



**ENHANCING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN
WILDLIFE TOURISM- A FOCUS ON CHALLENGES
AND ISSUES**

**(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WASGAMUWA
NATIONAL PARK)**

This dissertation is submitted as a partial fulfillment of the degree of
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ABSTRACT

It is a well-known fact that tourism is a sector that can contribute to the economic growth of any region. Sri Lanka has proved to be one of the fastest growing tourist destinations for most type of tourism and specially wildlife tourism. This research mainly focuses on the challenges & issues faced by host community which are limit their involvement to the wildlife tourism in order to enhance community involvement in wildlife tourism in economic, tourism & rural livelihood and tourism & social cohesion. Also it was identified the further expectations of the community in order to enhance their involvement in wildlife tourism.

Research area is Wasgamuwa national park, one of the famous wildlife park in Sri Lanka, mostly locals and foreigners visited to experience the wildlife tourism activities such as safari, camping, photography. This research contains literature about wildlife tourism, protected areas, community involvement in wildlife tourism, hosts perception on wildlife tourism, barriers to satisfactory host engagement with wildlife tourism and the way forwards for hosts and wildlife tourism. These parts are relevant to this research because it was important to understand the topic and previous research done in this field.

In this research work, the researcher adopts the semi-structured interview style to gathered data. Local service providers, government officials and host community around Wasgamuwa national park are interviewed and their views and opinions are used as the basis of the researcher's analysis from which findings are gotten and recommendations made. Qualitative data have analyzed through thematic analysis using NVivo11 pro software. By using thematic analysis method researcher identified the themes in the data set.

The findings of this study gave there was huge current involvement of the community to the wildlife tourism and there were lots of challenges and issues which were faced by community while engaging the wildlife tourism activities in Wasgamuwa national park. There were community expectations such as infrastructure development, training and education, safety and security, link with responsible authorities and new activities: how further can enhance their involvement to the wildlife tourism.

Keywords: *wildlife tourism, host community, community involvement, Wasgamuwa national park, challenges & issues*