

## **From reconciliation to National Development through PModel Tourist Zone in Eastern Province of Sri Lanka**

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After experiencing an ethnic based civil war for 30 years and unfulfilled promises by authorities after that, Eastern province of Sri Lanka is still far behind the national development efforts. While being forced back by inadequate infrastructure facilities, lack of service industry oriented vocational training and underemployment, the province consist of enormous amount of historic and natural tourist attractions. The main problem identified for this research evolved in this back ground of having no sustainable model to reap the benefits from tourist attractions in the war affected areas in eastern province. The primary objective was to address the aforesaid issue by developing a Model Tourist Zone; a self-sufficient supply chain model with resources supplied from and within the region and minimized negative aspects related to tourism industry in Ampara district mainly Pothuvil, Lahugala and surrounding areas, which can be implemented in the other parts of the country as well. The secondary objective was finding out circumstances of tourism industry in this area. A group of 25 Tamils who were former rebel groups' members who have entered into small scale tourism and/or politics, 15 Sinhala and/or Muslim tourism related business owners, local government members and government officials were considered for a series of focus group discussions and key informant interviews to gather information for the research. The key findings are distrust among majority of participants regarding government related development & reconciliation initiatives, inadequate infrastructure facilities, lack of tourism oriented vocational training facilities and favouritism towards corporate giants and maltreatments for small scale entrepreneurs in tourism. In conclusion, it is necessary to regain the trust of the underemployed former rebel members by skilling them on tourism and channelling their unity and strengths combined with the natural tourist attractions in the area towards national development through making them stakeholders of Model Tourist Zone.

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