well as for upgrading the existing infrastructure.

The presentation highlighted several constraints in regard development of tourism in the area. These include difficulties with state sector agencies in obtaining the necessary approvals, lack of clarity in regard to the roles and responsibilities of different departments/agencies that are involved in the approval processes, inadequate information on Arugam Bay and its environs, poor health-care facilities, poor transport services, and conflicts with fisher community which needs to be addressed as a matter of priority, lack of public utilities, and illegal activities including encroachments that affect both fishery and tourism.

He requested help in developing eco-tourism on a scientific footing, and capacity building of local people to service the tourism sector.



Fig. 4 - Pottuvil lagoon and Mangroves; Potential for Ecotourism  
(Ranjith Mahindapala)

Mr Raheem concluded that these issues will have to be addressed in order to use the potential of Arugam Bay (and up to Panama) as a prime tourism area, which will also result in a happy and harmonious life for the local communities.

### **Panel Discussion**

The following Panel discussed the presentations and provided responses to the queries from the floor.

- Mr U L Niyas, CEO/Divisional Secretary, Pottuvil
- Mr P U Ratnayake, Director, Standards & Quality Assurance, Sri Lanka Tourism
- Mr Anil Premaratne, Director General, Coast Conservation Department
- Mr Ravi de Silva, Hoteliers Association of Sri Lanka
- Mr M H A Raheem, Arugam Bay Tourism Association
- Mr N M M Muzarrath, Addl. Divisional Secretary, Lahugala
- Dr Locana Gunaratna, President, NASSL
- Mr M A C Najeeb, Deputy Director, Central Environmental Authority, Ampara
- Mr Shamen Vidanage, Programme Coordinator, IUCN Sri Lanka
- Mr N L Abeysekera, Range Forest Officer, Ampara



- Mr M H M Marzook, Chairman, Pottuvil Pradeshiya Sabha
- Mr M M Faizer, President, Arugam Bay Tour Guides' Association
- Mr M A Bajeer Ahmed, Land Colonisation Officer, DS Office, Pottuvil

The rich discussions during the Panel's deliberations were used to formulate the recommendations, which follow.





### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel took cognisance of the discussions at the workshop as well as previous discussions by the Committee appointed by the Chairman, DDC and chaired by the Divisional Secretary, Pottuvil.

#### 1. Overall Tourism Planning

- (a) The available tourism plans prepared by the Urban Development Authority have to be reviewed, considering the changes that have taken place since the cessation of hostilities in the region. Preparation of a new master plan needs close and active participation of all stakeholders, in particular the communities. There are already several studies done (by NECCDEP, UDA and Eastern Provincial Council) and these may be taken into consideration.
- (b) This plan need to address the option of more tourists vs better tourists; if it is the latter, infrastructure development can be reduced but the existing facilities may have to be upgraded. This approach is more environmentally friendly.
- (c) The plan must also take into account strategy for inculcating amongst the developers and others involved in tourism the need to conserve environment.
- (d) Preparation and implementation of a zoning plan for Arugam Bay.
- (e) Currently only a few hotels are registered, and a significant number operate without registration. The relevant policies need to be applied. Lack of registration leads to evasion of tax payments also,
- (f) Illegal activities including encroachments are affecting both fishery and tourism. The plan needs to recognise these.
- (g) An integral element in tourism planning is to focus on eco-tourism, the plans for which need to be scientifically validated.

## 2. Branding Arugam Bay

- (a) Arugam Bay's unique experiences need to be branded and sold. Its value as the best surfing area needs to be exploited. Additionally, other avenues of tourist attractions using Arugam Bay's resources need to be explored.
- (b) Information on Arugam Bay and its environs have to be developed using the available literature supplemented with other useful information depicting the natural and cultural heritage.

## 3. Infrastructure Development

- (a) The authorities will have to implement the setback regulations for new constructions; the Coast Conservation Department need to be consulted on the strategy for old constructions. The developers, residents and communities will have to be educated on these requirements. CCD explained that they have decided to reduce the set back limit to 10 m for existing buildings. Those who comply with that may be provided with a no objection letter for tourism establishments to obtain Sri Lanka Tourism approval. The setback for new buildings has been established at 20 m. CCD also explained that in the future they will have to take stern action against any establishment that does not conform to the setbacks.
- (b) Implementation of the building guidelines is equally important.
- (c) Until a zoning plan for Arugam Bay is prepared [cf. 1 (d)] the existing guidelines should be strictly adhered to.
- (d) Access to the beach by tourists should be unhindered.

## 4. Awareness Programmes

- (a) An effective awareness programme to create awareness on coastal zone management vis-à-vis tourism development needs to be launched in Arugam Bay. This has to be a multi-agency task.

## 5. Capacity Building

- (a) Capacity building of local people to service the tourism sector is urgently needed, not only as a means of assisting tourism but also as a vocation for local people. Basic training in tourism related aspects as well as foreign language training are required.

- (b) The communities could be mobilised to form Coastal Conservation Committees. CCD can take the lead role in this exercise.

## 6. Services and Utilities

- (a) The difficulties in liaising with state sector agencies in obtaining the necessary approvals have to be urgently addressed.
- Currently, there is no clarity in regard to the roles and responsibilities of different departments/agencies that are involved in the approval processes. There is a need for closer coordination amongst these agencies if tourism is to be successfully undertaken.
  - The role of UDA is not clear, and their application charges were indicated to be high.
  - Many of the important government agencies who are party to the approval processes are not physically present in the area.
  - Regular presence of Sri Lanka Tourism in the area would be beneficial. If a permanent office cannot be opened, regular field service by them would help the people in the area.
  - The UDA should also hold a mobile service in the area to examine the grievances of the people and to help with their problems.
  - Investors and small hoteliers need help from these agencies.
- (b) Health facilities are woefully inadequate, particularly for emergencies (as seen with surfing). In 2009, several tourists died due to lack of ready health care facilities.
- (c) Transport services are rudimentary, and government help is needed to improve transport facilities for tourists.

The problems with three-wheeler taxis were highlighted. A pricing 'menu' has been introduced by the Three Wheeler Association in Arugam Bay. However, the effectiveness is limited as there are many other three wheelers operating from other areas. The Divisional Secretary together with the Police will try to introduce metered 3-wheelers, and Sri Lanka Tourism agreed to provide training on tourism related aspects, provided the costs are defrayed. Upon training, the drivers are expected to form associations, and the trained members will be provided with identity cards.

- (d) Public utilities for enhancing tourism are woefully inadequate. There are no public toilets and pipe-borne water for beach users. As a result, the environment is polluted by the tourists.

Pradeshiya Sabha explained that they do not get any revenue from most of the tourism establishments in the area but is expected to provide services. Sri Lanka Tourism stated that their attempts to construct two sets of toilet units in 2004/5 did not materialise as land could not be procured. Also, there should be a commitment to maintain the toilets. This example also highlighted the lack of coordination amongst the organisations in the area.

In the ensuing discussions, the Chairman of the Pradeshiya Sabha agreed to construct one set of toilets in the area.

- (e) Harassment to tourists (both local and foreign) was reported to be common. This was due to lack of law enforcement officers and environment conducive to criminals.

Sri Lanka Tourism will explore the possibility of providing several Tourist police posts in the beach area. The Chairman, Pradeshiya Sabha agreed to install street lights.

Assistance from Sri Lanka Tourism was requested to train and register Tourist Guides; some of the miscreants can also be rehabilitated and employed as Tourist Guides then.

## 7. Environmental Consideration

- (a) Efficient use of energy and water is of paramount importance. Appropriate technology for such programmes needs to be introduced.
- (b) Proper Soil Waste Management strategy needs to be put in place. Currently, environmentally sensitive areas are being polluted.
- (c) Maintaining a green belt in the area is very important.
- (d) Environmentally sensitive areas (sand dunes, lagoons, forest patches etc.) need to be identified and demarcated. CCD will attend to this in consultation with other relevant agencies.
- (e) Encroachment of environmentally sensitive areas and constructions thereon are on the increase. The Irrigation Department needs to focus on the reservation areas of lagoons and other water bodies within their purview. Encroachments also impede natural water flows thereby increasing the risks of water logging and flooding.

- (f) Illegal constructions in the reservations and watershed areas have to be stopped forthwith by the Irrigation Department, and no new permission should be given.
- (g) Sand mining from sand dunes is causing immense problems. Action is needed urgently.

## **8. Close involvement of the Communities**

- (a) If tourism in Arugam Bay area is to flourish, involvement of the local community is of paramount importance. Equally, financial benefits to them are a must if the tourism is to sustain and the tourists to be happy.
- (b) Meeting the aspirations of the fisher community are very important to have a sustainable tourism approach in the Arugam Bay area.
- (c) The conflicts developing between the tourism and fisher sectors need to be addressed as a matter of priority, and a mutually beneficial existence with active participation of both sectors is necessary. A proactive social approach must be maintained.
- (d) The Department of Fishery with the collaboration of the Divisional Secretaries may examine the issues and consider demarcating specially designated areas for fishing boats.
- (e) Sustainable fishery practices need to be introduced, as the current practices seem to be a 'free-for-all'. Awareness programmes on aspects of sustainable fishery (including the use of legal nets) are required.





## Annex 1 – Programme of the Workshop

**Venue: Conference Hall, Divisional Secretariat, Pottuvil**

**Date: 23 December, 2010**

10 00 – 10 20	Opening Remarks <b>Dr Locana Gunaratna, President, National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka</b> <b>Dr Ranjith Mahindapala, Country Representative, IUCN Sri Lanka</b>
10 20 – 10 30	Self Introductions
10 30 – 10 40	Address <b>Government Agent/District Secretary, Ampara or Representative</b> [Mr U L Niyas, CEO/Divisional Secretary, Pottuvil represented the GA]
10 40 – 11 00	Tourism Plans in the Southeast <b>Mr P U Ratnayaka, Director, Standards &amp; Quality Assurance, Sri Lanka Tourism</b>
11 00 – 11 20	Perspectives from the Coast Conservation Department <b>Mr Anil Premaratne, Director General, Coast Conservation Department</b>
11 20 – 11 40	Tourism Development from Pottuvil to Panama <b>Mr Ravi de Silva, Hoteliers' Association of Sri Lanka</b>
11 40 – 12 00	<b>Tea</b>
12 00 – 12 20	Perspectives from the Ministry of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources <b>Mr Indra Ranasinghe, Director General (Technical), MoFAR (not presented)</b>
12 20 – 12 40	Perspectives from the Urban Development Authority and the National Physical Planning Department <b>Dr Locana Gunaratna, President, National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka</b>
12 40 – 13 00	Viewpoint from Small Hoteliers of Arugam Bay <b>Mr M H A Raheem, Arugam Bay Tourism Association</b>
13 00 – 13 30	Panel Discussion
13 30	<b>Concluding Remarks; Dr Locana Gunaratna</b>
13 40	<b>Lunch</b>



## Annex 2 – Participants List

Name	Designation/Institutional Affiliation
Abeyssekera, N L Mr	Range Forest Officer, Ampara
Ahmed, M A Bajeer Mr	Land Colonisation Officer, DS Office, Pottuvil
Aliyar, S M Mr	President Iranguthurai Fisheries Co-op Society Ltd, Pottuvil
Ashraff, A B M Mr	Divisional Secretariat, Pottuvil
De Silva, Ravi Mr	Consultant, Hoteliers' Association of Sri Lanka
Dissanayake, Jayanthi Ms	Ministry of Environment, Battaramulla
Ekaratne, Kumudini Mrs	IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Sri Lanka Office
Faizer, M M Mr	President, Arugambay Tour Guides' Association, Arugam Bay
Farook, K M Mr	Hangloose Hotel, Arugambay
Gunarathne, Kapila Mr	IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Sri Lanka Office
Gunaratna, Locana Dr	President, National Academy of Science of Sri Lanka, Colombo
Jahufer, N M Mr	Divisional Secretariat, Pottuvil
Jasoor, M I M Mr	District Coordinator, Coast Conservation Department, Ampara
Kodikara, Ananda Mr	District Coordinator, GEF/IFAD Project, Coast Conservation Department, Ampara
Lakmal, W W Mr	Coast Conservation Department, Pottuvil and Lahugala DSD
Lebbe, A C Ahamed Mr	Lake House Correspondent, Pottuvil
Lebbe, A Mousa Mr	Irrigation Department, Pottuvil
Mahindapala, Ranjith Dr	IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Sri Lanka Office
Marzook, M H M Mr	Chairman, Pottuvil Pradeshiya Sabha, Pottuvil
Mohideen, Cader Mr	Star Dust Hotel, Arugam Bay
Mubarak, A R A Mr	Forest Officer, Lahugala
Muzarrath, N M M Mr	Addl. Divisional Secretary, Lahugala
Najeeb, M A C Mr	Officer- in-charge, Central Environmental Authority, Ampara
Newton, T N Mr	Regional Field Director/East, Sewalanka Foundation
Nisoi, M C M Mr	Forest Officer, Komari
Niyas, U L Mr	Divisional Secretary, Pottuvil
Papu, S Mr	FRMA, Dept. of Fisheries, Pottuvil

Partheepan, P Mr	Pottuvil Point Hotel, Pottuvil
Prasanna, G M J Mr	Fisheries Inspector/Ulla, Dept of Fisheries
Premaratne, Anil Mr	Director General, Coast Conservation Department
Raheem, M H A Mr	President, Arugam Bay Tourism Association, Atugam Bay
Ratnasiri, P H C C Mr	Sri Lanka Tourism, Colombo
Ratnayake, P U Mr	Sri Lanka Tourism, Colombo
Robin, S A Mr	District Project Coordinator, Sewalanka Foundation, Tirukkovil
Sampath, M I Mr	Fisheries Inspector, Dept of Fisheries, Panama
Vidanage, Shamen Mr	IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Sri Lanka Office

## Annex 3 – Summaries of Presentations

1. Tourism Plans in the Southeast; **Mr P U Ratnayaka, Director, Standards & Quality Assurance, Sri Lanka Tourism**
2. Perspectives from the Coast Conservation Department; **Mr Anil Premaratne, Director General, Coast Conservation Department**
3. Tourism Development from Pottuvil to Panama; **Mr Ravi de Silva, Hoteliers' Association of Sri Lanka**
4. Perspectives from the Urban Development Authority and the National Physical Planning Department; **Dr Locana Gunaratna, President, National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka**
5. Viewpoint from Small Hoteliers of Arugam Bay; **Mr M H A Raheem, Arugam Bay Tourism Association**

## Arugam Bay Tourism Development

Excerpted from a presentation by  
Mr P U Ratnayaka, Director, Standards & Quality Assurance  
Sri Lanka Tourism

The East Coast of Sri Lanka is a very attractive tourist destination because it has distinctive natural resources, an exotic culture, fascinating flora and fauna, a World famous natural harbour, breathtaking view of sunrise, good connectivity by sea, land and air, unparalleled scenic beauty, pristine sea and beach with opportunities for whale watching, safe swimming, and close proximity to national parks. The area also has a unique seasonality. Combined with the land availability, the area has a high potential for eco-tourism.

Arugam Bay, one of the key attractions in the Eastern Province is 350 km east of Colombo, and 80 km South East of Ampara. Potuvil is the main city centre (Fig.1).



Fig. 1 - Arugam Bay area

Arugam Bay has a population of approximately 20,000- 22,000 people, and is a multi communal and multi cultural society. It is predominantly Muslim (50%) with 40% Sinhalese and 10% Tamil community. In terms of places of worship, there are six mosques, 8 Buddhist temples, four Hindu temples and two churches. The area has nearly 30 schools. Medical facilities are provided by the Base hospital at Moneragala, District hospital at Potuvil and five private clinics.

In terms of infrastructure, the road network has improved with A4 road upgraded, and the Monaragala to Panama stretch is in good condition. The closest aerodrome is at Ampara, and the lagoons in the environs of Arugam Bay can accommodate sea planes. The area is connected to the national grid and electricity supply is adequate; water supply is being improved.

Specific attractions of Arugam Bay are:

- It is the best surfing beach in Sri Lanka, and is the fourth best surfing beach in Asia and the Pacific
- It has untouched lagoons
- It is close to the Lahugala, Kumana and Yala east, and Galoya national parks
- Important archeological sites (Magul Maha Viharaya, Kudumbigala, Sasthravelli) are nearby;
- Farming and mix community and cultures
- Sand dunes
- Rich biodiversity and ecosystems

Aside from the above, other tourist attractions are the Okande mountain Skanda temple, Kudumbigala rock temple and monastery, Magul Maha Vihara, Buddhist Monastery at Sasthravelli, Panama ancient village and the Sudha's bungalow at Sasthravelli.

The area is visited by both local and foreign tourists, and the important surfing points are Potuvil, Peanut Farm, Arugam Bay Point, Komari and Panama.

One of the key attractions of Arugam Bay is the possibility of year-round tourism, due mainly to the weather pattern. Month-wise tourism in the area is given in Table 1.

Table 1 - Month-wise Tourist Arrival in Arugam Bay

Month	% of Tourists
January	5
February	5
March	4
April	5
May	8
June	17
July	17
August	17
September	5
October	4
November	5
December	5

The Government has already prepared some plans for tourism development in the area. These proposals include establishing a surf resort, surf training facilities, Wildlife Resort and Eco Tourism Facilities for Bird Watching and for Nature Lovers, a Nature Park, agro-tourism, home-stays and establishing camping and other facilities.

Fig. 2 depicts the developments planned for Arugam Bay, Fig. 3 for Sinna Ulla-Shastrawela Area and Fig. 4 for Panama- Okanda Area.



Fig. 2 - Arugam Bay Surfing Resort Development Plan



Fig. 3 - Sinna Ulla-Shastrawela Resort Development Plan



Fig. 4 - Panama- Okanda Area Resort Development Plan



## Arugam Bay Tourism Development – Perspectives from the Coast Conservation Department

Excerpted from a presentation by

Mr Anil Premaratne, Director General, Coast Conservation Department

Sri Lanka's coastal regions are significant in that it contain 34% of the population and represents 25% of the land. The coastal regions have the majority of large cities and urban areas, and produce over 90% of the fish. There is high potential for tourism and recreation due to productive habitats such as coral reefs, estuaries, mangroves, etc. with significant mineral sources. Most industrial units are also coastal. The aims are high; doubling tourism and doubling fishery with the existing resources.

Coastal zone is commonly referred to as the interface or transition space between two environmental domains, the land and the sea. Efficient Coastal Resources Management system aims at involving the **participation** of stakeholders in achieving a **sustainable** development of the natural system through **integration** of all the activities in the CRM area.

Sri Lanka has a coast line of 1520 km of which 267 km are protected with hard structures. More than 650 km of coastal areas are wildlife parks or protected coastal areas. About 280 km are high sensitive areas where no other activities can be undertaken. Fish landing sites, anchorages and fishery harbours are 35 km. Tourist areas are about 140 km. In addition, some areas cannot be further developed due to the narrowness of coastal stretches such as roads and railway tracks, urban centers and other settlements and industries. Thus the available coastal area for further tourism development is not that high.

The tourism development targets require a proper understanding of the demand and supply. The infrastructure requirements are significant, and it whether the coastal areas can accommodate more tourists is doubtful. Successful tourism needs nice and clean beaches, natural and simple accommodation, environmentally friendly infrastructures and no harassment. How much of this can be achieved in Arugam Bay, with its current *ad hoc* nature of development.

Other issues encountered are the linear developments of the hotels in the coasts (in the south coast there is one hotel extending for 1.8 km), lack of beach access, coastal pollution with some beaches showing significant coliform bacteria populations indicative of faecal pollution, and user conflicts with other users, particularly fishers.

The management solutions available are as follows:

- Implementation of the setback for new constructions – whilst there will be consideration for old constructions, the Coast Conservation Department will

strictly adhere to the declared setbacks for new constructions, and will be compelled to break down structures that do not conform to the established setbacks.

- Implementation of the building guidelines – the building guidelines provided by the authorities are often ignored during constructions, causing immense problems for coastal dwellers.
- Maintaining a green belt
- Preparation and implementation of the zoning plan – Arugam Bay also needs a zoning plan. Until such time a plan is made, the existing guidelines can be used.
- Very effective awareness programme – a cohesive and an inclusive programme to create awareness on coastal zone management vis-à-vis tourism development needs to be launched, particularly in new areas such as Arugam Bay. This has to be a multi-agency task, and will be appreciated by all stakeholders.

In order to have effective management, it is necessary that all stakeholders including the relevant state agencies and prospective entrepreneurs are aware of the Reservation and Restricted areas of setback.

- Reservation Area is nearest to the shoreline and corresponds to a “no build zone”;
- Restricted Area (or soft zone) can be used for some low impact activities such as small dwelling units.

The setback for Ampara district is in Table 1.

Table 1 - Setbacks for Ampara District

Area	Level of Vulnerability	Reservation Area (M)	Restricted Area (M)	Total
Parawa Modera gala to Murugatanna Lagoon	Low -	20	30	50
Murugatanna to Kandaraje	Medium -	30	50	80
Kandaraj to Tambiluvil	Low +	25	40	65
Tambiluvil to 228 Mile post	High +	45	80	125
228 Mile to Periya Kallar	Low +	25	40	65



Arugam Bay (A Premaratne)

## Tourism Development from Pottuvil to Panama

Excerpted from a presentation by  
Mr Ravi de Silva, Hoteliers' Association of Sri Lanka

Many stakeholders are involved in tourism. These include planners, builders, regulatory authorities, skilled labour, managers etc. Tourism gives good returns, but it is necessary to provide a quality service to the tourists. The main question therefore is to know the characteristics of the expected tourists and to find out whether it is possible to supply their demands.

Tourism is also very sensitive to outside influences. A closure of an important airport abroad can affect tourist arrivals, thus affecting the occupancy of hotels, livelihood of those dependent on tourism etc. In areas such as Arugam Bay, such sensitivities need to be especially taken note of.

In terms of resources, it is necessary to clearly identify the resources as well as arrange access to it. In the Arugam Bay area, there are resources that would interest the tourists, but if maximum use is to be got, there needs planning, capacity building (say competent guides) etc.

In terms of developing tourism in Arugam Bay, the following aspects need to be carefully considered:

- Inculcate amongst the developers and others involved in tourism the need to conserve environment – this has to be a concerted effort with the assistance of state agencies and others;
- Strategise on the need for more tourists or better tourists; if it is the latter, infrastructure development can be reduced but the existing facilities may have to be upgraded. This approach is more environmentally friendly.
- Arugam Bay's unique experiences need to be branded and sold. Its value as the best surfing area needs to be exploited.
- Other avenues of tourist attractions using Arugam Bay's resources need to be explored. For example, the windy nature can be used for having sail boats.
- Efficient use of energy and water is of paramount importance, and awareness programmes are required. Technology for such programmes needs to be introduced, and it is to be borne in mind that Arugam Bay is a water scarce area.
- Proper Soil Waste Management strategy needs to be put in place. The 7R approach (Reject, reduce, Re-use, Reclaim, Replace, Repair, Recycle) has to be brought in.
- Beach reservation as per regulations has to be adhered to. Also, there has to be unhindered beach access to both tourists and local communities.

- Suitable transport systems are a constraint in Arugam Bay area. There has to be better and more disciplined transport systems.
- If tourism in Arugam Bay area is to flourish, involvement of the local community is of paramount importance. Equally, financial benefits to them are a must if the tourism is to sustain and the tourists to be happy.
- The aspirations of the fisher community are very important to have a sustainable tourism approach in the Arugam Bay area. Already there are conflicts developing between the two sectors, and a mutually beneficial system with active participation of both sectors is necessary. A proactive social approach must be maintained.
- The fishery needs to be sustainable as the current practices seem to be a 'free-for-all'. Awareness programmes on aspects of sustainable fishery (including the use of legal nets) are required.
- Ecotourism as a tool for conservation has to be developed and popularized; there have been many attempts of ecotourism before, but properly planned and executed programmes will benefit the area where there is natural wealth to be explored.

Overall, tourism development in Arugam Bay area needs sustainable development approaches as the area has several sensitive ecosystems. Equally, the aspirations of the authorities, developers, planners, suppliers, contractors, managers and communities, which are largely rural and poor, have to be carefully considered.

## Arugam Bay Tourism Development – Perspectives of the National Physical Planning Department

Excerpted from a presentation<sup>5</sup> by

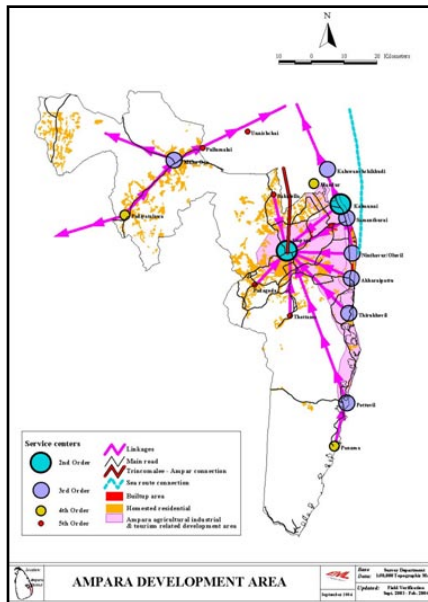
Dr Locana Gunaratna, President, National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka

The presentation highlighted in brief the major components of the Eastern Province Physical Plan prepared by the National Physical Planning Department in 2004. The province is very aptly termed “The Sunrise Region”. The plan has been modified after the Tsunami and its implications on the body of geography of the area.

The plan is consistent with the provisions of the National Physical Planning Policy and Plan that were approved by the National Physical Planning Council consisting of H.E.the President as the Chairman and relevant Ministers including the Minister of Urban Development & Sacred Area Development and all Chief Ministers. This approval was given under the provisions of the Town & Country Planning Ordinance No.13 of 1946 as amended by Act No.49 of 2000.

Amongst the objectives of plan are to improve the socio-economic conditions in the region, restructure the regional economy with its resources, optimal use of physical and natural endowments in a sustainable manner, enhance economic growth in rural areas through development of non-farm activities, and to create an attractive economic environment for private sector investment.

The tourism development area has already been ear-marked (Fig. 1).



5 This presentation was based on the EASTERN PROVINCE PHYSICAL PLAN - THE SUNRISE REGION, National Physical Planning Department (Ministry of Urban Development & Sacred Area Development)



Mention was made during the discussion on the presentation that plans had been prepared by the Urban Development Authority for some of the towns within the tourism development area. These included Arugam Bay. Considering the changes that have taken place since the cessation of hostilities in the region, it was agreed by all that there is a clear need to revisit these proposals with active participation of the stakeholders.

## **Arugam Bay Tourism Development – Viewpoint from Small Hoteliers of Arugam Bay**

**Excerpted from a presentation by  
Mr M H A Raheem, Arugam Bay Tourism Association**

Arugam Bay area has 54 hotels with about 400 rooms. Although it is a prime surfing area, accommodation facilities available are mediocre, and there is ample scope for development. Tourism is very active for about six months, but there is potential for local tourists. There is also considerable interest in new investment in tourism as well as for upgrading the existing infrastructure.

The presentation highlighted several constraints in regard development of tourism in the area. These are briefly indicated below:

- Difficulties with state sector agencies in obtaining the necessary approvals. There is no clarity in regard to the roles and responsibilities of different departments/agencies that are involved in the approval processes. There is a need for coordination amongst these agencies if tourism is to be successfully undertaken. Many of the important government agencies who are party to the approval processes are not physically present in the area. Investors and small hoteliers need help from these agencies.
- Information on Arugam Bay and its environs, which would be useful for tourism (both local and foreign) is not readily available. Several technical reports are available, but simple brochures depicting the natural and cultural heritage are required.
- Health facilities are woefully inadequate, particularly for emergencies (as seen with surfing). In 2009, several tourists died due to lack of ready health care facilities.
- Transport services are rudimentary, and government help is needed to improve transport facilities for tourists.
- Eco-tourism has much scope. There have been several attempts in the past decade to promote eco-tourism; these can now be taken to a new level as the area is now peaceful. Scientific eco-tourism has to be introduced, perhaps with the assistance of the Sri Lanka Tourism as the area is well bestowed with natural wealth.
- Capacity building of local people to service the tourism sector is urgently needed, not only as a means of assisting tourism but also as a vocation for local people. Basic training in tourism related aspects as well as foreign language training are required.
- The conflicts with the fisher community have to be addressed as a matter of priority. It is suggested that designated areas are demarcated for fishery. Assistance of the Dept. of Fishery is required in this regard.

- Public utilities for enhancing tourism are woefully inadequate. There are no public toilets and pipe-borne water for beach users. As a result, the environment is polluted by the tourists.
- Illegal activities including encroachments are affecting both fishery and tourism. Sometimes outside parties are involved in these activities.

The potential of Arugam Bay (and up to Panama) as a prime tourism area will depend on addressing these issues, which will also result in a happy and harmonious life for the local communities.



MFF builds on a history of coastal management interventions before and after the 2004 tsunami. It focuses on the countries most-affected by the tsunami; **India, Indonesia, Maldives, Parkistan, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Thailand** and **Vietnam**. MFF also includes other countries of the Region that face similar issues, with an overall aim to promote an integrated ocean wide approach to coastal zone management.

Its long-term management strategy is based on identified needs and priorities that emerged from extensive consultations with over 200 individuals and 160 institutions involved in coastal management in the Region.

MFF uses mangroves as a flagship ecosystem in recognition of the important role mangroves played in reducing the damage caused by the tsunami, and the implications on livelihoods because of mangrove forest destruction. But **MFF is inclusive of all coastal ecosystems**, including coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, sandy beaches, sea grasses and wetlands.

Its vision is a healthier, more prosperous and secure future for all sections of the coastal population in Indian Ocean countries. It is a unique partnership-led initiative working in four key areas of influence: regional cooperation, national programme support, private sector engagement and community action.

The initiative undertakes collective actions to build knowledge, strengthen empowerment, and enhance governance through 15 broad programmes of work to address the current and future threats, and to conserve and restore coastal ecosystems. These are implemented through a series of on-the-ground projects, through small and large grant modalities.

MFF seeks more effective and inclusive institutions, policies and mechanisms for cooperation at national and regional levels by prioritising coastal ecosystem management across national development agendas, policies and budgets.

[www.mangrovesforthefuture.org](http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org)



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