

Revival of Tourism in Sri Lanka following the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

Vasantha WICKRAMASINGHE and Shin-ei TAKANO
Graduate School of Engineering, Hokkaido University, Japan

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ABSTRACT

Tourism, the fourth largest contributor of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange was soon brought to halt with the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. An estimated damage of US\$ 250 million to tourist assets and a loss of over 27,000 livelihoods almost ruined the tourist industry of Sri Lanka. An imperative revival process was executed in two phases: immediate relief phase and rapid recovery phase. Immediate relief phase included provision of reassuring measures for tourist victims and notifying the mass media with up to minute tourism situation. The rapid recovery phase was incorporated with a short term recovery process and long term rehabilitation and reconstruction process aimed at recapturing tourist interest, and reestablishing the affected tourist communities and the tourist infrastructure respectively. The lack of a priori disaster management framework and the prevailing security condition of the country impeded the tsunami revival process. This paper documents the impact of the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami on tourism in Sri Lanka and a detailed overview of the recovery strategies adopted in the aftermath of the disaster. Furthermore, it assesses the challenges and way forwards providing guidance to formulate a comprehensive disaster management framework for the tourism sector through the influence of the recovery process.

Abbreviations: Attention to Sub-Editor;

Dear Sir, both peer-reviewers advised to add a list of abbreviations at the preface. It is really needed for the clear understanding of the paper as there are 17 words/phrases are abbreviated in the list.

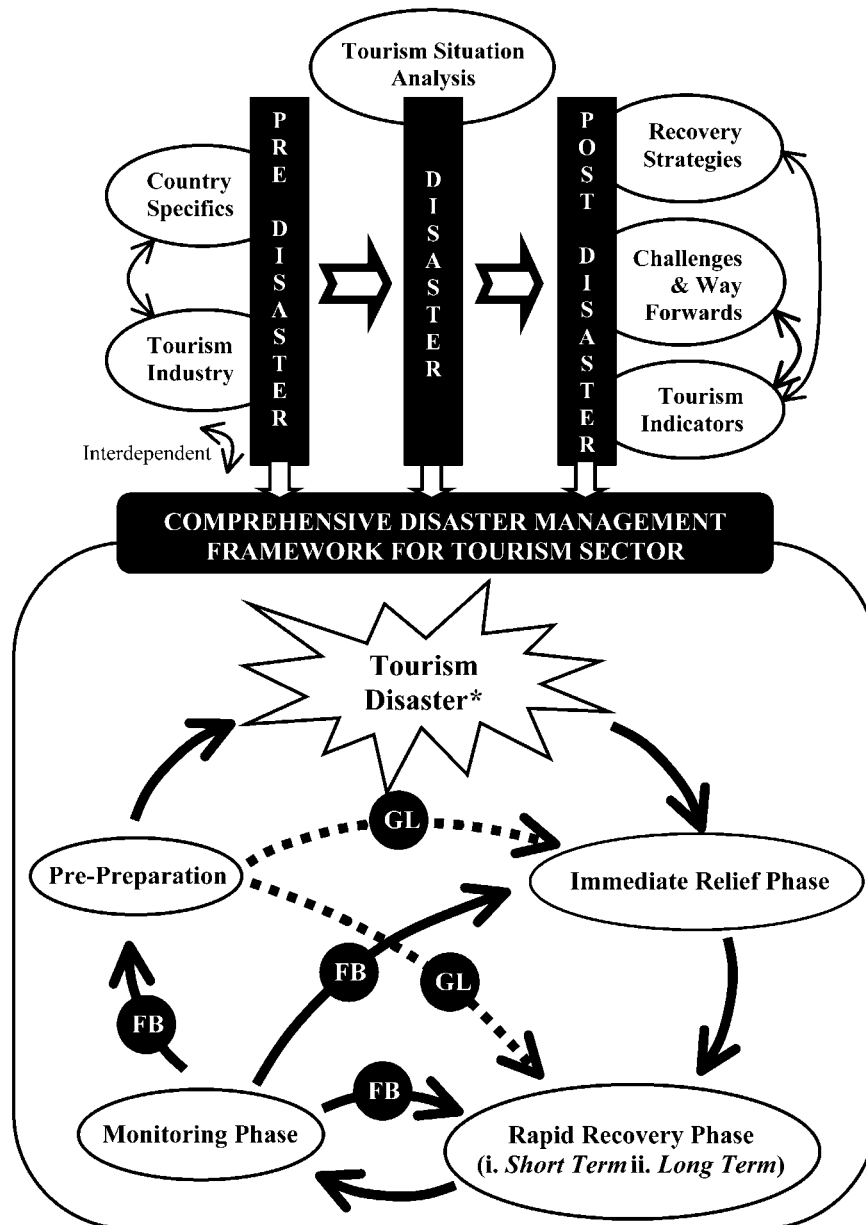
Thank you very much!!

1. INTRODUCTION

On 26th December, 2004, an earthquake of magnitude 9.0 struck the North-West coast of the Indonesian Island of Sumatra. The subsequent tsunami devastated the coasts of 12 nations in the Asian region with massive damage to the economies and social networks of individual countries. The absence of a tsunami warning system in the Indian Ocean, refrained the regional communities from being forewarned of the impending disaster (Inderfurth et al., 2005). Sri Lanka, an island at the Southern tip of India, was the second worst damaged country; 35,322 people dead (210 tourists), 4,115 missing (65 tourists), over 500,000 homeless, and 275,000 livelihoods (27,000 in travel and tourism sector) lost (TAFREN, 2005a; USAID, 2005). Tourism, the fourth largest contributor to Sri Lanka's GDP (4.6% of GDP) and a major employment generator (3.7% of total employments) was brought to halt in seconds (SLTB, *Annual reports*). Over three fourths of the coastal belt was filled with debris; nearly half of the hotels in the Southern and Eastern coast belt were ruined by the destructive tsunami waves. The tourism image was damaged more than the tourist assets destroyed over US\$ 250 million (ADB, JBIC & WB, 2005). The tsunami struck at the peak of the tourist season affecting most of the tourism indicators (annual tourist arrivals, annual revenue, receipts per tourist per day, room occupancy rate, employment generation, etc.). An imperative tourism revival process: 'Bounce Back Sri Lanka', was initiated to recapture tourism quickly, and to

reestablish tourist assets and secure the livelihoods of tourism based communities. Today, two years after the tsunami, tourism assets (e.g., hotels and room capacity) have returned to the pre-tsunami level; though, tourist arrivals, especially the Western tourists have not yet reached to expected numbers (SLTB, *Annual Report*, 2006). The major reasons to avoid visiting Sri Lanka is the sense that the area is not secure both due to the tsunami phobia, the actual physical damage to the tsunami, and the prevailing warfare. Wickramasinghe and Takano, (2007) mentioned that destination attraction and destination safety are the two most pertinent factors to resume tourist arrivals after a sudden calamity.

This paper documents the impact of the December 2004 IOT on tourism and a detailed overview of the recovery strategies adopted in the aftermath of the disaster. Furthermore, it assesses the challenges and way forwards to formulate a comprehensive disaster management framework for tourism sector through the influence of the recovery process to confront corresponding disasters in the future. Sri Lanka, one of the most affected tourist destinations, was selected as the case study focusing upon the pre-tsunami country specifics and tourism situation, the tsunami impact on tourism, and the strategies and recovery plans adopted up to date for revival of tourism. The influence from the revival process of tourism in Sri Lanka can be exemplified for developing countries grappling with similar problems in the future. The proposed comprehensive disaster management framework for tourist industry provides



**Tourism Disaster:* Any unexpected event that affects traveler confidence in a destination and interferes with the ability to continue operating normally-World Tourism Organization Definition
 GL: Guide Lines; FB: Feed Back

Fig. 1 Schematic diagram containing the steps for descriptive analysis on revival of tourism in Sri Lanka following the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and Comprehensive Disaster Management Framework for the Tourism Sector

assurance of tourists' safety and pre-determined recovery planning in case of a sudden calamity. The scope of the study is however narrowed excluding local tourists and the tourism image among foreign tourists is boosted by reassuring the tourism value and safety improvements to confront future sudden non-escapable disasters.

2. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive analysis was performed upon the December 2004 IOT devastation and the effect on tourism in Sri Lanka in three periods: *Pre-tsunami, Tsunami and Post-Tsunami* periods. Relevant information was collected from personal interviews of the officials involved in the tourism recovery process, government and international organization reports, and various project reports. The

schematic diagram in **Fig. 1** developed by the authors describes the flow of the methodological analysis adopted in the current research study in approaching to the final goal: a comprehensive disaster management framework for the tourism sector. Initially, pre-tsunami country specifics and tourism industry were deeply studied. Next, the tourism situation analysis (i.e., *damage and needs assessment to tourism assets*) following the tsunami was brought up using government reports and the initial damage assessment reports jointly produced by the ADB, JBIC and WB. Then, recovery strategies, challenges and the way forwards of the recovery process were considered. Moreover, tourism indicators were monitored using monthly data from the SLTB. Finally, the resultant analyzed factors were incorporated to devise the four phase (i.e., pre-preparation phase, response and immediate relief phase, rapid reaction

and recovery phase, and monitoring phase) comprehensive disaster management framework for the tourism sector based on pros and cons of the recovery strategies adopted in the tourism revival process in Sri Lanka.

3. PRE-TSUNAMI COUNTRY SPECIFICS AND TOURISM IN SRI LANKA

3.1 Sri Lanka: Country Specifics

Sri Lanka, an island with a 65,610 km² land area and a coastal belt of 1,310 km, is situated in the Indian Ocean close to the Southern end of the Indian peninsula (Fig. 2). Geographically, the island has an irregular surface with low-lying coastal plains stretching inland from the Northern and Eastern shores while the Western and Southern coasts slope into hills and mountains. Occasional wind storms, droughts, landslides, floods, and coastal erosion are the common natural hazards for the country; however, casualties had not been more than few hundreds per event and also Sri Lanka has not been marked as a disaster prone destination. According to demographic data, total population of Sri Lanka was 19.2 million (2003) making population density to 307 people per km² and the annual growth rate of population was 1.1% in 2003 (Dep. of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka). Sri Lanka is governed by a demographic parliamentary system, in which the executive president is the first; uneven distribution of socio-economic features and political features are common in the country. Western and Southern regions are concentrated with most resources while the North and East are neglected mostly due to the ethnic conflict continuing over two decades (Godavitarane et al., 2006). The 25-year civil war between the GoSL and LTTE has arrested the socio-economic progress of the country; military expenditure recorded US\$

719 million (4.2% of GDP) in 1998 (CIA World Fact Book, 2002). Peace negotiations in 2001 uplifted many socio-economic aspects; the annual growth rate of GDP of -1.5% in 2001 reached to 5.9% in 2003 (ADB, 2006a).

Sri Lanka is a low- to middle-income country. Textile and garments, foreign remittance, tea, and tourism are the major exchange earners of the nation (SLCB, *Annual Report*, 2004). In 2003, GNI per capita was US\$ 930; population living below poverty line was estimated at 22.7% in 2002 (ADB, 2006a). Total external debts have increased by 27% from US\$ 8.3 billion in 2001 to US\$ 10.6 billion (58.7% of GDP) in 2003 (SLCB, *Annual Report*, 2004). The total labour force increased from 5.8 million in 1991 to 8.3 million in 2004. The unemployment rate dropped from 14.7% in 1991 to 8.4% in 2003 (Dep. of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka). The tsunami struck at a time the country's domestic and foreign resources were under severe strain; the oil price shock, the drought in early 2004, the post conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, and with an additional risk of phasing out of textile and apparel quotas of the USA (SLCB, 2004).

3.2 Sri Lanka: Tourism Industry

Sri Lanka's tropical climate, palm-fringed beaches, diverse landscapes, and historical sites are prime tourist attractions. By 1970s, sizeable investments were devoted to build the tourism infrastructure. After facing promising prospects in 1970s, with an yearly growth rate of tourist arrivals surpassing 20%, tourism collapse started soon after the onset of the civil war conflict; 55% contraction in 1983-1989 period before starting the re-recovery in early 1990s (Perera, 1995). However, tourist arrivals did not show a steady increase with spiked drops in relation to devastating terrorism activities in 1996 and 2001¹. The 'Peace Accord' between



Fig. 2 Geographical location of Sri Lanka

¹ Central Bank bomb attack on 31st January, 1996 and Bandaranayake International Airport bomb attack on 24th July, 2001

Table 1. Pre-Tsunami Tourism Indicators in Sri Lankan Tourist Industry

Tourism Indicators	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Annual Tourist Arrivals	436,440	400,414	336,794	393,171	500,642	566,202
Annual Tourist Nights ('000)	4,479	4,059	3,342	3,989	5,093	5,742
Annual Revenue (US\$ mn)	274.9	252.8	211.1	253.0	340.0	416.8
Avg. Expenditure (US\$/Tourist)	629.9	631.3	626.8	646.0	679.0	732.2
Avg. Expenditure (US\$/Tourist/Day)	61.4	62.3	63.1	63.4	66.8	72.2
Ave. Length of Stay (Days)	10.3	10.1	9.9	10.1	10.2	10.1
Accommodation Establishments						
Establishments (Graded)	173	207	211	222	233	242
Rooms	12,918	13,311	13,626	13,818	14,137	14,322
Beds	24,216	24,953	25,595	25,956	26,511	26,854
Annual Room Occupancy Rate (%)	57.6	52.3	42.1	43.1	53.2	59.3
Employment						
Direct	36,560	37,943	33,710	38,821	46,761	53,766
Indirect (Estimated)	51,184	53,120	47,194	54,349	65,465	75,272

the GoSL and LTTE in February, 2002 provided necessary impetus for tourism growth in the subsequent two years. Thus, tourist arrivals reached to half a million mark in 2003 for the first time in history, totaling 500,642, an increase of 27.3% than the previous year. Tourism had further continued its growth momentum and reached a new peak of 566,202 arrivals in 2004, with 13.1% increase than the previous year. Notably, values of the key tourism indicators: annual tourist arrivals, annual revenue, total tourist nights, receipt per tourist per day, room occupancy rate, and the number of employees, surpassed corresponding peaks in 2004 (**Table1**). Tourism was ranked as the nation's fourth largest industry in terms of foreign exchange earnings in 2004; tourism based foreign exchange receipts increased by 28.2% from US\$ 340 million in 2003 to US\$ 416.8 million in 2004. Receipts per tourist per day rose substantially by US\$ 5.4 from US\$ 66.8 in the previous year to US\$ 72.2 in 2004. Sri Lanka tourism was working hard to boost 'per day spending' of tourists targeting at US\$ 84 per tourist per day in 2005. The overall room occupancy rate in tourist hotels increased substantially from 53.2% in previous year to 59.3% in 2004 marking an increment of 6.1%. Tourism based employment generation was increased to 129,062 in 2004, a 15% growth than the previous year. European tourists favour Sri Lanka for a winter holiday; Western Europe accounted for 50.2% of total arrivals in 2004 while South Asia accounted for 23.6%. In 2004, for the first time in Sri Lanka, two individual markets surpassed the 100,000 mark of tourist arrivals namely the UK (106,645) and India (105,151) (SLTB, *Annual Report*, 2004).

Tourists flow in Sri Lanka is characterized by strong seasonal fluctuations; a high season from November to March with peak arrivals in December and a low season in May to June. Sri Lanka is not entirely dependent on beach tourism; rather, most tourists prefer combined beach/cultural sites packages (ADB, JBIC & WB, 2005). Notably, over 40% of the foreign guest nights in 2004 were spent along the beaches of the island's Southern and Eastern coasts which were among the hardest hits of the tsunami (SLTB, *Annual Report*, 2004).

In 2004, tourism industry consisted of 14,322 rooms in 242 hotels and 3,318 rooms in supplementary establishments such as guest houses, motels and Inns (ADB & SASEC, 2006). A large number of SMEs were associated with tourism; although, outside

the 'Registration and License Scheme' of the SLTB; thus, they were regarded as unauthorized operations (SLTB, *Annual Report*, 2005). In 2002, a five year tourism master plan: "Transforming the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry-A Five Year Strategy for Growth", containing a substantial framework of tourism strategies was implemented and served as the primary guide for tourism policies at the time of the tsunami devastation. With all the recent advances in tourism industry after the 'Peace Accord', SLTB was working hard towards a target of one million arrivals by 2010 (ADB & SASEC, 2006).

4. THE IMPACT OF TSUNAMI ON TOURISM IN SRI LANKA: DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

The December 2004 IOT was by far the most devastating natural catastrophe in the recorded history of Sri Lanka. It affected the Northern, Eastern, and Southern coastal regions of Sri Lanka most severely and with a marked damage to the Western coast as well. The total economic damage equaled 4.5% of GDP, demanding US\$ 2.2 billion for recovery and reconstruction efforts of Sri Lanka according to ADB, JBIC & WB (2005) Joint Needs Assessment.

Unfortunately, it was the peak of tourist arrivals in so far tourism history of Sri Lanka apparently following two consecutive years of sustained growth experienced after two decades of oscillation and stagnation due to the prolonged ethnic conflict. The impact of the tsunami on Sri Lanka tourism was grave. When the tsunami waves hit the beaches in Sri Lanka, 6,000 tourists occupied the affected coastal belt; out of them 4.5% of tourists were affected. Most of the 14,500 tourists out of 17,000 tourists who occupied the country at the time of the disaster left the island immediately (SLTB). Out of 105 hotels located in the tsunami affected areas, 53 were partially damaged and 8 were down to the ground (ADB, JBIC & WB, 2005). Besides, 352 tourism based SMEs were severely damaged. Also 3,553 out of the total 14,322 rooms were damaged in medium to large scale hotels estimating a damage of US\$ 200 million. The damage to tourism related assets (souvenir shops, restaurants, vehicles, etc.) accounted for US\$ 50 million (ADB, JBIC & WB, 2005; WB, 2005). TAFREN (2005b) mentioned 27,000 loss of tourism based livelihoods. **Fig. 3a** and **Fig. 3b** illustrate the tourist assets as well as tourism image damage

Source: Tsunami Photo Collection by Dr. A.G.H.J.Edirisinghe (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)



Fig. 3a (Upper) Debris and waste material along the coast line and (Lower)



Fig. 3b (Upper) Damaged Tourist hotel and (Lower) Rest-house damaged by tsunami waves

to beach tourism in Sri Lanka.

The tsunami has damaged tourism constructions which is visible, tangible and quantifiable. Similarly, it affected the tourism image, which is invisible, intangible and therefore not quantifiable. The best means to measure the invisible damage is by quoting potential visitors' views to perform a detailed analysis, which had not been performed in Sri Lanka tourism sector. The image damage was caused by two means; the actual physical damage and the perception that the entire beaches in Sri Lanka and overall tourism has washed away rising a sense of insecurity. This negative tourism image has possibly affected the non-beach tourism indirectly. Random inquiries revealed that this perception was particularly strong among European travelers (Samaranayake, 2005). Yet Sri Lanka had significant tourist resources such as the cultural triangle and the hill country, which had not been touched by the tsunami. Thus, in the recovery process the utmost priority was given to correct the perception of potential travelers that tourism still exists and the most locations are in safe custody.

5. POST-TSUNAMI TOURISM SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

5.1 Tourism Recovery in Sri Lanka

The recovery process of tourism in Sri Lanka was implemented in two phases: '*immediate relief*' and '*rapid recovery*' phases. Immediate relief phase included provision of reassuring measures for tourist victims and notifying the mass media with up to the

minute tourism situation. While the rapid recovery phase consisted of a short term recovery process, and long term rehabilitation and reconstruction process aimed at recapturing tourist interest, and reestablishing the affected tourist communities and the tourist infrastructure respectively. The cooperation between main tourist bodies (i.e., SLTB and MoT) and other ministries of GoSL was remarkable in the rebuilding process, highlighting the importance of tourism for the nation's economy. The government has noticed the importance of rapid recovery of the tourism industry and unconfined the resources immediately. A tourism recovery plan: '*Bounce Back Sri Lanka*', was initiated with US\$ 320 million by the GoSL including an extensive infrastructure and construction program, investments for community development, import duty waivers and a marketing and promotion campaign worth US\$ 5.3 million (PATA, 2005). The commitment on tourism was high due to the steady progress shown in the recent two years prior to the tsunami and that tourism has shifted from fifth to fourth position in Sri Lanka's GDP (SLTB, *Annual Report*, 2004).

5.1.1 Immediate Relief Operation

The immediate relief operation was independently carried out by the SLTB. Main goals of this process included evacuation of tourists from the coastal belt, supplying emergency medical treatments and basic needs, provide communication with origin countries, tourist repatriation, and mass media co-ordination. The process was initiated with immediate evacuation of tourists from the beach front and locating a 24hr tsunami information management call center. Tourists receiving centers were set up equipped with 24hr medical services, meals and bottled water. Special trans-

portation was organized for tourist victims; within 24 hrs, first batch of tourists were repatriated. Information dissemination was enhanced by a dedicated website: www.contactsrilanka.org, providing information on survivors, death tolls, damage maps, hotel /room status, etc. with twice daily updates. British embassy and many foreign consular services assisted the SLTB to pick up stranded tourists, arrange communication with origin countries, and for return travel arrangements (NAO, 2006). Further, SLTB has arranged no cost vacations for the affected tourist victims directing them to unaffected inland destinations.

The SLTB actions (e.g. evacuation of tourists from affected areas) were publicized and the International society was informed that only the coastal areas (less than 15% of land area) of Sri Lanka were affected and there still remains unharmed inland areas (e.g., cultural triangle, world heritage sites, hill country); this supported to dispel the tourist perception that whole island was struck by the tsunami. Communications were further dilated to pre-empt and balance the negative coverage of international media and kept all information disseminators (e.g., SLTB offices overseas, foreign mission, and associate agencies) informed of the key messages to bring consistency to messages.

5.1.2 Rapid Recovery Phase

5.1.2. a. Short Term Recovery Process

As the first step of the short-term recovery process, tourism authorities in Sri Lanka, namely the MoT and the SLTB, have initiated actions to collect detailed information on the damage caused to tourism infrastructure to schedule rehabilitation programs. Information was collected by means of press advertisements requesting the affected tourism enterprises to provide detailed information on the extent of damage, estimated cost of damage, number of people who lost employment, and the type of assistance needed to retrieve the business. The response was exceptionally high.

Unless strategic tourism recovery planning and promotion is done, it is impossible to recover such a tourism disaster. Under the short term recovery, the SLTB and MoT developed a two-part tourism recovery strategy to restore both tangible and intangible tourism assets within the shortest possible time. The first half aimed at resorting tourism facilities rapidly to bring back tourists and initiate the livelihoods involved in tourism. The second half included an international marketing and promotion campaign under 'Bounce Back Sri Lanka' developed with the help of tourism private sector (Rice and Haynes, 2005). These strategies included following programs and activities.

(i) Disposal of Debris: Disposal of debris and waste material along the coasts was one of the urgent tasks. By tourism point of view, it was important to clear the debris, remove unusable buildings and rebuild the locality as fast as possible (GoSL, 2005b). Although, relevant national and sub-national institutions took safe actions on this function, it did not progress well due to protest of local victims. Rather, they kept most of debris on display, expecting benefits from local and foreign tourists and relevant authorities. Nevertheless, in Thailand most affected areas were cleared shortly as tourists disfavour the dreadful mementos of the tsunami devasta-

tion (Cooray, 2006). Thus, local victims have purposely or without knowing neglected reassurance of their livelihoods and failed to assist the initial reconstruction work.

(ii) Concessions to Industry/Hotel Refurbishment: The government allowed duty free concessions covering import duties for all goods needed for renovation of damaged resorts and hotels (US\$ 6.7 million) as well as for replacement of vehicles (US\$ 1 million) required for tourist transportation (TAFREN, 2005a; GoSL, 2005a). The registered tourist hotels under SLTB were eligible to apply for the post-tsunami reconstruction loan scheme providing loans up to LKR10 million at an interest rate of 7% with a one-year grace period. Further, the larger establishments had good insurance coverage to compensate the damages (Rice and Haynes, 2005; UNWTO, 2005a). However, the buffer-zone or coastal conservation zone of 100m-200m land stretch, which was declared as a no-build zone without any careful study of socio-economic impacts or public awareness, created hardships in reconstruction plan. Only hotels partially damaged (i.e., if the cost of repair is below 40% of the replacement value) were allowed to reconstruct within the buffer-zone. However, any establishment or SMEs outside the 'Registration and Licensing Scheme' of the SLTB were not allowed for reconstruction within the buffer-zone. The reconstruction of houses within the buffer-zone was completely banned.

(iii) Loans for SMEs involved in Tourism Sector: The majority of tourism SMEs were unable to re-start operations without assistance either as outright grants or soft-loans. Despite this fact, tourism SMEs were not given due consideration by the government. There had not been any special assistance schemes in place of tourism SMEs other than the Central Bank which supported the SMEs of all economic sectors with a soft-loan scheme called 'Sahana Scheme': loans up to LKR 1-5 million, with an interest rate at 6%, with a maximum grace period of 1 year and repayment period of 3-8 years (GoSL, 2005a, 2006). The 'Phuket Action Plan' initiated by the WTO in February, 2005 came forward to rescue and rebuild the livelihoods of tourism SMEs focusing on human elements in order to save tourism jobs, re-launch SMEs and recover the flow of tourists. The top priority from the above plan towards the tourism sector in Sri Lanka was identification and provision of assistance to SMEs through grants and micro-financing (UNWTO, 2005b, 2005c). The Phuket Action plan recommended that soft loan facilities should be made available through international leading institutions for SMEs and these should be channeled through the designated local banks. Further, the plan helped in marketing communications, capacity building exercises, and professional training towards sustainable development.

(iv) Marketing and Promotion Campaigns to Re-gain Tourists: The tsunami caused untold damage to the tourism image creating an impression that beach tourism in Sri Lanka was totally wrecked. It was important to initiate resilience actions to correct these false assumptions in potential tourists. Media based tourism marketing and promotion campaign was the main approach used for restoring the tourism image of Sri Lanka as a world-class tourist destination. The main aims of the campaign were managing the negative perception created by the global mass media, draw back tourists as soon as possible and thereby uplift the moral of

local stake-holders, and highlight that tourism persists in Sri Lanka. An active recovery communication strategy was launched with US\$ 5.3 million immediately following the tsunami under the ‘Bounce Back Sri Lanka’ campaign (GoSL, 2005a; Rice and Haynes, 2005). At the first stage of the campaign, an international post-card advertisement strategy was developed. SLTB with the support of the Sri Lanka postal authority 600,000 prepaid postcards were distributed globally. The post-cards featured six different images of Sri Lanka’s main tourist venues with an invitation to visit the country. Furthermore, both media and trade familiarization (FAM) tours were organized to showcase the diversity of Sri Lanka tourism and experience the post recovery tourism situation. The ‘Buy One Get One Free’ package was launched from 14th February to 24th June, 2005 targeting the European market. Meanwhile, another package was launched for India: (3 nights/4days) ‘Bed & Breakfast’ accommodation for the price of airfare (SLTB). SLTB joined with the Sri Lankan Airlines and the Tourism Cluster, a USAID supported program to promote tourism in Sri Lanka, to spearhead a 3 1/2 months media campaign on global television and press (‘Rediscover Sri Lanka’) starting from 16th May, 2005 (UNWTO, 2005a). Further, the SLTB alone organized two special events designed to attract more tourists: the World of Music Arts and Dance (WOMAD) drum festival from 21-25 September, 2005 and the spice festival featuring with seven of the world’s top chefs in October, 2005 (UNWTO, 2005a; SLTB).

5.1.2. b. Long Term Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

Sustainable redevelopment of tangible tourism assets and human resources are important in the tourism revival process. Therefore, in March, 2005, 15 coastal towns were announced as tourism zones for restoration and redevelopment (Fig. 4). The objective was to install specific guidelines (e.g., high-end tourism

oriented infrastructure design, holding back illegal tourism establishments, get all tourism businesses registered under SLTB etc.) and to manage these tourism zones efficiently, avoiding ad-hoc tourism development in future. The layout of each proposed tourism zone includes three zones: set back zone, tourism zone, and community zone. Housing and related utility infrastructure developments are to be completed in above 15 tourist zones in order to reestablish displaced tourism based communities.

The long term revival master plan was implemented by the TAFREN which was formed as an extra-government body with ten managing personals to carry out total tsunami reconstruction and monitoring work (Rice and Haynes, 2005). The first plan was to redevelop the Arugam Bay, a small town nestled at the edge of a 300 hectare lagoon in the East coast of Sri Lanka (Fig. 4). The Arugam master plan envisaged total re-orientation of the previously existed fishing and agricultural communities, supplementary seasonal guesthouses into large hotels, build a commercial centre, a yachting marina, a floating plane pier and a helipad (Fernando, 2005a). This plan was initiated independently by the TAFREN with little or no stakeholder involvement (Arcadis, 2005; Rice and Haynes, 2005). Past events indicated that affected communities get a higher contentment and a sense of ownership by involving in planning their communities and livelihoods (Godavitarane et al., 2006).

The master plans of proposed tourism zones incorporated neither any public views nor a detailed feasibility study. The SRDP for the tsunami affected Andaman region, meanwhile, consulted every stakeholder and input their views for the regional development planning (ADB, 2006b); the final updated report of the 15 year master plan for Andaman was released nearly two years after the tragedy, in October, 2006. Ironically, in Sri Lanka, the master plan was designed and released in three months after the tsunami without conducting a single public awareness workshop. Fernando (2005a) mentioned that the most important shortcoming is that the master plan was isolated to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, with little or no stakeholder involvement. It contained several controversial issues which may cause to future complications. Furthermore, consultants responsible of the project admitted that the master plan was heavily drawn upon the former plan (i.e. the Tourism Master Plan- “Transforming the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry-A Five Year Strategy for Growth”) which was widely recognized as grandiose and inappropriate for the country due to the unbearably heavy capital cost for a country like Sri Lanka which tourism contributes only 4.6% of GDP (2004); yet, with uncertainty of the benefits (Arcadis, 2005). If all 15 tourist resorts follow the model of Arugam Bay, the number of families pushed away could be well over 75,000. Further, if single tourism zone requires an investment of US\$ 80 million, the cost will be US\$ 1.2 billion or a massive 40% of the total amount rose as tsunami recovery funds. Besides, the master plan explains that new housing for the displaced families will be provided in separate inland locations, at an average of over 1 km from the sea coast behind the tourist zone giving rise to several social problems: breakage of social-network, difficulties in carrying out livelihood etc. (Fernando, 2005a, 2005b).

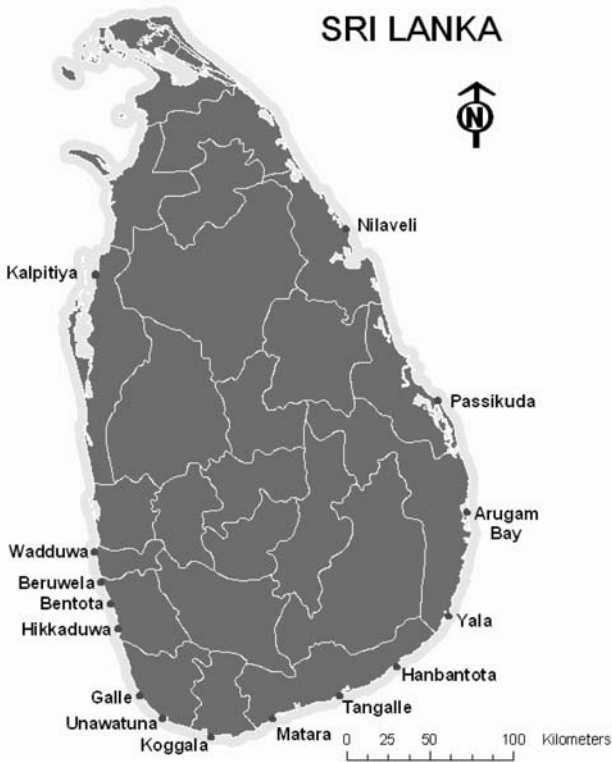
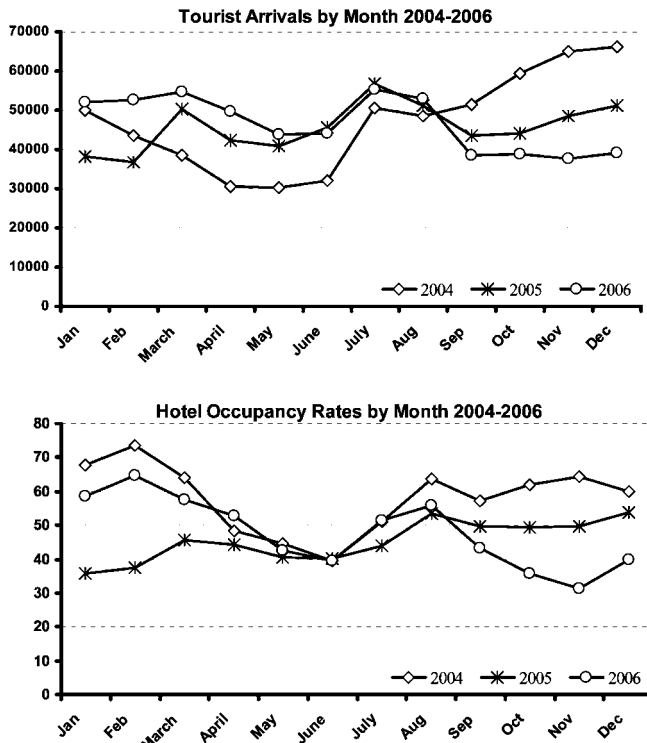


Fig.4 Proposed locations for 15 Tourism Zones



Source: Sri Lanka Tourist Board

Fig. 5 Monthly Tourism Indicators (Tourist Arrivals and Room Occupancy Rate)

6. TOURISM RECOVERY INDICATORS: TOURISM IN SRI LANKA REBOUNDS OR NOT

In early 2005, Sri Lankan tourist industry was severely set back by the aftermath of tsunami. According to SLTB-monthly statistical bulletins, Sri Lankan tourism industry recorded a negative growth with annual arrivals dropping by 3% from a value of 566,202 in 2004 to 549,308 in the following year. The actual figures of tourist arrivals are however, exaggerated by the large number of influx of tsunami aid workers from all over the world. The loss of tourist receipts was more severe than the loss of arrivals, with a drop of 13.0% from US\$ 416.8 million in 2004 to US\$ 362.3 million in 2005. For the first time in available history in Sri Lanka tourism, the average duration of stay was reduced below nine nights to 8.7 nights in 2005, compared with 10.1 nights in 2004. However, receipts per tourist per day recorded a significant increase to US\$ 74.6 in 2005 from US\$ 72.2 in 2004 increasing by US\$ 2.4. The room occupancy rate dipped substantially from 59.3% in the previous year to 45.4% in 2005. Furthermore, the employment generation in tourism sector decreased by 3.1% than 2004 to 125,004 in 2005. Despite the set-back caused by the tsunami, tourism was yet able to retain its position as the fourth largest foreign exchange earner in 2005, merely contributing 3.6% of the GDP compared to 4.6% in the previous year. Recovery of the annual arrivals increased slightly by 1.9% than the previous year to 559,603 in 2006. Monthly tourist arrivals are recovered already during the first eight months in 2005 and 2006, although hardly during the high season, from September to December in both years (Fig. 5). This is due to the decrease of Western tourist market (SLTB, *Monthly Statistical Bulletins*).

Tourism industry in Sri Lanka largely focused on media based marketing and promotion during and after the tsunami, yet, some innovative marketing promotions were required for recovering the confidence of potential tourists, especially in UK, Germany, and Italy (UNWTO, 2005a). Tourism in Sri Lanka historically had a high dependency on Western European markets, which accounted for 63.2% of all visitors in 1999, but shrunk to 41.4% in 2005, and 40.1% in 2006. Recently, a robust growth of tourists from South Asia, particularly the India as the single largest source providing 20.6% of the arrivals has overtaken UK. By all means, Sri Lankan tourism has markedly declined due to the drop of Western market following the tsunami. The North-East ethnic violence is also believed to play a role in this drop out.

The number of accommodation establishments increased from 209 in December 2005 to 241 in December 2006, while number of rooms increased from 12,428 to 14,218; in December 2004, just before the tsunami, tourism sector in Sri Lanka consisted of 242 hotel establishments with 14,322 room facilities. This indicates the tourism facilities were replaced to the pre-tsunami condition. The tourism industry is rebounding quickly although with a shortage of visitors in coastal areas. Room occupancy rate dropped by 16.5% in Southern coast establishments in December, 2006 compared to the same period in previous year, however, the number of rooms increased from 3,961 in December, 2005 to 5,112 in December, 2006 (SLTB, *Monthly Statistical Bulletins*).

7. RECOVERY CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARDS IN TOURISM SECTOR

1. 'No-Build' coastal buffer-zone: In order to reduce the loss in a future disastrous event, GoSL decreed a mitigation measure; 'No-Build' coastal buffer-zone varying from 100 to 200 meters depending of the coastal slope (GoSL, 2005a; TAFREN, 2005a; Rice and Haynes, 2005). Only the already registered tourism enterprises were allowed to carry out businesses inside the buffer-zone. This further jeopardized the distressed enterprises; especially tourism SMEs were deprived from getting government backed loans delaying the post-tsunami recovery. Although, the setting of new strategies should be transparent and consultative; declaration of the buffer-zone, however, happened without a careful study of the social and economic impacts or expert consultation (Cooray, 2006). The buffer-zone was controverted by both local and international agencies. Finally, GoSL eased the controversial buffer-zone to 40 meters in mid-October, 2005, which had prevented many reconstruction activities and government backed loans for SMEs of the revival process (UNWTO, 2005a). This relaxation allowed SMEs to establish themselves as close as 40 meters from the shore; however, this affected the once those had already started their constructions beyond the 100 meter boundary.

2. Reduction of tourist arrivals due to prevailing security condition: The recent conflict between the GoSL and the LTTE, violating the 'Peace Accord' signed in 2002, further worsened the tourism recovery process. The civil war dilemma has been influencing the tourist industry causing a negative economic growth and an unsafe environment which halt potential tourist arrivals (GoSL, 2006). The positive trend of tourist arrivals immediately prior to

the tsunami, initiated with the peace accord; thus, the success of the long term tsunami recovery process further counts on peacekeeping. The Southern and Eastern coastal towns particularly, depend on tourism. There is a concept that any prolonged downturn in tourist arrivals lead to serious social problems; depression, unemployment, crime, or hopelessness (ADB, JBIC & WB, 2005).

3. Inequitable Distribution of Recovery Assistance: Success of tourism sector is characterized with combined activities of different parties: from large hotel operators to mobile vendors. Large establishments were eligible to apply for government backed loans and offered duty waivers for all items needed for renovation and replacement of damaged vehicles for tourism transportation (TAFREN, 2005a). Yet, such government involvement was not seen towards tourism SMEs; the enterprises, however, do not hold the SLTB license were treated as illegal, in addition to the buffer zone restrictions. Only the 'Phuket Action Plan' came up to safeguard the tourism SMEs providing several incentive schemes (UNWTO, 2005a, 2005b).

4. Lack of Centralized Coordination: The tsunami has hit the island quite unexpectedly and the massive damage caused was extremely impossible to bare the nation alone. Almost all the relief operations were performed in ad-hoc manner (GoSL, 2005). Though, Tourism Relief Operation was totally coordinated by the SLTB and proved successful. Being able to dispatch first batch of tourists within 24hrs of the disaster, and absence of recorded injuries and epidemic diseases spread during relief phase are some of the indicators to mention that tourism relief operation carried out by SLTB was successful. The contribution of the national long term rehabilitation process handles by the TAFREN made numerous complicated issues in tourism aspect: lack of public involvement, lack of proper economic and environment feasibility studies, etc. The ten management level members of the TAFREN were criticized due to their novelty in such recovery processes as well as the unawareness on victims and regions affected (Shanmugaratnam, 2005). Thus, it would have been effective if TAFREN had come to an umbrella framework within which the top members govern the total progression while the sub-branches assigned in proportionate to the damage experienced, work with local and international experts.

5. Re-generating Livelihoods: Regenerating livelihoods was a major challenge in the toppled tourism industry. Over 70% of affected livelihoods were directly or indirectly involved with tourism industry (TAFREN, 2005a). Most activities were associated with SMEs; the damage to tourism assets and the drop in tourist arrivals drastically reduced the employment opportunities in SMEs. Thus, small tourism enterprises heavily depend on the recovery of tourism itself.

6. Non-existence of a Priori Disaster Management Plan: Sri Lanka was completely unaccustomed for the tsunami and never had experienced a disaster of such a huge scale. The post-tsunami recovery effort was therefore, complicated without a priori disaster management framework, and a clear rehabilitation framework. The lack of administrative control of the whole island (e.g. North-East conflict) also affects the tourism revival process

(Godavitarane et al., 2006).

8. COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR THROUGH THE TOURISM REVIVAL PROCESS IN SRI LANKA

Weighing the pros and cons of the strategies adopted for the tourism recovery campaign in Sri Lanka and exploring the strategies that could have been implemented upon then existed internal and external environment condition, a comprehensive disaster management framework for the tourism sector was proposed as shown in Fig. 6. These strategies were further counseled by a tourism expert involved in the tourist revival process in Sri Lanka. The proposed framework consists four phases: pre-preparation phase, response and immediate relief phase, rapid reaction and recovery phase, and monitoring phase. This phasing system and centric discern activities of the proposed framework reduce the complexity in resource allocation and administration malfunctions following an unforeseeable major devastation.

(i) Pre-preparation Phase: The tourism recovery process in Sri Lanka experienced that many of the SMEs involved in tourism had not been registered under the SLTB thus; treated as illegal tourist enterprises. The tsunami destroyed many of these SMEs along the coastal belt. Henceforth, orderly planning of the industry should be established (Godavitarane et al., 2006). Simultaneously, steps should be taken to eradicate rest and block potential encroachments to the tourism sector by strengthening the policy issues. Furthermore, the absence of detailed data base of tourism enterprises made the recovery process a complex (Samaranayake, 2005). Develop a monitoring mechanism for tourism functions: licensing regulation updates, annual review of safety precaution measures, cooperate work with 'Tourism Disaster Management' experts and perform SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analyses of the ongoing safety improvement activities which enable evaluation of the likely impact of foreseeable disasters are worthwhile components in priori actions. Preparation for prevention is also important as many victims in the 2004 IOT were not familiarized with the tsunami: thus, did not know when to evacuate (Godavitarane et al., 2006). Education and implementation of preventive measures are useful in minimizing the damage: awareness programs on disasters, establishment of disaster mitigation practices: installation of an early warning system, maintain a green belt, land use planning updates (e.g., replace single story buildings with multi-story to provide vertical evacuation, double-walled buildings), evacuation drills and clearly directed routes, establishment of communication strategies (Cooray, 2006). Further, initiation of communication soon following a disaster is essential to block the spreading of erroneous information; thus, appoint and train a media spokesperson is worthwhile in the pre-preparation phase.

(ii) Response and Immediate Relief Phase: The successfulness of the immediate relief operation of the tourism in Sri Lanka provides guidelines for utilization and duplication duly. Being able to dispatch the first batch of tourist within 24hrs, and absence of recorded injuries and epidemic diseases spread during relief phase

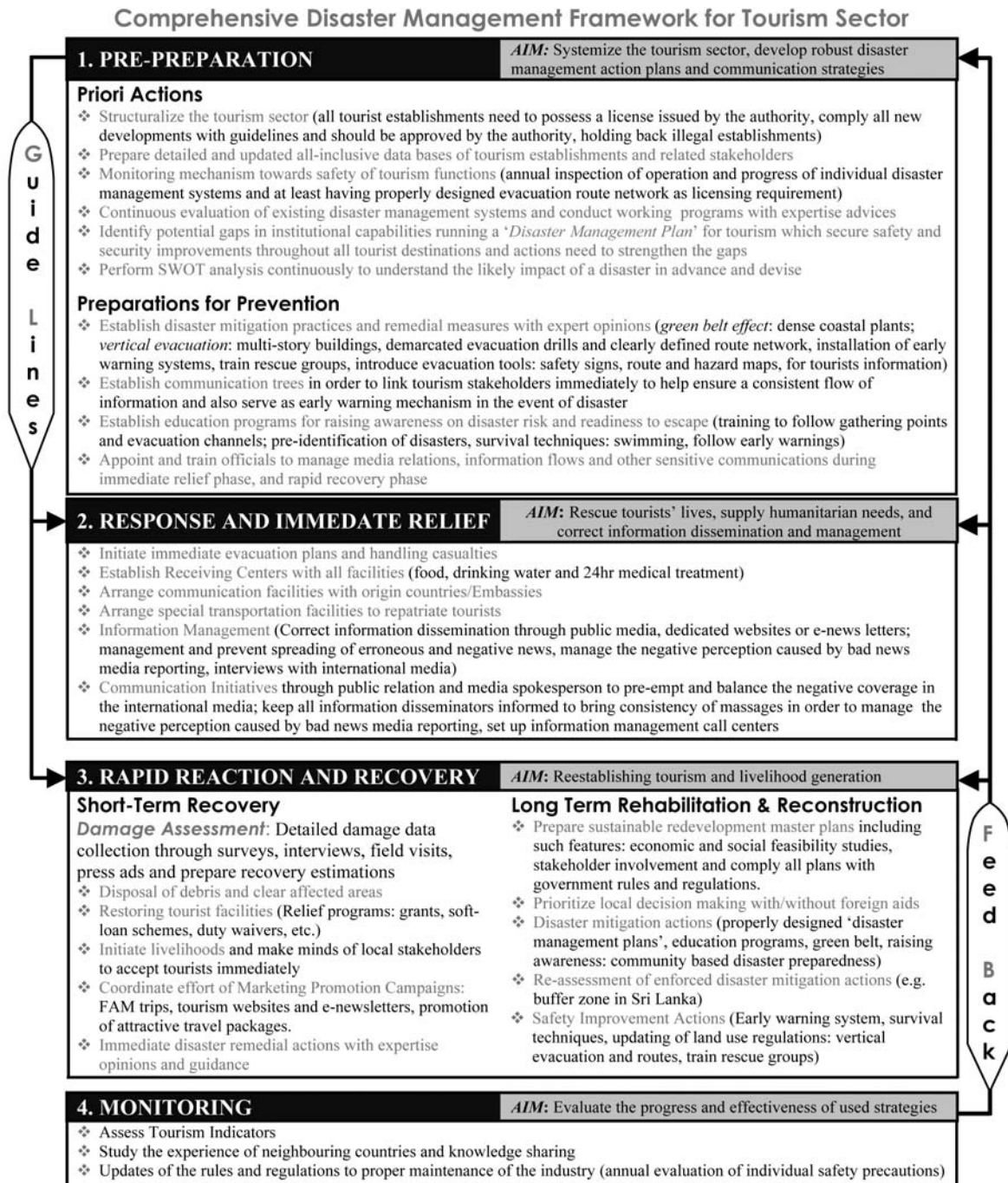


Fig. 6 Comprehensive Disaster Management Framework for the Tourism Sector

are some of the indicators to mention that tourism relief operation carried out by SLTB was successful. Evacuation plans and handling casualties, establishment of receiving centers with basic facilities, provide communication facilities with origin countries/embassies, tourist repatriation, correct information dissemination, and managing and preventing spread of erroneous and negative news bulletins are to be highlighted during relief phase. Information management in SLTB was performed in many means; dedicated websites and e-news letters, interviews with international media (e.g., Reuters, CNN, BBS etc.), highlighting supported quotes from leading travel industry people. Further, communication was initiated with 24 hr calling center, via e-mails to foreign missions and spread consistent messages to representative officers

in foreign markets.

(iii) **Rapid Reaction and Recovery Phase:** This phase can be implemented in two phases: 'short-term recovery' and 'long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation'. Damage assessment and detailed data gathering should be emphasized prior to launch the recovery process. Disposal of debris in coastal line, restoring tourism facilities, initiating tourism based livelihoods, and marketing promotions of the destinations are notable components in the short term recovery phase. Sustainable redevelopment of tangible assets and community resettlement are highlighted in long-term recovery phase. Community participation is vital during both planning and implementation stages. Economic and social feasibility

studies of the projects should be considered mandatory. Re-assessment of enforced disaster mitigation actions and long term disaster mitigation actions with expert opinions is advisable. Vital tactical safety improvement actions must be installed to improve the security and guarantee the safety of tourists. Further, following identification of vulnerable areas for natural disasters, the potentially affected community and officials can be educated with workshops of disaster management actions. Further, disaster management education can be included in the school education curriculum to disseminate the knowledge of disasters and precaution actions to the community.

(iv) Monitoring Phase: Regular monitoring of tourism indicators should be adopted to make sure the targets are achieved. Furthermore, studying the revival practices adopted in neighbourhood countries for necessary amendments of the disaster management framework should be also spotted. International exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing after the recovery process contribute to capacity building at all phases (ADB, JBIC & WB, 2005).

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The December 2004 IOT was an unforeseen and intolerable disaster to the tourism in Sri Lanka. The country was never ranked as a disaster prone destination; thus, prior preventive actions for such a destructive event were not installed, even in the most susceptible tourist industry. Tourists are mostly concerned with the safety and security in choosing tourist destinations in disaster stricken regions. Yet, in Sri Lanka very little has been invested to improve the safety or to formulate a disaster management framework; no early warning system in place up to now (UNWTO, 2005a). The nation long term recovery process including tourism sector rehabilitation process was adhered to the opinions and guidance of novelty group members in TAFREN; the technical know-how was demanding, no foreign experts were consulted at a single stage.

Decline in tourist arrivals due to prevailing security and political instability was the biggest challenge in the tourism recovery process (GoSL, 2006). Furthermore, inequitable distribution of recovery assistance, lack of centralized coordination, non-existence of a priori disaster management plan, re-generation of livelihoods, damage assessment, negative perception created among potential tourists, and increase the knowledge on disasters among public were major challenges. Community participation was hardly observed in tourism recovery process. The practice used by the ADB funded project to redevelop Andaman region provides an effective mechanism to get the participation of victims and other stakeholders. However, it was found that after two years, tourist arrivals have reached the pre-tsunami level except the Western market. Readiness and variation of marketing promotion tack ticks (not only media campaigns) would have shortened the time duration of recovery on Western tourists.

Tourism industry is different to other industries as there is a need getting back to business faster, due to tourists having to return for economic rehabilitation (Cooray, 2006). In that context, a

proper strategically robust relief and recovery planning framework is inevitable. The first goal of recovery is to return to previous level of economic function and social network. Pre-disaster experience, otherwise proper disaster management plan will immensely guide in rapid recovery. Community participation is crucial for a successful recovery process together with the role of the national government. Negative trends before a disaster usually worsen the recovery process; these include declining economies, social problems, and political instability etc. Equity of resource allocation is also important; the minor groups which are highly affected get less attention and delayed in the revival process while the giants in the industry better integrated into economic and social network are well supported, thus recover faster. The national political context is crucial for delivery of resources equally among the victim groups and enterprises. Outside resources are vital, but local decision making should be prioritized. To resume tourists to destinations shortly, marketing promotions should be considered parallel to physical reconstruction, community rehabilitation, and livelihood rebuilding. Moreover, the safety of the destination should be strengthened to reassure security of tourists. Careful attention should be paid on above mentioned features in the recovery process after a disaster. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the progress is necessary to realize goals attained and are to be improved. Above generalized features are the resultants of the detailed descriptive analysis performed on the recovery process adopted in tourism sector, Sri Lanka. The comprehensive disaster management framework, which is supported with pros and cons of the strategies adopted in the tourism revival campaign in Sri Lanka, is the major contributory of the research in practical arena of tourism. The phasing system and centric discern recovery activities in the proposed framework eliminates the complexity of resource allocation and administration malfunctions following an unforeseeable future devastation.

The developed disaster management framework based on Sri Lanka tourism revival process can be considered for preparing strategies or action plans in 'Hyogo Framework for Action'; the 10-year plan to make the world safe from natural disasters adopted by 168 governments at the World Conference of Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan, 2005. Moreover, this study would be a valuable feedback for revising the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act No. 13 of 2005. Further, comparison of the revival strategies and practices of the here mentioned disaster management framework with two well-accepted tourism disaster management frameworks developed by Faulkner (2001) and Ritchie (2004) is subjected to future research. Faulkner and Vikulov (2001) applied Faulkner's (2001) model to Katherine Floods in Australia and there by a more applicable framework to flood situations was produced. The extended study will validate the strategies of Faulkner's (2001) and Ritchie's (2004) models for a revival process of a massive tourism disaster caused by giant tsunami waves.

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