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**SITUATION ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES  
FOR ELEPHANT ORPHANAGE AT PINNAWALA**

A PROJECT REPORT PRESENTED BY

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To the Board of Study in Environmental Sciences of the  
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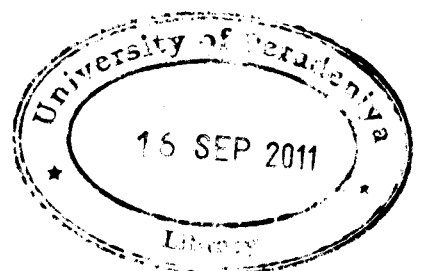
**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN BIODIVERSITY, ECOTOURISM AND  
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# **SITUATION ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR ELEPHANT ORPHANAGE AT PINNAWALA**

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The Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage (PEO) receives around 0.5 million visitors each year. According to the statistics available at PEO around 70% of the visitors that arrive at PEO are local visitors while the remaining 30% are foreign visitors. Therefore, PEO can be considered as one of the key tourist attractions in Sri Lanka. However, there are many shortcomings of PEO both as a tourism destination and an *ex situ* conservation facility. Therefore, this study was undertaken to analyze the visitor dynamics, profiles, perceptions, and expectations as well as the quality of visitor experiences and services provided by PEO, which are necessary elements to be considered in identifying its development needs.

During the period 2006 to 2009 the highest number of tourist arrivals took place in year 2006. The highest number of visitor arrivals in PEO takes place during the month of August. The lowest number of visitor arrivals occur in the months of May and June while lowest local visitor arrivals takes place during the months of January and November. Most of the local visitors arrive to PEO from the Kegalle district followed by Colombo, Kandy, Kurunegala, Gampaha and Ratnapura districts.

Most of the people who took part in the interview survey has rated, bottle feeding of baby elephants, which they cannot see in other places such as national parks in Sri Lanka, as the major attraction of PEO. Further, watching baby elephants and elephant bathing in the river were rated as the other major attractions of PEO.

Absence of a formal arrangement for the visitors to observe elephant bathing was identified by the visitors as the main defect of PEO. The bathing area is located outside the orphanage and there is no formal arrangement for the visitors to observe this activity. Many of the hotels and boutiques located on the river front offers this facility at a price that is not affordable for most tourists, especially Sri Lankan's who visit PEO. Therefore, they have to stand in a narrow area with no shade and watch the elephants and as a result are deprived of properly enjoying this experience. Further, this area is highly eroded and therefore cannot be accessed easily, especially by the disabled visitors.

The other short comings identified by the visitors includes the lack of education programmes and guidance at PEO, inadequate parking facilities, inadequacies in available visitor services such as restaurants, toilet facilities, elephant viewing facilities at the bathing place as well as free ranging area and lack of a garbage disposal system resulting in unregulated litter disposal by the visitors lowering the overall appearance at PEO.

The success of any tourism destination also lies with the efficiency and courtesy of the staff which in turn depends on staff satisfaction. All staff members who took part in the survey expressed that they are satisfied with their job and working conditions at the PEO.

Number of changes can be suggested to improve the visitor experience at PEO. First, construct safe and comfortable viewing platform near the elephant bathing area and free ranging area. Further, these viewing platforms have to be designed in a manner that would enable both disabled and elderly people to access it. Second, providing better guidance to the visitor through strategically placed sign boards educating them on "Do's and Do not's" while at the site. Third, establishing affordable restaurant(s) and other visitor facilities for the visitors. Finally, since PEO is visited by a 0.5 million visitors each year it provides an excellent opportunity to create awareness about Asian elephants and their conservation status. This could be achieved through a well designed visitor center established at the orphanage with exhibits and informational posters.