

**Abstract No: BP-09**

**Ecotourism as a strategy for sustainable natural resource management in Meemure forest region; Sri Lanka**

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Ecotourism based on sustainable use of natural resources provides opportunities to diversify pathways for income generation, employment, environment conservation and preservation/enhancement of aesthetic value of landscapes. Ecotourism has been defined as the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the wellbeing of the local people, while compromising the regional development mechanism, environment, socio cultural, economic and education. Meemure is a fascinating village with a favourable climate located in the Knuckles mountain range which is mostly covered with tropical rainforests. This study attempts to identify the strategies for sustainable natural resource management that strengthen ecotourism based in Meemure village and surrounding areas. The primary objective of this study is to assess the efficacy of natural resources management strategies currently in practice. This study revealed that absence of alternative livelihoods and therefore, over-exploitation of natural resources has impacted sustainability of natural resource- base of the area. Relevant primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, interviews, observations and discussions. Secondary data/ information available in research papers, articles, journals and newspapers were also gathered for the purpose. Tourism related activities such as camping, hiking and expeditions create stress on the natural resources. Analyses reveal that ecotourism are unsustainable and therefore unsustainable due to lack of proper planning and management of the natural resources that contributes to environmental and cultural deterioration. Unscrupulous establishment of recreational areas, infrastructure and garbage dump sites had contributed to deforestation and erosion, thus threatening ecological sustainability of the area.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Natural resource, Sustainability