

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEMANDS AND LOCAL RESOURCE LOSSES: STUDY OF EFFECTS ON VILLAGE TANK CASCADE SYSTEMS IN THE GREATER HAMBANTHOTA AREA, SRI LANKA

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Abstract: The national development demands and local resource losses in village tank cascade systems in the Greater Hambanthota Project (GHP) area were investigated. The aim of the study was to identify mega-development projects and their impact on the natural environment and resources of tank cascade system. The study utilized qualitative methodology, involving 27 interviews with local farmers, government officers, NGOs, and government representatives and direct observations. The study revealed that the rapid development in Hambanthota city has severely impacted the upper part of the cascade and leading to eroded embankments, sedimentation, and reduced natural water flows. Despite the region's infrastructure development, the attention, management and development of tanks and irrigation systems has installed, new proposals have not implemented. It caused to damage to the embankments, reduced their drainage capacity and created challenges for their sustainable, widespread utility. New development interventions in Hambanthota City and Mirijjawila areas have led to increased deforestation, fragmentation of wildlife habitats, and increased the arrival of elephants in villages. Therefore, the human-elephant conflict have been a modern socio economic and environmental issue in the area, during the last few years. As a conclusion, mega development projects, have neglected local capacities, resources, and development requirements of the area and causing harm to locals and wildlife with diminishing their resource-base. Researchers suggest mega-development projects should consider local resources and community engagement while introducing national policies and existing policy integration to sustainably address conflicting demands.

Keywords: Tank, Cascade systems, Villages, Sustainability, Development