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Wetland Ecotourism and the Sustainable Development: A Review

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Abstract: Wetlands are crucial ecosystems characterized by shallow water levels, typically close to the surface, and abundant plant life during the growth and saturation seasons. They serve essential functions such as mitigating floods, purifying water, and offering habitats for diverse flora and fauna. Moreover, wetlands have a significant impact on climate change dynamics. These ecosystems are invaluable to both humans and the environment, often standing out as the most beneficial ecosystems within a given landscape. They provide a range of valuable services, including recreational opportunities such as tourism associated with wetland areas. Wetlands stand out as prime destinations for leisure tourism and offer a rich array of resources essential for human well-being. Wetland ecotourism has become a widespread concern as it represents the tourism industry, wetland protection, and sustainable development. Ecotourism, a facet of sustainable tourism, embodies the intricate interplay between fostering environmental preservation and fostering social and economic prosperity for local populations. Wetland ecotourism is a practical strategy for preserving the environment while bringing about social and financial advantages for nearby populations. This review explores the dynamic relationship between wetland ecotourism and sustainable development, focusing on the ecological, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions.

Author Keywords: Wetland, Ecotourism, Sustainable Development, Environment Protection. Economic Growth, Poverty.

I. INTRODUCTION

Wetlands are widely recognized as critical and invaluable ecosystems on our planet, often referred to as the "Earth's kidneys". They are characterized by shallow water levels, typically situated near the ground surface, and are populated by thriving plant life during the growth season and periods of water saturation (Barducci et. al, 2009). In order to achieve global objectives pertaining to biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development, wetlands are essential. They provide essential functions like flood management, groundwater recharge, climate regulation, coastal erosion prevention, recreational opportunities, and assistance for environmentally friendly travel. Wetlands also support a variety of habitats by means of complex food chains. By creating jobs and acting as homes for a variety of plant and animal species, they also make a substantial contribution to local economies. The term "wetland" encompasses a broad spectrum of ecosystems, including coastal wetlands, peatlands, mangrove forests, estuarine wetlands, marshes, and other similar environments (Guo et al, 2017). The Ramsar Convention, also known as the International Convention on Wetlands, defines wetlands as encompassing a vast array of habitats, including marshes, fens,

peatlands, and bodies of water, whether natural or man-made, permanent or temporary, with water that may be still or flowing, and of various salinity levels ranging from fresh to salt. (Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2016; Chandramani, 2019).

Wetlands, covering about nine percent of the Earth's surface, play a crucial role in supporting human habitation. They serve as vital ecosystems, hosting diverse biodiversity and serving as significant carbon sinks. Additionally, wetlands function as natural flood control systems, absorbing excess water during heavy rainfall and releasing it gradually to surrounding areas. They provide habitats for a wide range of species, including diverse flora, fish, amphibians, and birds, among others. Moreover, wetlands offer various ecosystem services such as water purification and nutrient cycling, ultimately contributing to enhanced human development when effectively utilized (Moyanmi and Ariya, 2015). In most parts of the world, the provision of food, fiber, water, and other materials, the provision of services for regulating the climate and floods, and the provision of recreational opportunities, including tourism associated with wetlands, all significantly contribute to human well-being (Chandramani, 2019).

Wetlands offer an ecology rich in resources necessary for human survival, making them the ideal destinations for recreational tourism. Therefore, it is believed that wetlands are the most diverse and productive ecological system in nature and that human progress and existence depend on them (Shao et.al, 2022).

Ecotourism, stemming from the fusion of "ecology" and "tourism" involves travel activities focused on natural, pristine environments and protected areas. It contributes to ecosystem preservation, honouring natural resources, and respecting the cultural heritage of indigenous communities. With its emphasis on the non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources, ecotourism indirectly aids in conservation efforts and enhances the economic well-being of local populations (Gaurabi and Rad, 2013). Because of its biological diversity, cultural richness, and role in environmental education, wetlands have a very high tourism value. Wetland ecotourism has become a widespread concern as it represents the tourism industry, wetland protection, and sustainable development (Luo, 2014). Wetlands are exceptional hotspots for biodiversity, directly benefiting the economy and ecology. They can also be sustainably utilized to support the growth of ecotourism (Fernando and Shariff, 2013).

The key objective of sustainable development is to ensure the enduring stability of both the economy and the environment, a goal attainable only by incorporating and recognizing economic, environmental, and social considerations in decision-making processes (Emas, 2015). Wetlands offer a multitude of advantages and functions that are critical to accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By 2030, the SDGs aim to eliminate poverty and promote sustainable development (Ramsar Convention on Wetland, 2018). The objective of this review article is to study the contribution of the development and promotion of ecotourism in wetlands to sustainable development goals. Wetland ecotourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the achievement of multiple sustainable development goals by promoting economic growth, environmental conservation, community well-being, and partnerships for sustainable development.

Wetland and Ecotourism

Wetlands are valued as tourism destinations due to their visual appeal and aesthetic qualities (Paudyal et al., 2018) considering the great diversity of flora and fauna they support (Bista et al., 2010; Lamsal et al., 2014). They serve as locations for leisure fishing activities, while coral reef regions are popular for recreational diving pursuits (Khadka et.al, 2021; Reid et al, 2005). The term "wetland tourism" refers to a kind of tourism that directly benefits from a largely intact natural region and helps to preserve and manage the wetland environment (Lee, 2009; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996). Due to their diverse array of wildlife habitats, ecological settings, and presence of fishing communities, wetlands can serve as nature-based tourism destinations, providing leisure, recreation, and tourism opportunities for visitors (Lee, 2009; Kerstetter et al., 2004; Chiu et al., 2014). Small-scale, village-style lodging is offered by wetland tourism, allowing visitors to take in the natural

surroundings in a socially responsible way without endangering the ecosystem. Tourists to wetland areas actively support local communities and the destination by bringing in capital, and they also significantly contribute to the preservation of the environment. Social exchange theory states that locals who see more benefits from tourism than expenses can be in favor of the growth of sustainable tourism (Lee, 2013) Thus, wetland tourism can support the wetland destination's sustainable growth (Galley and Clifton, 2004; Lee and Hseih, 2016; Biggs et al., 2012).

Numerous wetlands are popular tourist destinations. They supply travellers with necessities like food and drink as well as the raw materials needed to construct infrastructure related to tourism. In addition, they control natural processes that support a healthy environment like water purification and climate regulation (Duim et.al, 2007). Wetlands and tourism are closely interrelated, mutually benefiting each other. Wetlands offer ideal settings for tourists to engage in activities like swimming, sunbathing, boating, fishing, and wildlife observation. Conversely, revenue generated from tourism can contribute to wetland conservation efforts, facilitating the sustainable development of these environments. Furthermore, the demands and environmental challenges posed by tourism compel governments to prioritize wetland protection and management. Wetland ecotourism not only drives sustainable regional economic growth and safeguards wetland ecosystems but also fosters ecological awareness among tourists, thus contributing to the construction of ecological civilization through practical environmental education initiatives (Luo, 2014).

Because of their scenic appeal and the wide variety of animals and plants they support, wetlands are popular tourist sites. Coral reef habitats are heavily utilized as recreational diving destinations, and they are utilized as locations for recreational fishing (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). Seagrass beds, mangroves, and other bio-diverse locations including estuaries, semi-enclosed oceans, and temperate bays have a great deal of potential for development as ecotourism destinations. Rural economies rely heavily on tourism, even though visitation patterns vary widely depending on access and participation in tourist-related activities (Nyaupane & Thapa, 2006).



Figure: Major Wetlands of the World and Key Indian Wetlands Important for Tourism

Ecotourism and Sustainable Development

Sustainable ecotourism entails travel practices that avoid detrimental effects on the environment, economy, society, and financial viability. It emphasizes minimizing negative impacts on natural surroundings while maximizing positive outcomes for local communities and residents. The objective of ecotourism could include educating travellers, generating funds for environmental conservation, empowering local populations economically and politically, or fostering cultural understanding and respect for human rights (Indwar and Muthukumar, 2023).

Ecotourism is a diverse activity that can support the objectives of sustainable development in its economic, social, and environmental components, according to the statement "Sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection." By creating jobs, ecotourism can boost the economy and help people escape poverty. It can also hasten the shift to more sensible patterns of consumption and production, which include encouraging the sustainable use of seas, oceans, and marine resources, promoting local culture, and enhancing the standard of living for those who live in rural areas (UN General Assembly Resolution 73/245). An integrated ecotourism model encompasses sustainable attributes that promote environmental improvement, are worldwide in reach, and incorporate environmental and social aspects (Khanra. et.al, 2021). Ecotourism's growth can be seen as the primary opportunity presented by the current economic environment because it uses the potential of natural tourism in a sustainable way to promote local sustainable development and nature conservation while generating significant socioeconomic benefits with little financial outlay (Tisca et.al, 2016).

The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as a form of tourism that considers both present and future economic, social, and environmental consequences while meeting the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and local communities (UNEP-WTO, 2005). This is accomplished by carefully organizing, carrying out, and overseeing tourism-related operations. Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development has resulted in sustainable tourism (WECD, 1987). Which, however, is framed in terms of ecotourism and sustainable development, generating incentives for wetland protection while also supporting local livelihood (Thompson et.al, 2018). In many instances, it also makes it easier for residents and businesses to adopt and implement environmental regulations, which are crucial for the preservation of wetlands. One element of sustainable development that can be attained by combining social, economic, and natural resources is ecotourism (Chandramani, 2019).

Ecotourism is a subset of sustainable tourism, showcasing the interconnection between ecotourism and sustainable development. It's often seen as a means of advancing sustainable development in developing nations. By offering local communities alternative and more sustainable sources of livelihood, ecotourism contributes to community development.

Many see ecotourism as an effective strategy for conserving the natural environment while simultaneously fostering social and economic advantages for local populations. Thus, ecotourism is widely recognized as an alternative avenue for sustainable development (Kiper, 2013). Wetland ecotourism promotes environmental stewardship, provides revenue for nearby communities, and increases public awareness of wetland protection, all of which act as catalysts for sustainable development.

Benefits of Wetland Ecotourism

The promotion of ecotourism development, which prioritizes environmental preservation, community empowerment, and visitor satisfaction, represents a suitable alternative utilization of wetlands compared to consumptive activities like agriculture. This approach is crucial for wetland conservation and the reduction of poverty in local communities. Ecotourism relies on natural assets such as wildlife, landscapes, and cultural heritage. It also creates employment opportunities, particularly for young people and women. Additionally, ecotourism encourages the creation and sale of souvenirs, as visitors are drawn to the natural attractions. Moreover, it is a diverse industry that fosters broader community involvement, leading to increased benefits for all stakeholders (Momanyi and Ariya, 2015).

Wetland ecotourism contributes to biodiversity conservation and environmental protection. In addition to providing equally distributed socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders, such as steady job and income-earning possibilities and social services for host communities, it also respects host communities and their cultural history and values and helps to reduce poverty. The economic and environmental benefits of well-managed tourism in and around wetlands can be substantial at the local, state, and federal levels. In terms of revenue and employment, local governments and communities can and frequently do gain economically. When the money from visitors is allocated directly to wetland conservation efforts, the wetland itself stands to gain directly from the relationship between tourism and long-term conservation (United Nations World Tourism Organization 11).

The most intriguing feature of ecotourism is that it attempts to preserve the environment by empowering the residents' sociocultural identity in addition to their economic growth. Given that the host population's total quality of life is influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors. Ecotourism must be socially and culturally acceptable in addition to being commercially viable to be considered sustainable (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

Role of Wetland Ecotourism in Sustainable Development

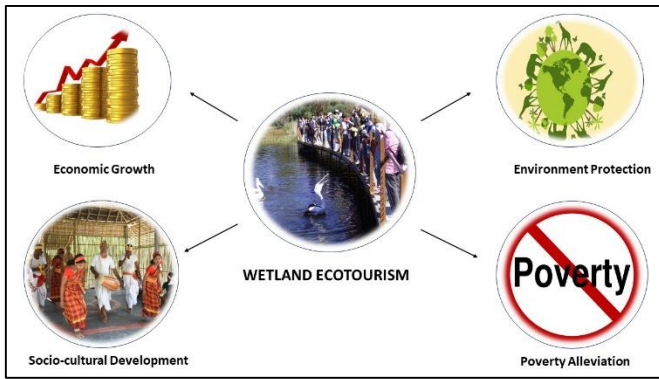


Figure: Role of Wetland Ecosystem in Sustainable Development

Wetland ecotourism in poverty alleviation

As numerous impoverished individuals rely on wetlands for their sustenance and earnings, the degradation of these wetlands poses a significant threat to their livelihoods, leaving them with no alternative resources. Consequently, this cycle exacerbates poverty and leads to the overexploitation of wetlands. To address this issue and contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, international organizations have begun implementing strategies that prioritize tourism initiatives benefiting impoverished communities. In 2002, the UNTOW initiated the Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty (STEP) program. Pro-poor tourism refers to tourism activities that result in overall positive outcomes for impoverished individuals. These benefits encompass economic, environmental, social, and cultural dimensions. Efforts to promote pro-poor tourism concentrate on creating opportunities for marginalized communities within the tourism sector. The scope and nature of pro-poor tourism initiatives vary widely, ranging from integrating tourism into national poverty alleviation strategies to establishing small-scale community-based tourism projects. Additionally, these efforts may involve facilitating partnerships between (international) tourism enterprises and impoverished populations, as well as offering capacity-building programs, training, and technical support (Duim et.al, 2007).

The growth of ecotourism will boost the local economy by directly generating jobs in the tourism industry in areas like restaurants, retail stores, eco-lodges, campsites, homestays, transportation, and guiding services (Reimer & Walter, 2013). Furthermore, as ecotourism grows, production systems for tourism-related goods and services such as locally produced handicrafts, agricultural products, and services—are established as a result of tourists' substantial consumption of these commodities. Respondents who have a livelihood connected to ecotourism believed that the growth of their livelihood is where ecotourism has the biggest positive influence. People shifted from fishing and using non-timber wood for their homes to ecotourism since it paid more (Jalani, 2012; Das and Chatterjee, 2015)

The UNWTO14 lists seven methods that the underprivileged might profit economically from tourism:

1. **Employment:** Actions can be implemented to raise employment opportunities for impoverished individuals across various sectors of the tourism industry, including hotels, resorts, transportation firms, attractions, and tourism services.
2. **Providing goods and services to businesses in the tourism sector:** Efforts can be made to optimize the percentage of visitor expenditure that stays within the local community and involve impoverished individuals in the supply chain operations to enhance their economic gains for them.
3. **Selling products and services directly to tourists:** Steps can be implemented to increase the income of impoverished individuals through the direct sale of products and services to tourists.
4. **Starting and running a tourism business:** Initiatives can be taken to support locals in starting and running individual or community-based tourism-related businesses.
5. Implementing a taxation or levy system on tourism income, with the generated funds directed towards benefiting impoverished communities. The revenues collected by both national and local governments, encompassing general income, business and development taxes, as well as specific tourism-related charges like airport levies, accommodation taxes, and visa fees, can be utilized for poverty alleviation purposes.
6. **Encouraging voluntary donations and assistance:** Actions can be taken to enhance the willingness of visitors or tourism enterprises to provide voluntary support to impoverished communities.
7. **Infrastructure investment:** The development of tourism may necessitate investments in new infrastructure such as roads, water and energy supply, sanitation, and communication systems. With thoughtful planning, these investments can also result in overall positive outcomes for impoverished communities in the area.

According to Duim et al. (2007), the wetland area of the Florida Keys in the United States generates a minimum of \$800 million in annual tourism revenue. Similarly, tourism stands as the primary commercial activity in the Great Barrier Reef region of Australia, with the marine tourism industry significantly contributing to both local and national economies. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park attracts an average of 1.8 million visitor-days annually.

Wetland ecotourism in environment protection

Wetland ecotourism resources are abundant and varied, similar to a natural ecosystem. The complex and varied wetland ecosystem, which includes both artificial and natural wetlands, offers a wealth of opportunities for wetland ecotourism. Rich animal and plant populations have an excellent habitat in the unique and rich environment of wetlands. The large marsh region is home to numerous uncommon species (Xu, 2020). The ecotourism industry plays a vital role in improving the conservation of wetlands and improving the well-being of nearby people. When responsibly practiced, ecotourism enhances community livelihood while promoting the

preservation of natural regions (wetland resources) (Menbere and Menbere, 2018).

Preserving natural environments and their resources is one of the main tenets of sustainable tourism. Several studies have demonstrated the critical role ecotourism plays in protecting the region's ecosystem and resources. The growth of plant life, the preservation of animals, the struggle against deforestation, and the advancement of renewable energy are all aided by ecotourism. Researchers have found that ecotourism income has positive effects on the environment. Also discovered that ecotourism encourages the preservation of natural regions and, consequently, the biodiversity of the area. Ecotourism ethics and those of preserving natural ecosystems are inextricably intertwined. The amount of harm done to the environment is decreased when ecotourism is introduced to the area. Ecotourism is a form of travel that makes the least use of the natural resources of a place to maximize long-term advantages for the environment and the local populace (Indwar and Muthukumar, 2023)

The main goal of ecotourism is to safeguard the environment. Numerous wetlands are popular tourist destinations. As a result, tourism can and has helped raise awareness of the importance of wetlands in particular as well as of nature in general. This is one way that tourism may encourage people to support the preservation of wetlands (Duim et.al, 2007). There is a significant chance to achieve advantages in terms of biological variety preservation and sustainable resource usage through ecotourism. This possibility arises especially when local populations directly profit from ecotourism, as their appreciation of the resources around them rises and they become more aware of the importance of protecting these resources as a major source of revenue (Convention on Biological Diversity; Pemberton and Charles, 2005). If ecotourism's guiding principles are used sustainably, it can be a visible strategy for preserving the environment and generating revenue for nearby communities. It may have a significant effect on both the preservation of natural resources and economic growth (Surendran & Sekhar, 2011). Ecotourism has been recognized by conservationists as a vital tool for preserving the environment and fostering community growth in the area (Stronza, 2007). Ecotourism often involves interacting with living elements of the natural world and is primarily concerned with environmentally sustainable travel, personal development, and socially conscious travel (Sadry, 2009; Ghorbani et. al, 2015).

Through the support of ecotourism, the local community is better able to participate in the preservation of the region's ecosystem and biodiversity, which in turn offers the community financial benefits. In addition to promoting locals' well-being, ecotourism helps to preserve wildlife (Kiper, 2013). Most people believe that ecotourism protects natural regions, which helps conserve biodiversity. It is mostly concerned with experiencing and learning about nature, including the local flora, wildlife, and their habitats, as well as the landscape and cultural artifacts. Planning for ecotourism brings with it the primary concern: the environment and its conservation (Fung & Wong, 2007; Kiper, 2013).

In recent times, ecotourism has garnered substantial support on a global scale by contributing to the preservation of the environment, biodiversity, and resources, augmenting the conservation of natural resources, and augmenting awareness about local customs and culture (Khallaf, 2014). Ecotourism is regarded as one of the aspects of sustainable tourism (Sarhan et al., 2016; Rivera, Gutierrez, & Rivera, 2018). The goal of ecotourism is to preserve the area's resources, safeguard its biodiversity, and work toward devising a strategy for minimal resource consumption that will allow visitors to enjoy the natural surroundings while simultaneously benefiting the local economy (Hunt et al., 2015; Salman et.al, 2020).

Preserving natural environments and their resources is one of the main tenets of sustainable tourism. Several studies have demonstrated the critical role ecotourism plays in protecting the region's ecosystem and resources (Kelkit, 2005). The conservation of wildlife, the growth of plant life, the advancement of renewable energy sources, and the battle against deforestation are all aided by ecotourism. Researchers have found that the ecology gains from ecotourism revenue as well. Researchers have discovered that ecotourism encourages the preservation of natural regions and, consequently, the biodiversity of the area. Ecotourism ethics and those of preserving natural ecosystems are inextricably intertwined. The amount of harm done to the environment is decreased when ecotourism is introduced to the area. Ecotourism is a form of travel that makes the least use of the natural resources of a place to maximize long-term advantages for the environment and the local populace (Indwar and Muthukumar, 2023).

The main measure of ecotourism's sustainability is conservation, which gives it an advantage over other forms of tourism (Zambrano et al., 2010). Numerous decision-makers are aware of the important benefits of preserving and advancing ecotourism, including biological diversity and ecosystem sustainability (Bhuiyan et al., 2012). Thus, they make an effort to uphold and adhere to this idea, which simultaneously promotes environmental sustainability (Salman et al., 2020). Ecotourism has a greater influence on the environment than only the community's engagement in recreational activities; it also has an impact on conservation (Seifi & Ghobadi, 2017).

- Has the potential to enhance the quality of the local environment because travelers are drawn to fascinating locations free of pollution.
- Because many tourists are interested in protecting nature, help spread the word about how important environmental protection is to the community. People can become more conscious of the value of preserving the environment and its surroundings by witnessing the behaviours of these tourists.
- Reduction of pollution to the environment resulting from inappropriate waste disposal procedures, including unsupported facilities and disposal techniques.
- Decrease the danger and escalation of environmental issues brought on by the use of land not used for planning and building activities while building facilities (Mustofa, 2022).

Ecotourism has reinforced the preservation of natural and ecologically significant areas for humans. This result illustrates ecotourism's role in protection. Some priceless natural environments, which are frequently valuable for both scientific study and tourism, have been preserved because of the growth of ecotourism. They might be destroyed or made available for other purposes if they are not utilized to promote ecotourism. Non-renewable materials with significant cultural and artistic significance are natural and cultural relics. They cannot be repaired if they are damaged. Numerous historic landmarks, distinctive structures, and monuments have been repaired or restored because of the growth of ecotourism. Through ecotourism, travellers can increase their understanding of environmental protection—all of which will help them to actively safeguard the environment. Effective management and planning strategies enable tourism to enhance visitor satisfaction while simultaneously improving the quality of the environment (Fei Meng, 2021).

Wetland ecotourism in promoting peace

Tourism offers multifaceted benefits, inherently possessing the potential to foster peace, restore social balance, resolve conflicts, and alleviate prejudice and poverty. While tourism and peace may not be inherently synonymous, the diverse activities within tourism can sow the seeds of peace in the minds of travellers. On a broader scale, tourism can catalyze societal transformation toward harmony and peaceful coexistence (Mohanty et.al, 2019). Assimilation and cultural interchange between visitors and the locals are encouraged by tourism, which contributes to the development of peace (Burtner, 2010), believes that tourism contributes to a peaceful, prosperous, and robust society, which lowers the likelihood of conflict and injustice. The benefits of tourism have brought about several social advancements and fostered understanding amongst individuals from different backgrounds and communities. In turn, harmony is finally improved via mutual understanding between individuals and cultures. (Theobald, 1998). Through coordinated efforts among tourism planners, local communities, and civic authorities, implementing well-designed action plans and initiatives can lead to positive outcomes.

The community actively contributes to the sustainable growth of tourism, thereby bolstering the rural economy. Sustainable tourism and the community are therefore integral to the process of developing peace. The community's role in preserving and promoting both the natural environment and the general well-being of society is seen as that of a symbol of peace (Mohanty et.al, 2019).

Wetland ecotourism in economic growth

One factor influencing both regional and economic growth has been identified as ecotourism. The fastest-growing segment of the tourism business is ecotourism, which has many advantages such as increasing foreign exchange earnings, promoting new investment opportunities, generating new jobs, and raising the local employment rate (Indwar and Muthukumar, 2023). There are several ways that ecotourism could boost the economy. This comprises foreign exchange

gains, greater job openings, the development of infrastructure, and a more varied local economy (Lindberg, 2001; Hussain, 2022).

Many rural communities view ecotourism as a promising economic lifeline, driven by the prospects of employment, entrepreneurial ventures, skill enhancement, and similar opportunities (Scheyvens, 2000; Das and Chatterjee, 2015). The active participation of residents is crucial for the successful development of ecotourism. It stands as a significant avenue for economic growth and employment generation. International examples illustrate that tourism is labour-intensive and presents diverse small-scale prospects, offering employment opportunities for marginalized groups such as the impoverished, women, youth, and indigenous communities (Das and Syiemlich, 2009).

(According to Wall 1997; Alexander and Whitehouse 2004; Jiang 2008 and Kiper, 2013) wetland ecotourism contributes to economic development in the following ways.

- Supports long-term regional economic growth.
- Gives steady employment to locals.
- Promotes the growth of allied industries
- Enhances regional infrastructure
- Earned profits contributed to local communities
- Equitable revenue sharing
- Encourages both production and consumption
- Provides funding for the creation and upkeep of protected areas
- Effectively uses natural resources

Wetland ecotourism in sociocultural development

Wetland eco-tourism assets expand opportunities for tourism development within society, drawing individuals to earn through activities such as sightseeing, entertainment, and other aesthetic experiences. Additionally, the suitable wetland settings offer a tranquil environment conducive to recuperation. The abundant ecological resources of wetlands also hold significant educational and research value (Xinlei, 2017), offering a wide range of applications and useful resources for human study and education. Resources found in wetland ecosystems are dependent on humans and flourish harmoniously together (Qin Xu, 2020).

Social and cultural norms play a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of tourism. Eco-tourism positively influences the social and cultural dynamics of a region, yielding significant benefits for local culture, society, and economy (Hall et.al, 1998). According to (Neth, 2008), ecotourism improves connections between various areas in the same region, encourages more people to get involved, and benefits local communities. According to (Acquah, 2013), maintaining local culture depends on ecotourism having a positive influence on it. According to Viswanatha and Chandrashekara (2014), ecotourism has positive social and economic impacts on the local community. Academics from many different fields have reached the same conclusion: the region benefits socially and

culturally from ecotourism. This includes strengthening regional economies, expanding access to healthcare, encouraging a deeper awareness and respect for the area's distinctive cultural customs, and more. The growing familiarity of the population with ecotourism may have far-reaching effects. Due to the advantages of ecotourism, unsustainable activities like fishing, hunting, and deforestation have significantly decreased. This suggests that community efforts to protect the environment are positively correlated (Indwar and Muthukumar, 2023).

II. CONCLUSION

Wetlands are the "Kidneys of the Earth". They are frequently the most important ecosystems in a landscape because they offer a variety of recreational possibilities and other significant ecosystem services, such as tourism. Wetlands are therefore thought to be the most diverse and productive ecological system in nature, and they are essential to human life and advancement. Wetlands can be considered a nature-based tourism destination that provides leisure, recreation, and tourism for tourists and recreationists due to their biodiversity, wildlife habitats, ecological environment, and fishing towns. The preservation of wetlands and additional reduction of poverty in the host communities depend on the growth of ecotourism. Wetland ecotourism offers a diverse potential to support economic growth, socio-cultural development, environmental conservation, poverty reduction, and peace promotion when integrated into sustainable development projects.

Communities can boost local resilience and prosperity by diversifying their economies, generating income streams, and creating jobs by utilizing the special attractions of wetland habitats. Concurrently, ecotourism promotes intercultural dialogue, acknowledges biodiversity, and protects indigenous knowledge, enhancing societal values and fortifying social cohesiveness. Ecotourism practices centered around wetlands can serve as powerful tools for environmental conservation and restoration. Wetland ecotourism holds promise as a vehicle for poverty alleviation, empowering local communities through capacity building, skills training, and the equitable distribution of benefits. Wetland ecotourism initiatives can contribute to poverty reduction and improve livelihoods, thereby promoting social equity and inclusion. The promotion of wetland ecotourism can contribute to peace-building efforts by fostering dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among diverse stakeholders. By creating shared spaces for recreation, education, and cultural exchange, ecotourism initiatives can bridge divides, build trust, and promote peaceful coexistence, thus contributing to conflict resolution and reconciliation. The sustainable development of wetland ecotourism offers a holistic approach to addressing interconnected challenges, balancing economic prosperity, social well-being, environmental integrity, and peace-building efforts.

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