

PROMOTING COMMUNITY-BASED AGRO-ECOTOURISM IN PALUGASWEWA CASCADED TANK-VILLAGE SYSTEM: A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

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Tourism in Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) offers significant benefits for local communities. However, the Cascaded Tank-Village System (CTVS), a GIAHS in Sri Lanka, remains underutilized, emphasizing potential issues like insufficient stakeholder collaborations. This study aimed to identify and classify stakeholders and analyze their views on promoting Community-based Agro-Ecotourism (CBAET) in the *Palugaswewa* CTVS. A total of 35 local stakeholders were identified, including members of the pre-existing cascade management committee and others purposively selected based on their direct roles and responsibilities within CTVS and its community. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and stakeholders were categorized using an interest-influence matrix. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze their consensus and conflicting views on promoting CBAET. Results showed that stakeholders represent multiple sectors i.e., agriculture (14%), forest and environment (17%), water (11%), finance and development (26%), infrastructure (9%), research (6%), security (6%), and agrarian and civil society (11%). The interest-influence matrix categorized stakeholders into three groups: key players (40%) with high influence and high interest, subjects (40%) with low influence but high interest, and crowd (20%) with both low influence and low interest. However, no context Setters (high influence but low interest) were identified. The interest-influence matrix identified *Key Players* (40%) with high influence-high interest, *Subjects* (40%) with low influence-high interest, and *Crowd* (20%) with both low influence-low interest. However, no *Context Setters* (high influence-low interest) were identified. In promoting CBAET, all stakeholders identified legitimate influence as the most significant, while infrastructure provision was the least significant. *Key players* and *Subjects* share the highest interest in social benefits, while the *Crowd* focused on improving cultural benefits through CBAET. All the stakeholders demonstrate the lowest interest in economic benefits and strongly believe in the need for CBAET-related training and awareness. Stakeholders show less confidence in infrastructure and policy development activities and notably, none express significant conflicting views on promoting CBAET. The findings of this study provide valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers to effectively manage stakeholder engagement and promote CBAET in the CTVS. The study recommends further analysis, incorporating national and provincial-level stakeholders.

Keywords: Community participation, Qualitative analysis, Stakeholder classification, Stakeholder survey, Tourism