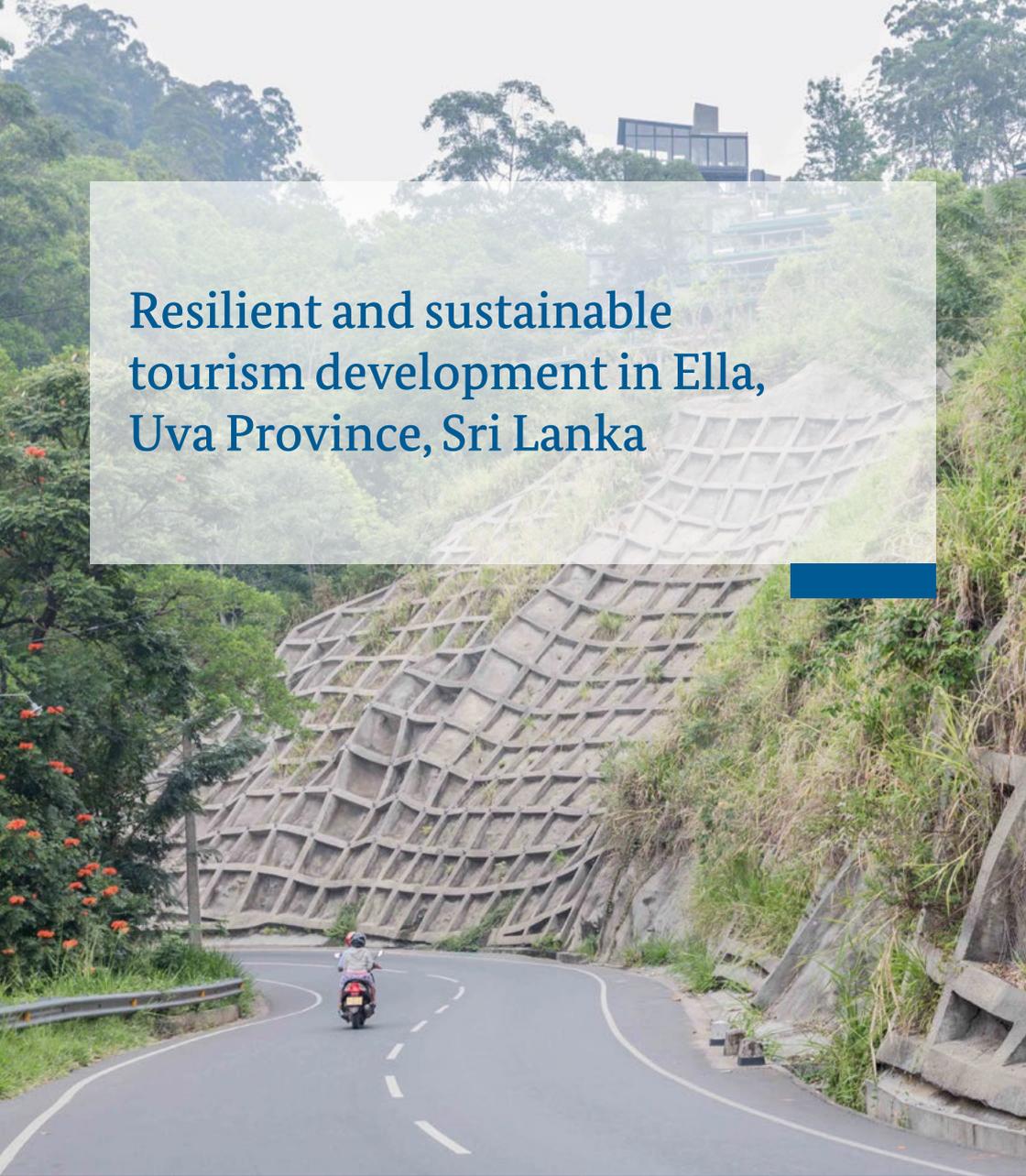


Resilient and sustainable tourism development in Ella, Uva Province, Sri Lanka



Building resilience in tourism destinations

Tourism is a major source of income for numerous communities worldwide, particularly in regions with difficult accessibility, remoteness from economic markets, and limited industry. However, many tourism destinations face complex and interconnected risks such as climate change, pandemics, ecosystem degradation, loss of nature and biodiversity (UNDRR, 2022). These issues are particularly demanding in a cross-cutting industry such as tourism which is highly dependent on intact ecosystems, global business activity and socio-cultural experiences. In the face of growing uncertainty and occurrence of

disasters in tourism destinations, resilience has evolved as a key concept for dealing with these challenges.

However, approaches for putting it to practice in a destination are still scarce. The tourism destination Ella in Sri Lanka set out to change this by pioneering an innovative methodology to analyse and build destination resilience. This brochure outlines Ella as a tourism destination, identifies hazards and risk for tourism activity in the region and compiles options for action to build resilience including implications for their implementation.

How to build destination resilience?



Collaborate with tourism stakeholders

Tourism is a people’s business. It involves a variety of stakeholders from different backgrounds and centres around creating and exchanging value between tourists and the host. This includes institutional actors (government, ministries), destination management organisations, tourism businesses (e.g., accommodation providers, tour operators, transport services, etc.), local communities and visitors, etc. Naturally, all these actors have a stake in resilience building which is

why they need to form part of a destination resilience analysis. Therefore, the project employed a variety of participatory formats to capture input and ideas from those planning and carrying out tourism activities as well as those ultimately affected by tourism development. Among these formats, quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches such as interviews, focus groups, surveys and workshops with the stakeholders from Ella in Uva province were conducted.

STEP 1



ELLA IN UVA PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

The mountain destination Ella in Uva Province is situated in the central mountain range of Sri Lanka. Surrounded by mountain peaks, cloud forests and tea plantations, the village has transformed into an attractive tourism destination. With its cooler climate and good connection by train, it contributes significantly to foreign currency generation, employment, infrastructural development and to local residents’ livelihoods.

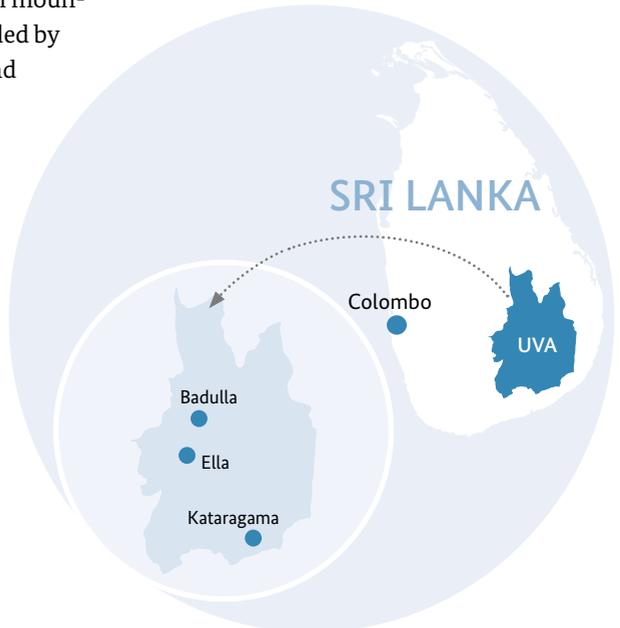


Figure 1: Ella, Uva Province

STEP 2



KEY RISKS FOR TOURISM IN ELLA

During the project, key risks for tourism within the destination Ella were identified. These included sudden shock events and slow-onset stressors. The potential negative impacts of these risks included adverse consequences for human lives, the

economy, the environment, destination image, or community well-being. Below, the key risks in Ella as well as underlying risk drivers which were identified during the participatory workshops, interviews and surveys are summarized.

TYPE OF RISK	IDENTIFIED RISKS / KEY RISKS
Hydrological/geological risk	Landslides
	Soil erosion
Biological risk	Heavy metal accumulation
	Bacterial contamination of water
	Spread of dengue fever
Political	Political instability
	Corruption
Financial risk	Loss of government tax income
	Debt

STEP 3



OPTIONS FOR ACTIONS TO ADDRESS RISKS

There is no solely valid pathway to reach destination resilience. Each key risk can be addressed with a number of different actions which must be carefully evaluated to check if their implementation is feasible, realistic and in line with other goals of sustainable development. It is therefore advisable to develop a variety of options for action that correspond to the identified risks.

During the project, a multitude of differentiated options for action to tackle key risks for tourism in Ella were identified.





GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT ENABLE RESILIENCE

There are common aspects that encourage the development of resilience pathways in tourism. We call them **Resilience Principles for Tourism**. These principles are applicable in most destinations and guide the development of concrete action for strengthening resilience and promoting sustainability. Examples include:

- ▶ **Diversity and Redundancy:** e.g., diversification of tourism products and activities to avoid overdependency
- ▶ **Social Networks:** e.g., build and strengthen cooperation among all stakeholders in the destination
- ▶ **Reflexivity and Awareness:** e.g., workshops and trainings to raise awareness on different risks in the destination; reflect contributions of tourism to economic growth and improving tourism satellite accounting
- ▶ **Flexibility, Adaptability and Learning:** e.g., create knowledge on how to manage risks; address skills gap in tourism industry
- ▶ **Participation and Collective Action:** e.g., establishment of easily accessible tourism funds and stimulus packages; define responsibilities and coordinate action across at all levels and in partnership with communities.

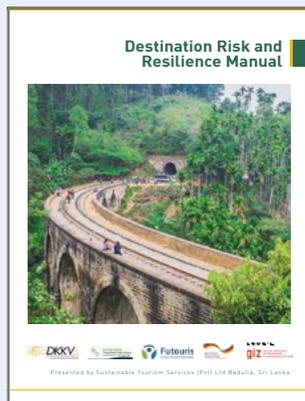


CREATING OWNERSHIP THROUGH TRAININGS

In order to increase long term resilience of tourism destinations in Ella, there is a need to raise awareness for risks through training and capacity enhancement of local tourism stakeholders on sustainability and resilience. Following the identification of training needs in the workshops, the local project team designed a two-day training program which included fire safety and emergency response training, environmental risk management, resilience building strategies and a fieldtrip to Ravana Falls, Ella.



For further insights on the successful implementation of this project in Ella (incl. key risks for tourism, methods and options for action to build resilience) please find more information in the *Destination Risk and Resilience Manual for Ella, Sri Lanka*.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Department of Tourism Studies from Uva Wellassa University in Badulla, Sri Lanka and the Sustainable Tourism Services Pvt. Ltd, Sri Lanka have partnered with the German Committee for Disaster Reduction and Futouris as part of the project 'Destination Resilience'. The international project promotes resilience in tourism destinations in Sri Lanka, Namibia, and the Dominican Republic. The project aims to assess destination resilience and provides support to tourism actors to build resilience and strengthen sustainable tourism development.

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<https://www.dkkv.org/en/consulting/projects/resilience-in-tourism>

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