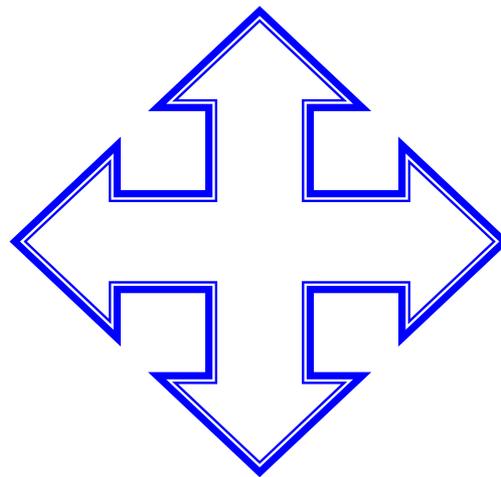




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Lessons Learned: Nepal's Experience Implementing Sustainable Rural Tourism Development Model of Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme



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**Lessons Learned: Nepal's Experience
Implementing Sustainable Rural Tourism
Development Model**

**Submitted to
Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme
(TRPAP)**

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Abbreviations

APPA	: Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action
BZMC	: Buffer Zone Management Committee
BZUC	: Buffer Zone Users Committee
BZUG	: Buffer Zone Users Group
CNP	: Chitwan National Park
CO	: Community Organisation
DADO	: District Agriculture Development Office
DDC	: District Development Committee
DNPWC	: Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
FG	: Functional Group
GLCC	: Gatlang Lodge and Cultural Centre
GoN	: Government of Nepal
HRA	: Himalayan Rescue Association
IDF	: Infrastructure Development Fund
KATH	: Kathmandu Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management
KEEP	: Kathmandu Environmental Educational Programme
LDO	: Local Development Officer
LDT	: Lumbini Development Trust
LNP	: Langtang National Park
MoCTCA	: Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
MUVC	: Multiple-use vVisitor cCentre
NATHM	: Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management
NP	: National Park
NTB	: Nepal Tourism Board
PDTDMP	: Participatory District Tourism Development and Management Plan
PRA	: Participatory Rural Appraisal
SM	: Social Mobiliser
SNP	: Sagarmatha National Park
SNPMTP	: Sagarmatha National Park Management and Tourism Plan
STDC	: Sustainable Tourism Development Committee
STDF	: Sustainable Tourism Development Fund
STDS	: Sustainable Tourism Development Section
STDU	: Sustainable Tourism Development Unit
STG	: Specially Targeted Group
STVF	: Sustainable Tourism Village Fund
TAAN	: Trekking Agents Association of Nepal
TEAP	: Tourism and Environment Awareness Programme
THT	: Tamang Heritage Trail
TRPAP	: Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme
VCF	: Venture Capital Fund
VDC	: Village Development Committee
VTA	: Village Tourism Advisor
WWF	: World Wide Fund for Nature

1. Introduction

1. The Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) aims to improve the livelihood of people by harnessing their participation in tourism development activities. TRPAP is active in six districts of Nepal, namely Taplejung (Kangchenjunga), Solukhumbu (Everest), Rasuwa (Langtang), Chitwan, Rupandehi (Lumbini) and Dolpa. The Programme has focussed on raising awareness of tourism issues, and facilitated organisational responses through community participation. It has successfully formed a series of community groups and enabled local people to engage in tourism. TRPAP seeks to contribute to poverty alleviation in Nepal by mainstreaming pro-poor sustainable tourism policies, and developing strategies and innovative models that are pro-women, pro-environment and pro-communities. There are good opportunities for national and international pro-poor sustainable tourism practitioners to learn lessons from the TRPAP experience during its five years of implementation since September 2001.

2. The Programme has trialled and developed different product models and institutional mechanisms that are appropriate for sustainable rural tourism at macro, meso and micro levels. Much of the activity has been at the field level and a range of further initiatives took place at the village, district and national levels.

3. TRPAP has assisted the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), to review and develop national sustainable tourism policies, regulations and strategic plans by working with government officials, the private sector and civil society. In order to sustain the Programme's achievements, separate units have been established in the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) for assuming responsibility for ecotourism. The Sustainable Tourism Development Unit (STDU) in the NTB collaborates closely with local bodies to address issues of poverty alleviation through the development of rural tourism in the countryside. The capacity of central level training institutions such as Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) and private sector colleges has been enhanced, and training manuals prepared. TRPAP has contributed in developing and enhancing capacity of MoCTCA and NTB in rural pro-poor tourism planning, strategy and implementation. NTB's capacity to promote new rural tourism products and services in originating markets has been enhanced. A comprehensive Sagarmatha National Park Management and Tourism Plan (SNPMTP) has been produced with the DNPWC.

4. A feature of TRPAP is that community participation in tourism is considered of central importance. Participatory techniques are used as a tool for contributing to poverty alleviation, for involving government officials and local bodies in rural tourism development, for strengthening environmental conservation, for empowering disadvantaged groups and women, and for social mobilisation. Participatory approaches have ensured that each intervention was carefully selected in response to beneficiaries' specific needs, along with their building an organisational structure capable of making the Programme work. The process of involving all stakeholders from the early planning stages, including the wider tourism industry, has made sure that TRPAP initiatives are more effective and sustainable than those imposed by outsiders.

5. The TRPAP district sites have all faced problems during implementation due to the insurgency and political unrest, especially Dolpa, Taplejung and Chitwan. International tourism flows to and within Nepal declined due to the effects of negative publicity and security constraints during most of the Programme period. Visitor

arrivals to Nepal have dropped from 470,000 in 1999 when the Programme was designed, to a low of 275,000 visitors in 2001 and 375,000 in 2005.

6. TRPAP was designed to work in close cooperation with locally elected bodies, but during most of the period there were few elected representatives as elections could not be held. Hence TRPAP had to concentrate on projects with the support of government-appointed employees of District Development Committees (DDCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs). TRPAP is operating in 48 VDCs covering 715 settlements and over 28,000 households. The total beneficiaries are expected to be around 160,000 individuals.

7. Local communities have supported TRPAP activities as they target improved livelihood options and tourism. The people-oriented approach has resulted in alternative livelihoods capacity building, skills training, increased agricultural productivity, employment opportunities, empowerment, and the improved ability to combat poverty. TRPAP is widely acknowledged for its transparency and rural development interventions. These include small-scale tourism infrastructure such as the construction of trails, bridges, signposts, information centres, public (porter) shelters, improved water, sanitation, waste disposal and renewable energy projects. It has achieved successful micro finance projects, social mobilisation and institutional enhancement.

8. Developing a system of institutional linkages from the village through the district to the national level is another TRPAP's accomplishments. A sense of local ownership has prevailed through the formation of institutions with community representation. This led to better development and management of processes, and eventually resulted in better outcomes. Though still unfolding, TRPAP's experiences are of special interest in providing a model for organisational change, especially for bureaucratic public organisations seeking to redesign their structure and systems through a more balanced approach. For reference by national and international stakeholders, an attempt was made to generate baseline knowledge and systematically monitor TRPAP's impacts on poverty, the environment, social and gender. Other districts of Nepal are now seeking to replicate the TRPAP model, and there is considerable international interest amongst sustainable tourism managers worldwide. It is likely that good opportunities exist for similar pro-poor tourism initiatives elsewhere.

9. MoCTCA and DNPWC implement TRPAP, which is partnership funded by DFID, SNV and UNDP. DFID provides 80 percent of the funds, SNV contributes technical assistance, and UNDP has managed the five-year Programme.

1. In summary:

- **TRPAP contributes to poverty alleviation in the country by mainstreaming sustainable tourism policies, and developing strategies and innovative models that are pro-poor, pro-women, pro-environment and pro-community.**
- **TRPAP aims to trial and develop different product models and institutional mechanisms that are appropriate for sustainable rural tourism.**
- **TRPAP operates at a range of levels including village, district and national, involving communities, local government bodies, tourism entrepreneurs and national government agencies including the NTB.**
- **The Programme has been instrumental in developing and enhancing the capacity of MoCTCA and NTB in rural pro-poor tourism planning, strategy and implementation**
- **Community participation is central to TRPAP's approach, and is used as a tool for alleviating poverty, engaging local bodies, strengthening environmental conservation, empowering disadvantaged groups and women, and social mobilisation.**
- **Insurgency and security problems affected Nepal tourism and constrained development during the implementation period.**
- **TRPAP is acknowledged for its rural development and livelihood benefits. Local communities were generally receptive and supportive of the initiatives. A sense of ownership has prevailed through organisational models developed by TRPAP.**
- **There are good opportunities for national and international pro-poor sustainable tourism practitioners to learn lessons from the TRPAP experience. There are requests to replicate the Programme in other districts of Nepal and elsewhere.**
- **The Government of Nepal (GoN) has partnered with DFID, UNDP and SNV Nepal to implement TRPAP.**

2. Research Methodology

10. TRPAP activities have generated international interest as a model of community-based rural tourism that can supplement the livelihoods of local people, especially economically and socially underprivileged groups, and that could be emulated in the rest of Nepal and elsewhere. TRPAP's lessons learned are being documented as useful experience for national and international practitioners, to record the successful activities as best practices as well as the challenges and experiments that were not so effective.

11. Experiences from TRPAP activities in the six districts were investigated and discussed. Three researchers, with extensive knowledge of rural tourism and social issues, were engaged in this task. A two-week field visit was made to sample TRPAP sites in Solukhumbu, Rasuwa, Chitwan and Rupandehi districts. The sites were selected on the basis of their tourism attractions and current markets, the diversity of local innovations according to caste and ethnicity, and geographic location.

12. The study team consulted with a range of key individuals and stakeholder groups who were involved in the rural tourism programmes, and who played major roles as implementers or beneficiaries. Others were consulted who had not been directly involved in TRPAP activities. They included illiterate people, community organisation (CO) leaders, handicraft producers, hotel and guesthouse operators, government officials and civil society organisations. In addition, field observation visits were made to gain knowledge of the daily practices of individuals running hotels, shops, weaving, handicrafts and managing infrastructure. The achievements and issues that emerged from community interactions were shared with the TRPAP Village Tourism Advisors (VTAs) and Social Mobilisers (SMs), and officials of DDCs, including the Local Development Officers (LDOs), VDCs, representatives of the Buffer Zone Management Committees (BZMCs), Buffer Zone Users' Committees (BZUCs), and Buffer Zone Users' Groups (BZUGs).

13. Prior to the field visits, the study team designed a checklist of key points to be explored with respondents. This served as the basis for recording interviews in the field and helped to extract insights on the contribution and challenges of TRPAP from illiterate people and women in the villages.

14. Reports and publications produced by TRPAP and key partners were reviewed for better understanding the Programme outcomes. Along with best practice observed during the field visits, an effort was made to link outcomes with process. The success of activities was measured through the achievement of desirable outcomes. Similarly, shortcomings were also noted. Allowances were made for the reality that TRPAP was implemented during a turbulent period of conflict in the history of Nepal. In some cases there were difficulties in accurately documenting outcomes, despite adequate processes. For example, the direction of local institutional outcomes could not be plotted precisely.

15. The overall aim of this document is to identify key lessons. These are mainly derived from TRPAP's performance in achieving or failing to achieve its objectives. The process relates to how the rural tourism and poverty alleviation programme was developed, implemented and managed. The outputs include the Venture Capital Fund (VCF) loans, tourism Infrastructure, new tourism products, social and gender aspects, social mobilisation, empowerment and new institutional arrangements.

16. It is hoped that publication of these experiences will benefit community leaders, ecotourism managers, policy makers, tourism planners, government officers, NGOs and others involved in pro-poor tourism so that similar programmes can be replicated in Nepal and abroad.

2.1 Defining “Best Practice”

17. The process through which different stakeholders interrelate, and the sustainability of the institutions that structure their interactions, judge best practice. The focal concern is therefore to build social capital, strengthen social mobilisation and create a sound institutional structure comprising the NTB STDU, Sustainable Tourism Development Section (STDS) and Sustainable Tourism Development Committees (STDCs). In documenting TRPAP's success stories, best practices, shortcomings and challenges, other aspects that have been considered include local people's aspirations, leadership capabilities, resources available to the poor (such as savings and credit), opportunities for capacity building, occupational training, social and gender aspects, creating new tourism products, marketing and promotion.

18. In the context of TRPAP, best practice can be characterized as the processes and external interventions that are well supported and successfully “owned” by the community. The tools that TRPAP has used while developing and promoting rural tourism activities, and the impacts observed in target communities, constitute the basic criteria of understanding best practice. TRPAP's contribution to shaping Nepal's sustainable tourism policies in order to address poverty alleviation issues and improve the legal environment for the tourism industry, is also regarded as an exemplary outcome. Another best practice is TRPAP's participatory approach, which succeeded in providing village women and the poor with access to resources, increased livelihood opportunities, improved income, tourism awareness, self-confidence and networking.

2. In summary:

- **The research methodology included field observations and consultations**
- **Interactions at local level with implementers and beneficiaries of TRPAP, and also with outsiders**
- **Consultations with stakeholders were held at the district and national levels**
- **Desk studies and documentation review**
- **Best practice and success were measured by outcomes and achievements, as well as processes, innovations and sustainable institutions that are successfully “owned” by the community and individuals**
- **Shortfalls and challenges during implementation were recorded as useful lessons so that others can learn from the TRPAP experience**

3. Policy, Planning and Institutional Development

19. The objective of rural tourism and poverty alleviation programmes can be achieved only when activities are supported by a sound and sustainable institutional framework. TRPAP has therefore focussed on contextual development approaches to achieve institutional, legal, governance, and other reforms.

20. The interests of low-income groups need to be articulated and protected so they are not marginalized by more powerful vested interests competing for government budgets. So as to organise and maintain TRPAP initiatives, the poor needed an institutional framework that guarantees their right to act. Demands need to be made within a representative political structure, and public funding priorities set through consultation among villagers. Democratic local governments, BZMCs, BZUCs, BZUGs and officials in DDCs and VDCs are important players.

21. To achieve this, TRPAP has forged a range of effective partnerships with government ministries and departments. NGO partners including the National Trust for Nature Conservation, The Mountain Institute, World –Wild Fund for Nature , Biogas Sector Partnership Nepal, Alternative Energy Promotion Centre and Renewable Energy Development Programme and other organisations including Himalayan Rescue Association (HRA), NATHM, Nepal Mountaineering Association, Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents, and many private sector operators.

22. VTAs and SMs are constantly liaising with local bodies to ensure that all the Programme activities are briefed to the Chief District Officers, LDOs and national park (NP) wardens. Government officials are regularly invited to participate in TRPAP events, successfully building good rapport between TRPAP and officials.

3.1 Pro-Poor Policy Interventions

23. TRPAP objectives include supporting the government to develop national sustainable tourism policies, regulations and strategic plans that address the interests of poor and disadvantaged groups, and integrate wider conservation objectives. The implementation of these pro-poor initiatives was to be tested through thematic pilot projects demonstrating sustainable tourism development models for policy feed back. Poverty alleviation is considered an entry point.

24. TRPAP has organised a series of national, regional, district and village level interaction programmes to review, discuss and gather the inputs of local leaders, the tourism industry, civil society and other stakeholders. This process was also adopted to update existing documents, to address issues of poverty, environment, community and gender, so that the benefits of tourism can be more equitably distributed.

25. New pro-poor tourism policy documents were prepared by TRPAP and submitted to MoCTCA and NTB in 2004 for adoption. These major inputs to government included the "Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism Policy", "Nepal's Tourism Industry Strategic Plan", and "National Tourism Marketing Strategy 2005 - 2020".

26. TRPAP has helped prepare Participatory District Tourism Development and Management Plans (PDTDMP) for all Programme districts. The respective DDCs have prepared these Plans in close collaboration with local communities and the private sector. For the first time tourism is included in District Periodic Plans. Similarly the SNPMTMP was prepared, and was recently approved by the Ministry of Forests

and Soil Conservation. A separate Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) regulation is under the approval process. The Ecotourism Biodiversity Conservation Manual was developed to incorporate issues of environment, biodiversity and tourism in protected areas.

27. TRPAP has instituted a geographic information system digital database of the district sites, coordinated into a single projection system. The data is based on GoN topographic and land resource maps, enabling TRPAP to produce a series of trekking and tourism product maps for the public, and authentic thematic maps based on biophysical and socio-economic information.

3.2 Operational Model

28. The TRPAP model is operational at the central, district and community levels. The central level involves MoCTCA, NTB, DNPWC and tourism associations who are responsible for tourism policy and marketing. District level activities are carried out in close coordination with DDCs, other district government agencies and NGOs. The community level involves the villages with grassroots activities, and COs, Functional Groups (FGs) and STDCs within VDCs are established as institutional mechanisms to carry out smoothly all the assigned activities. The STDS at district level are established within the DDC. At the central level, the key institutions are the STDU in the NTB, and the Tourism Unit in the DNPWC.

29. The formation of STDCs in each of the Programme VDCs is the key TRPAP activity to institutionalise sustainable tourism development at the community and village level. Inside protected areas and NPs, this responsibility is assumed by the BZUCs. These committees were designed to implement all tourism-related development of infrastructure, entrepreneurship and training courses for the local people. Similarly, STDSs and District Tourism Coordination Committees are established in the DDCs, managed by DDC permanent staff. The key function of STDSs is to assist DDCs in planning, coordinating, promoting and implementing tourism in their districts, and to help STDCs / BZUCs to function appropriately.

30. These institutions and their structure are a pioneering model in Nepal. District and village tourism activities are being carried out efficiently, with linkages backwards and forwards to the central level via the STDU in the NTB. There is now advocacy for pro-poor tourism and its benefits directly within central and local government, budgets are more transparent and local people are more involved in decision-making. Significantly, COs and BZUGs are designed to take over responsibility for rural tourism, influence policy and implementation after TRPAP ends in 2007.

31. The TRPAP participatory approach with COs and stakeholders involves 48 SMs (18 of whom are women) and seven VTAs, along with STDCs / BZUCs and BZUGs within the six DDCs, providing "ownership" of the Programme. In principle, the process is working well at the district and national level. The NTB has staffed the STDU with three persons and recently added two more personnel as the TRPAP period draws to a close. The STDU is the key to coordination with STDSs and STDCs / BZUCs to nurture and maintain linkages between stakeholders.

32. The VTAs and SMs are TRPAP staff, although their appointment was made in collaboration with DDCs. Candidates were selected from among local people from a range of different ethnic groups. The SMs remuneration and incentives are kept on par with DDC staff so they can be transformed into the DDC family when TRPAP comes to an end.

3.3 Community Participation

33. With the objective of TRPAP-formed COs eventually being empowered to direct all stages of rural tourism development, initially continuous support and guidance was extended to them by VTAs and SMs. VDCs and DDCs benefited from small-scale infrastructure programmes, and an enabling environment was created for DDCs. Memorandums of Understanding detail the roles and responsibilities of DDCs, TRPAP staff and other Programme beneficiaries. DDCs and TRPAP jointly control the funds. In this way TRPAP has succeeded in involving DDCs in the whole process as a key stakeholder.

34. In coordination with COs and STDCs, TRPAP has carried out various development activities in the villages. The institutional capacity of COs has been strengthened. The new structure encourages government officials in the DDCs and VDCs to adopt transparent and democratic decision-making processes, particularly in relation to villagers and COs, replacing earlier forms of planning in isolation that was often incompatible to village need. Hence the newly created institutions (STDU, STDCs/ BZUCs and STDSs) play key roles in providing guidance in policy formulation and local tourism development. STDSs, STDCs and BZUCs all ensure that beneficiaries have representatives from the multiple stakeholder groups that are likely to be impacted by the tourism development process.

3.4 Local Governance in Tourism

35. STDSs and STDCs/ BZUCs have attempted to reshape local institutions so that they become more accountable to low-income groups and more transparent in the use of funds. Reducing poverty without effective, accountable local governments is difficult. Achieving this is a challenge for an individual sector and requires integration and commitment from all sectors of society.

36. Undoubtedly, TRPAP has played a role in staving off the worst poverty, and strengthening local government and other community-based institutions. COs seek new standards in terms of transparency and accountability by local government to villagers. Financial application procedures and decision-making processes were kept transparent because the COs themselves were the decision makers, accountable upwards to the funding agencies. Decisions can be made quickly and funds released accordingly. Local people achieved more power to influence development through STDS and STDCs / BZUCs.

37. Once the concept of STDU, STDSs and STDCs/ BZUCs is legally institutionalised by the GoN, villagers will have a stronger basis for representation. This institutional mechanism moves towards granting more local responsibility and authority, establishes the flow of information, and a joint decision-making process for planning and implementation between government bodies and villagers.

3.5 Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action

38. Nepal has long experience in using participatory approaches in development planning. Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) is a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) planning tool developed in the hills of Nepal that builds on the strengths of the community. The community's innate knowledge of development issues and the corresponding solutions is essential for project planning and implementation. The APPA technique is increasingly popular as a source of motivation and commitment among villagers. It is a social empowerment tool, based on the appreciative inquiry and participatory decision-making model. It promotes a

“Five Ds” approach namely: Discovery, Dreaming, Direction, Design, and Delivery/Destiny. Using their knowledge and experience, participants identify core activities and future expectations, as well as a strategy to achieve them. TRPAP has conducted APPAs in all Programme VDCs and settlements to identify issues of different community members.

39. APPA exercises have helped considerably in capacity building with local communities. For example, APPAs resulted in the drafting of five-year rural tourism development and management plans in TRPAP districts, and supported the construction of multiple-use visitor centres (MUVs) and other tourist facilities. APPA methodologies include identifying different social groups and their issues, prioritising development programmes, assessing the overall community situation (social, political, economic, natural, cultural, environmental, infrastructure and human resources), and exploring development opportunities and external sources for their implementation.

40. VTAs and SMs began by helping communities with self-assessments in preparation for the APPA process. In APPA, community situation analysis begins with social and resource mapping. Community members draw a map to show resources such as land, forests, water, archaeological spots, view points etc., and to illustrate the social dynamics of their villages such as household settlements, castes and ethnic groups, community infrastructure, cultural and religious sites, village leaders etc. The map triggers discussions among members to identify and prioritize the needs of the community. One of the benefits accruing from social mapping is that everyone becomes involved in identifying community resources, cross-checking the information amongst themselves. The community then debate opportunities, decide the priority needs, and how to address them.

41. APPA also involves monitoring past activities. Community-level monitoring is effectively carried out through the development wheel and regular feedback sessions with SMs. The process includes the ranking of “well-being” so as to identify ultra poor and poor households and specially targeted groups (STGs). Members of COs / BZUGs and STDCs / BZUCs were all trained in executing APPA. Each CO prepares an annual plan and submits it to the STDC, using this technique. After the STDC consolidates plans of several COs, they are submitted to the DDC and other line agencies for budgetary and technical support. APPA exercises in TRPAP areas have proven to be an effective mechanism to gather views of the community, particularly those vulnerable people whose voices are not often heard.

3.6 The Development Wheel

42. The Development Wheel PRA technique, which integrates personal and societal growth with material growth, was used by TRPAP for the first time in Nepal. This is a self-assessment tool to measure the level of social mobilisation needed in a village to contribute in a desired development outcome. In the process, a balanced community structure is attained for poverty alleviation. In this model, villagers group local resources into different categories and assess the available human resources with required skills. These analyses have helped arrive at appropriate decisions best suited to a defined outcome.

43. The Development Wheel framework has replaced top-down decision-making by external authorities and has encouraged a local bottom-up approach to the development process, in which most of TRPAP’s direct beneficiaries are involved. A

feeling of ownership has been generated on tourism development decisions, their implementation and management of subsequent changes.

44. Using this technique, villagers are given the opportunity to score and rank 14 different attributes, depicted as spokes of a wheel. Participants draw a graphic picture clearly indicating the strengths and weaknesses relating to development process and tourism potential. This tool was found to be helpful in drawing conclusions based on a community approach to assess local capacity, strengths, weaknesses and potential improvements.

3. In summary:

- TRPAP has focused on tourism policy, institutions, legal, governance and other rural tourism development reforms that favour the poor, women and marginalised groups.
- TRPAP has adopted a field-based decentralised mode of operation for supporting rural tourism, forging effective partnerships between GoN, DDCs, VDCs, NGOs, private sector tourism industry and communities.
- TRPAP has assisted in the preparation of national and district sustainable pro-poor tourism policies and strategy recommendations for the GoN. These include the "Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism Policy", "Nepal's Tourism Industry Strategic Plan", "National Tourism Marketing Strategy 2005 - 2020", SNPMT and PDTMDPs for DDCs.
- STDCs in VDCs and BZUCs in NP areas are established to undertake tourism-related infrastructure development, entrepreneurship training courses to the local people.
- STDSs are formed within the DDCs to assist in planning, promoting, coordinating and implementing tourism in the entire district.
- Forty-eight SMs and seven VTAs worked with STDCs in all six districts. Some of the SMs will continue to be employed by DDCs when TRPAP terminates in June 2007.
- The STDU in the NTB, the Tourism Unit in the DNPWC and Tourism Management Units in the NPs were created to coordinate with STDSs, STDCs and organisations at the central level.
- VTAs and SMs work closely to capacitate newly created COs, FGs and STDCs.
- Institutional mechanisms establish information flows and joint decision-making processes for tourism planning and implementation between government bodies and communities.
- APPA and Development Wheels are widely used as PRA methods in villages to formulate and implement tourism development plans. The process has helped capacity building, steered by VTAs and SMs.

4. Fund Mobilisation

45. New institutional channels were needed for effective funding and support of community-level tourism initiatives. TRPAP has trialled a new model of managing tourism resources and securing public support through the involvement of STDU in the NTB, STDSs and STDCs/ BZUCs. These organisations strive to forge effective links between the community as the mobilisers, and government bodies as facilitators that control the resources.

46. TRPAP has adopted a fund mobilisation system that is designed to for sustainability, especially during the post-TRPAP period. The Programme gets funds in three ways, the Programme Operating Support Fund, the Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF), and the VCF. The Programme Operating Support Fund is designed to finance all the TRPAP central and national activities such as training, social mobilisation, research, product development, marketing, and administrative expenses handled by STDSs in the DDCs. The other two funds, the IDF and the VCF, are available at the local level in two forms; grant and loan. The composition of STDSs and STDCs are recognized in the Sustainable Tourism Development Fund (STDF) Bylaws 2003 and Sustainable Tourism Village Fund (STVF) Bylaws 2003.

4.1 The Infrastructure Development Fund

47. The IDF provides grants for the development and maintenance of small scale tourism-related, or supportive projects, in the area of physical infrastructure. Activity selection is made on the basis of four broad guidelines i.e. pro-poor, pro-women, pro-community and pro-environment. Under this segment, activities were undertaken relating to visitor information centres, museums, managed campsites, community centres, religious establishments, signposts and information boards, trek trail, rest stops, and communication facilities. Other areas of IDF included stone paving, drinking water and sanitation, public toilets, waste management, dumping sites, incinerators, alternative energy facilities, improved cook stoves, micro-hydro, small irrigation, agricultural production, suspension bridges, culverts, etc. Funds for this work were channelled through the IDF, falling under the STVF. STDCs / BZUCs are solely responsible for disbursement and keeping expense records. The STVF receives funds from Sustainable Tourism Development Fund, which is then operated by the STDSs in the DDCs.

Meeting energy needs in Langtang

One of the big challenges faced by authorities in Langtang is to reduce the consumption of firewood by local people and entrepreneurs in cooking meals, heating rooms, and serving hot water for bath to visitors. Hoteliers are enthusiastic to cut the use of forest products for these purposes. As a result, Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, TRPAP, Community Action Nepal, Langtang Foundation, Buffer Zone Management Committee, and local people joined hands to install a micro-hydro plant nearby Chhudachhu Khola. The first two institutions shared major cost of this 15 KW project, which provides lighting facility to 125 households. In addition, TRPAP has also supported it through its field level social mobilization, district level facilitation and central level coordination.

A convenient mode of tariff is fixed by allowing this facility to be used by Langtang Cheese Factory in daytime, which has eventually contributed to lower cost of electricity to villagers. The revenue collected from the factory is sufficient to remunerate two individuals, who are employed to operate the micro-hydro plant. People are now motivated to use low wattage rice cooker and heaters. Besides, locals, especially hoteliers, are also encouraged to install solar heaters to fulfil tourist demand for hot showers.

Community lodge and cultural centre in Gatlang, Rasuwa

The GLCC, built with TRPAP support, is a wonderful structure in terms of design and architecture. It has separate dormitory-type accommodation for men and women, a dining room, solar-heated showers, toilets and an incinerator for waste disposal. It has a beautiful courtyard in the front for open-air cultural performances. A spacious hall on the ground floor can be used for indoor cultural shows, meetings and exhibitions. The Lodge and Centre is developed and managed by the STDC. The committee has deputed a young woman and boy to look after visiting tourists. They are very courteous. The woman, Ms. Pasang says: *"I am not only getting economic benefits, but I'm also developing cooking and hospitality skills from the training and practical work at the Centre."*

TRPAP has successfully encouraged local cultural groups and provided new traditional costumes and ornaments. It has helped to revive the local culture, which was at the verge of extinction. Local groups, the majority of whom are women, have successfully adapted their cultural programmes for commercial use, performing for guests at a reasonable cost.

Gatlang village did not use to have even basic accommodation facility for the visitors. The Community Lodge and Cultural Centre was developed with the villagers so they can engage with commercial activities. Once locals become confident enough to develop home-stay or lodges in the villages, the Centre will be converted into a Tamang Museum and Cultural Centre. The restaurant will be discontinued. Mr. Lhakpa, a local villager, happily admits: *"Due to the accommodation facility developed in the village, tourists have begun to arrive. It has given us much benefit to sell chicken and vegetables to the Lodge."*

This pioneering model is already showing positive results. In 2005 Mr. Durga Bahadur Tamang took a VCF loan to expand and upgrade his home into a lodge. He has two rooms to accommodate 6-7 trekkers. He has built toilets. Mr. Tamang, who started his career as a porter eight years ago, took TRPAP guide training in 2003. Having improved his guiding skills, for the past two years he works for a Kathmandu company as a trekking guide.

4.2 The Venture Capital Fund

48. The VCF provides soft loans at favourable interest rates only to members of the TRPAP COs for small entrepreneurs to start sustainable businesses. Money can be used for hotels, restaurants, home-stays, handicrafts, poultry farming, livestock rearing, fisheries, milk and dairy, vegetable and fruit farming, solar equipment, convenience shops, managed campsites and other ventures that generate income for local people. Grant preference is given to the poor, women and disadvantaged groups, and these loans are channelled through the STVF. All TRPAP loans are granted through the VCF, which is active in the six districts. The STDCs, DDCs and VDCs are responsible for managing and monitoring all the VCF transactions. Around US\$ 150,000 has been disbursed in “revolving” loan programmes to over 650 new enterprises involving over 2,500 people. About 70 percent of the loans have been repaid, which under prevailing economic conditions is considered very satisfactory.

My convenience store, Solukhumbu

"Things have changed after the formation of CO in Kaku. We have received training from TRPAP in growing fresh vegetables, learning about vegetable seeds and new techniques of cultivation. I produced between 1 to 1.5 kilo of onion seeds all by myself. I supply vegetables to lodges, teashops and the Saturday market in Salleri, the district headquarters. Through TRPAP I received financial assistance for vegetable seeds. As a result, I could manage to plant seeds in time. Therefore, I now have good earnings that improve my livelihood. A year ago I opened a small shop selling mainly rice, tea, salt, sugar, seeds, etc. I invested almost Rs. 35,000 for it under a loan from VCF. Today, I have saved almost Rs. 20,000. Before, I had to travel to Jiri to purchase rice. Now I can pay for helpers to bring it to me. I eat meat once a week, which was not possible before. During those days it was difficult to eat meat even once a month. Now I sell produce such as tomatoes, onions, garlic, ginger and oranges in Salleri"- Mr. Man Bahadur Rai

49. Poor rural farmers, both women and men need financial support to start a small tourism enterprise. Normally official banking services are not available in most rural areas, and loans from local moneylenders command a prohibitively high interest rate. The TRPAP VCF has overcome these constraints by making soft loans with simple procedural formalities available to the rural poor to start small enterprises.

50. The selection process of needy people for micro-credit and VCF loans is done in association with the COs. A wellbeing ranking of the prospective creditor is carried out through an APPA exercise to identify eligible candidates. The lower the wellbeing ranking, the higher the possibility of receiving a loan. After identification, the eligible individual member makes a request for a VCF small business loan to the CO, which then has to be agreed by the executive committee and the total amount decided. Social collateral (members' witnesses) is accepted as a guarantee, instead of private property, the usual condition of financial institutions. The VCF is a revolving fund that provides loan to needy people on a rotational basis. The CO has developed a clear mechanism on who is funded for what business, the duration of the loan and its payback mechanism.

Fish farming: an economic boon, Rasuwa

Ms. Marsang Ghale, 45, from Dhunche Ward No 3, used to be a milk and vegetable vendor. Her main income was selling goat and buffalo milk in the local market. She had a kitchen garden that produced vegetables, occasionally selling the surplus in Dhunche. Her income was not sufficient to maintain her household expenses as she has a large family of 18 members. In 2004, Ms. Ghale received a loan through TRPAP of Rs. 50,000 for trout farming. She then got the Agriculture Development Bank to help her construct the fishponds, and 5,000 trout seedlings and their feed for a week were provided by the government fisheries office. The District Agriculture Development Office supported her by laying water pipes close to her site, at a cost of Rs. 95,000, which are also useful for many other farmers. The irrigation office has helped her with the required water supply for the ponds. TRPAP gave her a two-day observation study tour to the Trisuli fish farms, and seven days training on trout farming. She has been reusing the water to run a water *ghatta* and sells the electricity. This combination of new businesses gives her good income, earning about Rs. 150,000 a year from the trout farm. She supplies fish to tourist lodges as well as the local market. She was able to repay half the loan within the first year.

In search of the best occupation, Taplejung

Tellok VDC lies along the Mt. Kangchenjunga trekking route, the world's third highest mountain. In 2003 Mr. Dilliraj Para took a loan of Rs. 50,000 for goat farming and purchased 20 local and hybrid goats. Though they earned Rs. 15,000 in just seven months, he was not happy. So he switched to a new business and opened a convenience store. At present the store gives him an income of Rs. 1,500 per month. He says: "*Goat farming generates money slowly, so I have taken up another business to supplement it, a convenience store. Since I sell consumer items which have a good market, everybody wants to buy these things.*" His shop sells to both villagers and tourists.

Previously, Dilliraj had to depend on the mercy of a moneylender. Now he does not need any outside help, but can even help others. Within a year, the quality of his work and success has been applauded by other villagers. Mr. Janak Khadka, who is the member of the STDC and a friend of Dilliraj, says, "*The fruits of Dilliraj's labour are an inspiration to many in the community.*"

In another venture, Mr. Chhabilall Bardewa, a member of a disadvantaged ethnic group in Sinwa Bazaar, has borrowed Rs. 25,000 from the TRPAP VCF to purchase two sewing machines. He also received tailoring and sewing skill training. In addition to tailor-made items, he has a new venture of selling readymade clothes. Mr. Bardewa's living standard has gradually increased to a comfortable level. His family members are also busy. He remarks: "*The shop is doing well and nowadays I don't have any spare time. I am receiving a good income from it.*" He is planning to upgrade and expand his business to produce local souvenir items for tourists.

Ms. Khadkimaya's family did not have any real source of income until they took a loan to buy a buffalo from the VCF. Her six-member family now not only drink milk, but also have a dependable source of income selling the surplus milk and butter. Ms. Khadkimaya acknowledges: "*It has helped us to earn money for the children's education, books and school uniforms. During the trekking season, I sell milk for tourists at Lali Kharka village, which is two hours uphill walk from my village. In Lali Kharka I sell milk for Rs. 10 per mana. During the off-season, I make ghee to sell in the village for Rs. 50 per mana. I am making around Rs. 2,000 to 2,500 per month by selling milk and ghee. When they have free time, my children help take care of the buffalo.*" She believes her family's help assisted her financial progress. They also use the manure for vegetables or crops. "*I'll repay the loan well on time,*" she says with confidence.

4. In summary:

- STDU, STDS and STDC work with government employees as facilitators, and with community-level workers as mobilisers, in order to distribute funding resources.
- TRPAP has three modes of fund management:
 - The Programme Operating Support Fund for overall activities such as training, social mobilisation, research, product development, marketing and some administrative expenses
 - IDF governed by STDS and utilized through STDCs/ BZUCs, COs / BZUGs for physical and social infrastructure
 - VCF, a soft loan to CO members identified through wellbeing ranking, for small entrepreneurs to start sustainable businesses
- Under the IDF, the GLCC was constructed, providing facilities for visitor accommodation, dining and cultural performances. The Langtang micro-hydro has helped to reduce deforestation in Rasuwa district.
- Under the VCF about US\$ 150,000 for over 650 enterprises has been disbursed to poor, women and disadvantaged groups for small business ventures. Around 2,500 people took up the loans, and over 70 percent have already been repaid.
- A shopkeeper in Solukhumbu started growing and selling vegetables from his own land that has now substituted the imported vegetables in the village.
- A women entrepreneur in Rasuwa started a trout fish farm with TRPAP and other support, significantly increasing her family income.
- In Taplejung, enthusiasm to become an entrepreneur led a man to switch from goat farming to opening a convenience store, greatly increasing his income; skill enhancement training and a VCF loan to buy a sewing machine helped a tailor to expand his shop to sell readymade clothes; and a woman increased her income by buying a buffalo with a VCF loan.

5. Social and Gender Mainstreaming

5.1 Social Capital

51. Social capital is a network of trust and reciprocity between community members that helps to transform their social assets into economic, social or environmental action. It refers to people's willingness to invest their time and energy into specific social relationships, and to channel their efforts into building local associations such as membership organisations and user groups to facilitate coordination, cooperation and troubleshooting for mutual benefit. In TRPAP villages it was found that social capital existed in three tiers: between SMs, VTAs and the community; between VTAs and government officials; and between community members themselves. Grassroots social capital built in the form of FGs and COs to manage tourism infrastructure and enterprises is an indicator of TRPAP's success.

52. TRPAP has had to work hard in the Programme villages to overcome challenges, particularly to convince political insurgents who were creating trouble in almost all villages. Presenting itself as a viable alternative to traditional sources of credit for local enterprises was also a challenge. Local, smart, knowledgeable, politically and socially unbiased women or men were recruited as SMs. These individuals were the key to establishing a strong bond and positive working relationship with village leaders and other beneficiaries. Most of the SMs were chosen from VDCs where COs had to be formed. It helped implementation run smoothly that these SMs were from the local area, even during severe conflict periods. At the beginning, TRPAP had to earn the trust of different groups and convince them of the worthiness of the venture. The change from an initially suspicious attitude towards accepting the TRPAP approach took some time. In the course of implementation villagers were taken into confidence and learned to trust COs and FGs, thus building and strengthening linkages between the key players.

53. TRPAP organised regular CO meetings, during which members shared marketing information, and experiences relating to livestock rearing, poultry farming, and other micro-enterprise matters. Many participants acknowledge that community meetings have helped them expand social networks, increase self-reliance and capacity building. Information has been shared on small-scale infrastructure development, micro-hydro and alternative energy sources such as biogas and solar. This has resulted in new enterprises and improved livelihoods.

54. By strengthening social capital, TRPAP has achieved considerable success in delivering rural development benefits. Programmes have survived despite political and security threats only because a well built network has been sustained and thus contributed to poverty alleviation.

5.2 Social Mobilisation

55. Social mobilisation is an integrated approach whereby all members are mobilised to define their needs, identify their objectives, and prepare a sustainable process to achieve these results. The aim of social mobilisation is to manage human, economic and organisational resources to increase and strengthen participation. The final evaluation report of TRPAP has noted that SMs and VTAs have found ways of involving community groups in recruitment, micro-financing, business start-ups, training and infrastructure development. The VTAs channelled outside support while the SMs internalized this venture to the community, in such a way that processes were strengthened by creating a sense of community ownership.

ORGANISATION CHART?

56. Trained SMs under the guidance of VTAs are instrumental in organising and forming COs and FGs. People are encouraged to understand the benefits of uniting for a common cause, and thus COs are enthusiastically established. The process bore fruit as community members defined problems and corresponding solutions by themselves. Moreover, COs emerged as an effective forum to involve the community in decision-making, fund management, readiness assessment, and for dialogue within the community. Common discussions in CO meetings involved livelihood issues, their cause and solutions, infrastructure and service needs, decision-making processes, financial resources, and skill enhancement.

57. Although 781 COs were formed, the process was not always straightforward. TRPAP worked with three modalities: recognising COs that were already been formed by other development organisations; reactivating COs that were inactive or almost collapsed; and forming new COs where none existed. A similar approach was used when establishing FGs. Negotiations and threats from political insurgents did not deter villagers, but instead the COs and FGs gave them confidence and consolidated their strengths. The total commitment and patience of the VTAs and SMs supported villagers to overcome difficulties and almost daily confrontations with insurgents. However, there is not doubt that the beneficial impacts from the COs on livelihoods would have improved more dramatically without the obstacles posed by the insurgency.

58. In most VDCs social mobilisation has been transformed into self-mobilisation where people actively take initiatives without any external intervention and are able to agree on common objectives. Such improved self-reliance is a direct outcome of TRPAP's collective efforts.

5.2.1 Community Integration Through Community Organisations and Functional Groups

59. During the past four years, TRPAP has formed or re-formed 781 COs with 15,977 members. Women account for 50.65 percent of members, and many STG, which consist of those unable to feed their family each year from their own agricultural resources. Similarly, 170 FGs have been formed with 2,127 members during the same time period.

District	FGs (2005)			COs (2005)		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Chitwan	20	96	134	159	1,389	1,596
Dolpa	40	145	129	80	1,393	337
Rasuwa	27	259	212	89	784	1,117
Rupandehi	29	112	383	84	818	854
Solukhumbu	40	251	276	240	2,808	2,411
SNP (BZUCs)	N/A	N/A	N/A	28	N/A	N/A
Taplejung	14	61	69	101	875	1,595
Total	170	924	1,203	781	8,067	7,910

60. Each CO makes its own rules and regulations, although it is mandatory to have at least one woman in the position of chairperson or CO manager. A wide range of activities were undertaken, such as organising regular meetings, monthly savings and credit schemes, handicraft production and marketing, village sanitation, organic and off-season vegetable farming, improved banana farming, local trail construction, toilet construction, improving village access, drinking water schemes maintenance,

constructing community “Learning Centres”, etc. TRPAP’s role was crucial in capacity building, organisational management, and local resource and skill utilisation.

It is our organisation, Rupandehi

"We are self-confident in running our CO. We hold monthly meetings to make our activity plan and follow up regularly. We have adopted saving and credit programmes. Our community centre is under construction, for which 13 of us have contributed 16 days of work each to supplement the financial support provided by TRPAP. We were also able to receive some financial assistance from Madhubani VDC and Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) for this purpose." "We are hoping that this building will provide us multiple benefits. It can be a learning centre where members of the CO meet to exchange ideas and discuss issues of social development, an assembly house to share and resolve problems, and as a convenient place to display and sell our handicrafts. We can also make handicrafts collectively, bring raw material individually and together make handicrafts here. TRPAP has helped us organise ourselves," said the Mahilabar Women's Organisation, Madhubani 8, Lumbini.

61. The system of COs is an exemplary model that promotes community-based approaches in rural tourism activities. COs can provide rural women, poor farmers and disadvantaged groups the opportunity to express their livelihood needs, to apply for resources from government and stakeholders, and to implement tourism development activities. This approach has helped raise awareness among locals about their rights to access and benefit from development interventions, by being involved in decision-making processes, initiating revenue-generating enterprises, and thereby improving their living standards.

"We will develop tourism products", Solukhumbu

Mr. Bal Bahadur Newar spearheads the Janasudhar Community Organisation and proudly recounts their achievements in organising and managing credit and saving groups. The CO was only formed after repeated efforts to convince his village by the SM and VTA. Now, the villagers have mutually agreed on the functions and work together, promptly resolving any issues that occur. Starting with 16 members from households in the village, they used to collect Rs. 50 from each. This was soon unanimously dropped to Rs. 25 to allow more members to join. The savings of the CO at present amounts to around Rs. 90,000.

Having mutually agreed on loan disbursement methods, credit is offered to every member for small businesses on a rotation basis. There is a strict rule that each recipient had to clearly define the purpose of the loan, and use it only for the agreed purpose. Monitored by a 15-member CO inspection team, creditors' use of their loan is verified to ensure that other members are not duped.

Locally adapted nominal interest rates are applicable on loans. Crucial to the efficient credit system is the management techniques learned from TRPAP training. Some CO members have taken leadership and accountancy training and learned about maintaining records. The credit and loan group has completely abolished the need for traditional sources of borrowing from local moneylenders with high interest rates. In order to attract wider participation in the process, the tenure of the chairman and manager of the CO was made rotational every three months. Mr. Newar recounts that they had benefited immensely from the community exchange programmes organised by TRPAP, learning how other groups operate. TRPAP regularly supports them with further training, interaction meetings and improved accounting practices.

A community meeting is held twice a month. Strict discipline is maintained by fining latecomers Rs. 20, and Rs. 100 for absentees. Mr. Newar hopes that very soon they will be using their financial resources for developing tourism products in the village. The major focus will be on trail construction and cleanliness programmes. He envisages that garbage will be regularly collected in baskets, and a dump organised. Glass bottles will be separated, and degradable goods will be burnt. Villagers believe that maintaining a clean environment will benefit everyone.

62. In Rupandehi and Chitwan many of the underprivileged groups, including Tharu, Chepang, Muslim and *dalits*, operate the TRPAP COs. Women in Rupandehi

are leading the CO executive committees. In Rasuwa and Solukhumbu, ethnic groups such as Tamang and Sherpa lead the COs. Thus TRPAP has successfully created leadership and management opportunities for women and socially deprived people.

63. Community centres have been built in Dhunche for the Tamang cultural museum, in Goljung for community training and cultural performances, in Briddhim for welcoming home-stay visitors, and in Gatlang as a community lodge and cultural centre (GLCC).

5.3 Empowering People

64. In Nepal, women, *janjati*, *dalits* and Muslims are identified as among the most excluded groups in terms of access to development opportunities. TRPAP has paid special attention to strengthening the weak position of these vulnerable groups to ensure that their rights are recognised. Local SMEs have constantly interacted with local leaders and socially excluded groups. Direct access to tourism awareness and skills training has helped them identify tourism opportunities, services and products and the value of friendly cooperation with tourists.

"We have gained our identity and knowledge through tourism", Rupandehi

"Rickshaw pulling is our main occupation. We 92 individuals working for years around Lumbini. Most of us are illiterate. Before TRPAP, there was no unity amongst us. We used to compete with each other. The weaker rickshaw pullers sometimes went home without any earnings due to domination by the stronger ones. Now we are united. Local people and officials of the Lumbini Development Trust (LDT) have recognised our services by giving us identity cards. We have set-up a queue system to give everyone an equal opportunity to carry visitors and earn accordingly. We have introduced a fixed fare based on distance of travel. These rules are necessary for a quality, reliable business, and our customers prefer it. We have learned through the tourism enterprise development training provided by TRPAP," say members of Lumbini Mahamaya Rickshaw Puller Group

Mr. Harischandra Harijan, makes a similar observation: *"I am changed a lot because of TRPAP. My self-confidence when talking to local authorities concerning tourism promotion has increased. I was unable to talk to them before because of a fear of punishment. Now, I can speak to them and put my concerns related to rickshaw pulling because of moral support from TRPAP. I now know how to deal with tourists and attract them. I am conscious of maintaining goodwill and discipline. I know the importance of tourists in our business as the main source of income. Twelve members among 92 of us also have received 15-day English language training from TRPAP. I feel proud of being able to speak a little English with foreigners. We rickshaw pullers get more work when there are tourists around. Similarly hotels and restaurants would also benefit. So, I would like to see three times as many tourists visit during a season."*

Tourism can be for everyone, Dolpa

Mr. Santaram BK, a member of a disadvantaged group, is the vice-president of the Caravan Porters Association. His father and mentor, Mr. Aaite BK, rose from being a porter to become head of a tourism business.

Economic hardships and social discrimination prevented Santaram from going to school at an early age. Instead, he was forced to follow his father's profession and began as a porter, carrying loads from Jufal airstrip to Dunai. Over time, he travelled widely with tourists from his village along the Dolpa tourist trails from Sahartara, Dho, across Numala and Bagala passes, to Lake Phoksundo. He has travelled to many trekking areas beyond his district.

Cheerful and smart, Santaram has taken a 10-day training on cookery and bakery, a one-month training in English language, and another 45-day training to become a tourist guide. These courses were jointly organised by TRPAP, the DDC and the NGO Dolpa Educational, Social and Ecological Resource Team (DESERT).

Although he has only studied up to fifth grade, Santaram is able to communicate well with tourists in English. He is now not only a porter but also works as kitchen boy. He has been able to buy two horses from his own income to hire to trekkers and to carry their luggage, another good source of income. He sometimes earns more than Rs. 50,000 in a single tourist season. His economic condition has improved.

Now Santaram is confident that his training will make him a successful tourist guide. Though from a *dalit* community, his honesty, patience and hard work have demonstrated that perseverance in tourism is a sure way to earn both money and reputation.

5.4 Gender Mainstreaming

65. Even during its relatively short implementation period, TRPAP has been able to demonstrate several changes in gender and social attitudes. Stakeholders, especially women, have received a number of tangible benefits including the following:

- ♦ Women are aware of the benefits of tourism and realise that their skills can be used to earn from it by producing attractive souvenir items.
- ♦ A range of awareness activities such as community interactions, the celebration of women's day, tourism day, quiz programmes and study visits to model villages have sensitised local women to tourism and created an interest to engage in tourism.
- ♦ With training and study visits, women have learned how to mobilise local resources for tourism, such as village visits, handicraft exhibitions, showing local culture to tourists, etc.
- ♦ Women and the poor have been empowered through special awareness programmes, capacity building activities, and skill development and leadership training.
- ♦ Mandatory provision was made within COs, FGs and STDCs that women and disadvantaged people must be represented. Thus STGs were empowered from the beginning to have equal access to services and resources
- ♦ TRPAP has assisted with easy access to credit and training for rural women through income generating schemes and small-scale enterprises. This has greatly enhanced women's power at the household level. They feel proud to

be able to decide on subsistence priorities from the money they earn out of small-scale enterprise.

- ♦ Training in enterprise development, tourism promotion and business management has significantly helped even illiterate women to lead a CO, enabling them to develop leadership qualities, and enhance their knowledge and ability to seek external resources for development plans.
- ♦ Community buildings, constructed by TRPAP, VDCs and other support organisations, are largely used by women as learning centres and for cultural performances. They provide a venue for women's interaction, information exchange and other social work.

Building self-confidence and enhancing traditional skill, Rupandehi

The positive impact of training that builds self-confidence and empowers illiterate women can be observed in Rupandehi. *"In the past, I used to shy away from talking to outsiders and be afraid of speaking to family members. Now I can confidently talk to my husband, mother-in-law and community people because of my TRPAP training. I am also confident to do business, and have taken a Rs. 20,000 loan from the VCF to open a small grocery"*-

Ms. Birma Tharu, a resident of Madhubani 8, is in high spirits after she started earning money by selling handicraft articles made from *kans* and *mooj*, species of wild grass. Although previously a farmer, she now earns from handicrafts. She does not ask her husband for money. TRPAP's 45-day handicraft production training course has given her skills in making articles that sell to tourists such as *dhaki* (deep trays), tea mats, brush holders, pen stands and bouquet holders. Birma says: *"Formerly there was only the traditional use of these wild grass articles, for example in dowry of dhakiya and mauni for a daughter's marriage. But now I have earned over Rs. 3,000 by selling them."*

In her free time she teaches this skill to her sisters-in-law and women neighbours. Ms. Bindravati Tharu, a local resident of Madhubani village, says: *"I have earned Rs. 1,500 since I learned the skill from Birma." TRPAP has helped women to sell and market these products, and increased their skill for making quality products and designs"*.

Handicraft production is also becoming popular among the women of Sonabarsa, Khudabagar-2 near Lumbini. TRPAP has arranged similar training to local women through the Rahul Community Group. A local woman, Ms. Durpati Chowdhary, says: *"We are indeed pleased to know that our products like tea mats, trays, models of the Ashok pillar and peace lamp, caps, cups and plates have become articles for sale to foreign tourists."* The VDC secretary, Mr. Guchchan Prasad Barai supports her statement: *"Within a year she managed to earn Rs. 3,500 from handicraft items that she made in her free time."*

66. Although women appreciate the training that enabled them to speak out confidently, their influence in meetings is often negligible. Women's participation is still limited to physical work such as farming, trail and road construction, household duties and observing at community meetings. Men in Nepal are not yet convinced about the role of women as leaders, even at the household level. Empowering local leaders and men to support ethnic minorities and women in leadership roles has not been fully achieved.

67. TRPAP's strategy to encourage more participation from STGs included aiming to have at least 40 percent women in all activities. Staff recruitment in the field gave priority to local people. TRPAP has prepared a manual on "Gender, Tourism, and HIV/AIDS", and mainly women resource persons prepared and conducted this training.

68. TRPAP's pro-poor and pro-women approach recognises the need to sensitise stakeholders on the rights of women and poor in the rural tourism development process. However, achieving gender and social equity-based outcomes are still a

long way off. For example, involving women in tourism development activities (such as employment, training, business etc.) would increase the women's workload. Their opportunities for leadership positions is limited if men are not willing to share responsibility in the household.

Woman trekking guide, Rasuwa

Ms. Yangjen Tamang was the talk of the town when she dared to be a trainee in a trekking guide training programme organised by Rasuwa DDC and TRPAP. The reason was obvious: as a female she wanted to become a trekking guide, a traditionally male-only profession. Yangjen is still making news now that she is an active guide. She is the first-ever trekking guide in the Tatopani Mid-region User's Group associated with Syabru VDC, Ward no. 9.

Since the training, Yangjen has successfully guided two tourist groups along the Langtang to Gosainkund trail. Confident and skilled, Yangjen says: *"Now I can manage my life more independently as I now have the necessary skills. The tourists seemed to enjoy me being with them for trekking."* She is an inspiration to her peer group, many of whom are now motivated local women who want local guide training. In her own words: *"I feel privileged to have obtained the trekking guide license from the DDC and TRPAP training. I am not just economically independent, I am also happy to be able to introduce the beauty and heritage of Langtang and Gosainkund to visitors from around the world."*

According to Yangjen's neighbour, Ms. Chhoban Tamang: *"Yangjen now believes she can achieve a mission in life, unlike in the past when she was quite lazy."* Yangjen seems satisfied with her job and plans to open a tourist information centre along the trail, and to approach various agencies for support. She wants to create employment opportunities locally so that tourists no longer have to hire guides from Kathmandu.

69. Effective facilitation in social mobilisation requires sensitising stakeholders at all levels on the need of gender and social inclusion as part of sustainable development. Inclusion of women and low-income people requires understanding the relationships between different social groups and their level of access to resources. Although TRPAP has instigated the inclusion of women in these social dynamics, there are still many priorities and areas to be uncovered before they can be more fully brought forward in community work.

70. Training and study visits are a useful source of understanding and empowerment. In Nepal, women, especially married women with children, are generally given less priority for visits outside their community. TRPAP has made an attempt to encourage equal representation of women and men in capacity building training programmes and study visits. Partner organisations are facilitated with the need of gender consideration in planning and programming. Rural women have been trained in a number of topics such as organic and off-season vegetable farming, environmental sanitation, gender, home-stay management, handicraft making and marketing and CO management.

71. One idea to attract visitors was to demonstrate handicraft making in villages to supplement a village tour and showcase Tharu culture in Rupandehi. This product was widely advertised on tourist information boards at Lumbini, in travel brochures and on websites. Tourists were encouraged to hire rickshaws and bicycles from the local people. Thus through TRPAP, some villages have been receiving tourists for the first time, and are benefiting from it.

5. In summary:

- **SMs are selected from local ethnic groups with preference given to women.**
- **TRPAP succeeded in forming or re-forming 170 FGs with 2,127 members and 781 COs with 15,977 family members (50.65 percent women). This is achieved even during the prevailing insurgency and difficulties for the local people.**
- **The Programme's sense of ownership is routed within the COs, the key forum for interactions, raising the voice of disadvantaged people, recommending individuals for VCF loans, and all collective decision-making.**
- **Community building are constructed by TRPAP, VDC and other organisations in Briddhim, Gatlang, Goljung, and Langtang. They are actively supported by women, used as learning centres and for cultural performances, and as a venue for women's interaction, information exchange and other social work.**
- **Illiterate women from Rupandehi have developed the self-confidence to speak out, take loans, produce handicrafts and engage with tourists.**
- **Individual contributions to finance their own saving and credit scheme through the auspices of CO- chaired by individuals in rotation every three months helped uplift the income level as well as build up leadership quality in Solukhumbu.**
- **Special programmes empowered disadvantaged groups by capacitating and actively engaging them in decision-making and management processes in the COs, FGs, STDCs, BZUCs, and BZUGs.**
- **Rickshaw pullers in Lumbini organised their services and received English language training. A *dalit* boy from Dolpa turned his profession from a porter to trekking guide and invested in two ponies.**
- **Gender mainstreaming activities are focused on rural women in all programmes. COs have to have a woman as chairperson or manager.**
- **A woman from Rasuwa broke all social restrictions and became a busy trekking guide after taking TRPAP training.**

6. Tourism Infrastructure

72. TRPAP has supported the construction, renovation and maintenance of trails, bridges, cultural museums, religious sites, viewpoints, porter shelters, resting places, culverts, campsites, welcome gates, MUVs, signposts, arrow boards, push carts, improved cook stoves, biogas plants, incinerators, dustbins, dumpsites, community toilets, etc. TRPAP has developed drinking water supplies, small irrigation schemes, micro-hydro, and the repair of monasteries, temples and guesthouses that render direct advantage to local inhabitants and serve as an attraction to the visitors. The Community Lodge and Cultural Centre in Gatlang provides dormitory tourist accommodation, and community centres have been built in Briddhim, Goljung, and Langtang. Community-driven infrastructure developments have occurred extensively in all six districts. These works are carried out in a joint partnership model between the community, TRPAP and DDC, and are funded through the IDF. Wherever possible, TRPAP also sought partnerships with other projects and NGOs active in the area.

73. Under DDC procedures, an estimate of construction costs has to be made before going for a public tender. There used to be minimal consultation with the local community at this stage regarding the location, design, construction and provision for maintenance of interventions. Contractors responsible for construction and maintenance generally had little accountability with the villagers, and usually came from outside. The quality of construction was often questionable. The DDC model of infrastructure development often results in early deterioration and disuse.

74. Things are different with TRPAP's participatory approach. Villagers are involved in planning, source suppliers, monitor materials and often use their own labour. This eventually reduces the overall cost of infrastructure and provides employment to local people. The relevance of the intervention and the quality of construction is also assured.

"We make the system work", Solukhumbu

TRPAP and the COs have jointly developed a working modality for small scale infrastructure which serves as a needs assessment, accountability and management. The CO takes the decision to build infrastructure; the stakeholders, CO and TRPAP, jointly oversee the design stage, and the community voluntarily contributes 25 percent of the workforce. TRPAP has adopted this model in all six districts. The village trails in Bhedakharka, Thaksindu, and Kharikhola VDCs are completed under this modality. A wooden bridge is designed and built with the community with TRPAP in Nunthala, Solukhumbu.

The voluntary village workforce acts as a catalyst to build as well as regularly maintain local infrastructure. A sense of ownership and pride in the accomplishment are created. Villagers are optimistic about employment opportunities so they contributed to the success of the process. Fundamental to the concept and design of tourism infrastructure is the idea of "community ownership" facilitated by wider consultation and participation of community members during the planning, formulation, prioritisation and design phases of infrastructure within VDC.

75. Once the local community took ownership of the Programme, they became involved. Resources including labour, finance, materials and equipment are managed by COs. They have a key role in managing materials on site, keeping track of deliveries, coordinating progress with the SMS and organising community members for the division of labour.

76. This system of tourism infrastructure construction is unusual for villagers because of its transparency and accountability. No deals are struck behind closed doors, accounts are regularly checked by the communities themselves, and benefits

are shared. There is regular communication between DDCs, VDCs, TRPAP, COs and community leaders. Regular meetings brought all stakeholders together to review progress and identify problems. All aspects of costing and financing are publicly available. Access by all COs members and stringent mechanisms to release TRPAP funds have been instrumental in stopping petty corruption practices.

77. The COs involved in building tourism infrastructure have almost wiped out the old contractual system. Today, villagers believe in their own ability that they can change and improve performance because of easily available funds and the discretionary power vested in them. The present system has reinforced peoples' power whilst keeping local government institutions as the facilitator. Undoubtedly, the community-driven process results in higher quality and better-designed infrastructure, and at a lower unit cost due to reduced administrative overheads.

Community-managed hot springs, Rasuwa

Little known except to selected pilgrims, the hot water spring in Rasuwa is believed to cure skin disease, bone ache and obesity. It is one of the largest in Nepal. Tatopani has religious significance that attracts pilgrims from Nepal and India. A new tourist package combines it with the hilltop destination of Nagthali, a lush green meadow with 180 degree panoramic views of Langtang, Ganesh Himal and other Himalayan peaks that could become a preferred trekking itinerary for foreign tourists.

Since TRPAP, locals have seen a significant increase in tourist numbers, from around 50 to 60 people to about 600 every year. There used to be no accommodation or restaurant facilities. However, local people quickly realised the benefits of tourism and have invested in accommodation facilities. Currently there are four lodges in operation that accommodate around 35 people. Four more lodges are under construction, which will add another 32 beds. Under TRPAP, four loans were extended to the residents of Tatopani, which were mostly used to build the lodges. Unlike in other areas, the bed charge is less than US\$1 per head per night for both Nepali and foreign tourists. The food menu is being developed through TRPAP support to serve visitors at reasonable prices. People were appreciative of the TRPAP support in infrastructure development, especially in and around the hot springs. The attraction has been promoted in domestic and international markets.

TRPAP conducted tourism awareness programmes with Tatopani residents. The spot was identified as having good tourism potential, and villagers were trained in lodge management. Study visits organised by TRPAP for the Kathmandu tourism industry and media has helped publicise Tatopani in Rasuwa as an attractive pilgrimage and tourist site. TRPAP has invested in maintaining the hot springs with filtration and a system of three interconnected ponds. Bathing facilities and changing rooms for visitors are needed. Tourists take a holy bath in the hot springs to relax after a long trek.

Local residents appreciated TRPAP's contribution to the repair of the Chilme suspension bridge, enabling visitors to reach Tatopani. On their own initiative, local people have been widening, cleaning, and stone paving the trekking trails connecting Tatopani.

Local people have formed a committee to manage the hot spring and the surroundings to ensure sustainability. The committee is registered with the local administration. Two of its members are represented in the STDC.

Namche public shelter benefits porters, Solukhumbu

Normally the ratio of tourists to support staff on Nepal treks is about 1:3, in which the porters outnumber other staff. The porters are often ill equipped with clothes, shoes and expedition gear. Namche Bazaar, being one of the most popular trails in the country, faces severe constraints in accommodating porters in affordable prices. Often they are compelled to spend nights in caves and consume low quality food. TRPAP partnered with BZUC and Namche Youth Club to construct a public (porter) shelter in Namche Bazaar availing 120 beds of free accommodation for porters, toilet facilities and reasonably priced hot shower, meals and other basic necessities.

Mr. Bal Bir Rai, a porter from Gudel, says: "*The shelter is really a home away from home for us. We can get cheap food, blankets and free beds. We porters are thankful to those who constructed this building and manage the facilities. Otherwise we had to spend cold nights with expensive food.*" Similarly, Mr. Dawa Sherpa, the chairperson of the Namche Youth Club is happy to manage this shelter and says: "*We not only save our degrading image of inhumane behaviour towards the porters, but also made a convenient and safe shelter for them. Audio-visual facilities are also being developed in the shelter.*" A dream has come true for Mr. Sonam Gyalgen Sherpa, the local hotelier and chairperson of BZMC. He says: "*This is a pro-poor and sustainable project. The partnership of BZMC with TRPAP and Namche Youth Club has considerably helped in managing it and guidelines are under preparation, which will help improve it in future.*"

The Public Shelter is a self-sustaining project. The Club has employed four youths whose salary and expenses are covered from the earnings of kitchen services, and other utility and rental charges, which average around Rs. 20,000 per week. This successful venture has a strong case for replication in other parts of the country.

6. In summary:

- **In order to carry out the design, construction and maintenance of tourism-related physical infrastructure, TRPAP has adopted a joint implementation approach with DDCs, the community and other NGOs. This model was able to instil a strong sense of ownership with users, and has proven to be more transparent, responsive and cost effective.**
- **The community normally contributes 25 percent of the cost through voluntary labour, TRPAP supports the design, implementation and supervision of work, the CO takes care of overall management; and the DDC with TRPAP finds the required funds.**
- **Infrastructure developed with this modality includes the building and renovating access trails, tourism facilities, religious sites, public utilities, social infrastructure, environmental conservation management and energy options. Most interventions were financed through IDF**
- **The CO financing and multi-stakeholder small infrastructure model has been successful in all TRPAP villages.**
- **One of the largest hot springs in Nepal was renovated, developed and promoted as a tourist spot in Rasuwa. Visitor flows to Tatopani have significantly increased, attracting Nepali and Indian pilgrims and foreign trekkers. Villagers have started up four new lodges.**
- **The Namche public shelter is an exemplary jointly managed 120-bed accommodation facility developed for porters stay. It is a financially self-sustaining project.**

7. Capacity Development and Training

78. TRPAP considers capacity building and skills enhancement as essential components to capacitate community members to engage in tourism. It has improved the capability of local people to plan and manage rural tourism, as well as equip them with essential tourism-related technical skills. The positive effects of environmental improvements, infrastructural development and training are clearly evident in TRPAP Programme areas. Some of the major training courses include English language, food and beverage, cookery and bakery, trekking guiding, home-stays, small hotel and lodges and business development.

79. Other training courses in the tourism sector include hospitality, handicrafts, local tour guiding, marketing, interpretation, visitor information centre management, and search and rescue. Waste management, health, hygiene, sanitation, HIV/ AIDS, alternative energy such as bio-gas, improved cooking stoves, and solar systems were taken up under the health, environment and energy sector. TRPAP has widely utilised NATHM to conduct trainings. Local people were found to be very receptive to TRPAP training courses, as they understood that they were essential for understanding and servicing tourists coming to their areas.

80. The impact of health and hygiene training has resulted in improved sanitation standards in and around rural villages. Training on tourism subjects has resulted in improved service quality, better cooking and more courteous behaviour to guests. Villagers recount the importance of proper etiquette in serving food. A significant number of trainees are still engaged in the sectors in which they were trained. In Solukhumbu, out of 420 trained people, 310 or 74 percent are still working in the field.

81. Equal access to the training programmes was provided to women, men, and marginalized groups. As a result, women trainees represent 50.65 percent of total participants in 41 different training events organised by the Programme. A total of 13,126 individuals benefited from these trainings.

82. As emphasised the mid-term evaluation, the services of private tourism training schools and partners NGOs can supplement NATHM training. TRPAP partnered with the HRA to conduct search and rescue training for porters in Solukhumbu. TRPAP had partnered with a range of other institutions to conduct courses, such as TAAN, Kathmandu Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (KATH), Kathmandu Environmental Educational Programme (KEEP).

83. In addition to the training and workshops, a wide range of supporting manuals and practical materials such as price lists, menus etc. were developed with the locals. Training manuals published by TRPAP include waste management in rural areas; ecotourism and biodiversity conservation; solar-drying of vegetables and fruits; gender, HIV/ AIDS and women's health orientation for pro-women rural tourism development; tourism and environment awareness; management capacity enhancement; small hotel and lodge management; cooking and baking; and local tour guiding.

7.1 Role Play and Drama: An Ideal Training Model

84. In some training programmes performing stage dramas and role plays was introduced to help people gain a better understanding and knowledge of how the world around them functions in real life. This exercise has been successful in

encouraging shy local people to come forward and handle business as required in the tourism industry.

Role-playing and drama: a powerful training tool in Salleri, Solukhumbu

A drama module has been introduced in enterprise development training. In order to generate enthusiasm and demonstrate the responsibilities of various positions in a teahouse, a role-play exercise was performed during the Salleri training programme. The SM acted as the facilitator and involved CO members in developing and acting out different situations. Participants were divided into three groups. In each group a person was selected as the teashop owner, and rest of the group members were assigned the role of customers. They all rehearsed their respective roles under guidance. The facilitator discussed the central question, summarized and recorded all the information that was generated during the drama, and explained how it could be further improved.

7.2 Creating Income Generating Activities

85. Agricultural training offered by TRPAP included improved seed varieties, harvesting techniques, fruit and vegetable farming, livestock, beekeeping and poultry. The villagers found these useful additions to their traditional farming knowledge. There is now evidence of surplus agricultural produce sold by farmers on trekking trails and in local markets. Growing cash crops such as onions and cucumbers are an additional source of livelihood with ready local markets. For example, the onions and cucumbers grown in Kaku, Basa VDC of Solukhumbu are sold nearby in Salleri, Taksindu, Nunthala, and Kharikhola. Formerly these vegetables had to be supplied from Okhaldhunga, a three to four-day walk away. As a result, local demand for onions has surged as the price has dropped.

86. Village women weaving wild-grass baskets and growing organic fruit and vegetables now earn money selling their produce to home-stays, restaurants, and hotels as well as the local market. These additional earnings enable rural households to buy basic necessities such as salt, cooking oil and sugar. Although the scale of additional income may seem modest, this type of earning is more beneficial to poor women as they have fewer options for generating cash. With awareness campaigns and village level interactions, women are now aware of the importance of tourism for local development. *"In the past we did not know what tourism was, but now we know that we can bring money and resources into our village from tourism. We can show our Chepong culture to our guests and generate some cash. We can provide visitors with seasonal fruits such as oranges and peaches and make money,"* says Ms. Dil Kumari Chepong, Hattibang, Chitwan.

No marketing problems for agriculture products, Solukhumbu

"TRPAP has changed the way I do my farming. Before I only used to grow spinach in my farm. After I took TRPAP agricultural training, I learned new techniques. Today I grow cabbages, garlic, onion, cucumber and coriander in my small farm. All my produce is consumed in the village, so there is no marketing problem for me. The villagers have been helpful and like purchasing my produce. Last year I borrowed Rs. 10,000 from the VCF, which I have already paid back in four instalments. I invested that money in farming, mainly purchasing agricultural seeds. Today I have saved around Rs. 50,000. I have travelled outside my village and seen jeeps and cars. I went to Janakpur on a study tour. I hope I may travel to more cities through TRPAP's programmes". Ms. Harki Maya Magar, Juving, Solukhumbu.

Vegetable farming, Taplejung

Mr. Lekh Bahadur Gurung from Phurumbu VDC, Taplejung is nowadays busy in his vegetable farming business. His enhanced skills were obtained from a TRPAP agricultural training programme. He reflects, *“Before, I didn’t have enough knowledge about farming. I couldn’t feed my family using traditional methods. After the TRPAP training, I can now produce much larger quantities.”* Today he grows many different kinds of vegetables and earns Rs. 20,000 annually. He adds: *“Now I can easily handle my household expenditure, and in addition I can afford the tuition fees for my three sons.”*

He can now produce sufficient vegetables himself to feed visitors, so there is no longer any need to bring these from outside and far-flung villages. Varieties in his garden include onions, garlic, cauliflower, peas, cabbages, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes, spinach, etc. Neighbours also purchase vegetables from him.

When there are not enough tourists to keep up the demand, Mr. Gurung’s business suffers. But he is not deterred. In this case he has to walk three hours to Fungling market in order to sell his vegetables. He purchases improved varieties of vegetable seeds from the government. Upbeat about his entrepreneurship, he happily shares his experience with others who are willing to learn from the success of such ventures.

7.3 Business Development

87. Business development training courses taught business skills and encouraged entrepreneurs to establish new small enterprises such as lodges, teashops, souvenirs, agricultural produce and stores. VCF loans were often linked with training as criteria for eligibility. TRPAP has trained a wide range of potential entrepreneurs from community members in the six districts.

Poultry farming of Taksindu VDC, Solukhumbu

A resident of Nunthala Bazaar, Taksindu VDC 4, Solukhumbu, Ms. Maiya Kumari Magar is a woman with a low income. Her main earning was from a rented teashop, but she did not have enough confidence to survive well in the competitive environment. Her family budget was therefore tight. Although she wanted to try for a new business, her poor financial status was an obstacle.

When TRPAP created a Women’s Awareness CO in the area, Maiya became a member. She received a loan of Rs. 6,000 to start an additional venture, a poultry farm. The training she received was useful, and she then turned her attention to the cleanliness of the teashop. The shop started to give her a better return. The customers bought her chickens and eggs, and soon her business was thriving.

Now she is able to earn over Rs. 10,000 per month. Having begun with 20 chickens, she now has 80. The teashop helps her to buy feed for the chickens. Poultry farming has truly improved her situation. She is able to repay her loan instalments, educate her children, and save money as well. Maiya’s success story has become an inspiration for others to show that a small capital venture can improve one family’s economic condition.

7.4 Skills Enhancement

88. TRPAP training programmes cover areas of gender awareness, English language, and skill enhancement training. The skills that local people acquire from TRPAP offer them choices and opportunities for improved lifestyles. The skills reach others within the community, as members share what they have learned during the training courses. This process has contributed to the sustainability of new tourism products and infrastructure.

89. One of the best practices of pro-poor sustainable tourism is to build on the traditional skills of local men and women, and adapt them for tourism use. TRPAP successfully increased local communities’ awareness of the potential benefits of tourism, by giving value to their traditional occupations. TRPAP skills training to improve manufacturing techniques, quality design and marketing has significantly

helped women and men earn more from their knitting, weaving, bamboo crafts and Nepali paper items. A significant change is that traditional skills are converted into a business-oriented activity. The making of some traditional items can also be revived and pride reinforced in the cultural heritage of individual communities. Being able to sell products both to local and foreign tourists increases the earnings of skilled people.

90.

Life related to bamboo and handicrafts, Chitwan

"*Bamboo cannot make a plough, but it does good to all,*" is a saying translated by two folks of Kaule VDC, Mr. Shuddha Bahadur Chepang of Ward no. 2 and Mr. Lal Bahadur Giri of Ward no. 3 in Chitwan. Last year they attended skills training on bamboo handicrafts offered jointly by the DDC and TRPAP. They now produce large items from bamboo such as dining tables and stools, as well as photo frames, clock stands, bangle stands, teacups, trays and other small decorative pieces.

They sell their products in the local market. In 2004, they exhibited and sold their bamboo products at the Chitwan Festival. They worked for 10 days to make different handicraft items. Now Shuddha Bahadur says: "*We sold items for Rs. 6,000 from a stock that cost us about Rs. 2,500*".

Shuddha Bahadur is the president of the TRPAP Praja Community Organisation and Lal Bahadur is its secretary, both having been active from the beginning. They admit that they had no idea or knowledge of how to work on bamboo. "*This training has taught us very useful skills*". Since they do not have enough bamboo in their backyard, Shuddha Bahadur has purchased 35 saplings to grow in groves in his new land.

Why go abroad when everything is at home, Solukhumbu

About six kilometres from Salleri on the route south from Dudhkunda, Halesi and Khotang, Mr. Dhan Bahadur BK is a resident of Tingla VDC, 5 and member of the Sagarmatha CO. He used to be a traditional blacksmith working on iron at the forge, dependent on his employers for his wages. Before he took a 45-day skills training course on stone carving, he was considering going abroad to seek employment. Today he has a good income from stone sculptures that he makes from rocks at his house. He chisels ashtrays, lamps, gods and goddesses, selling them in local lodges and hotels to local and foreign tourists

He says that a statue can take up to two days for him to complete, but he is usually able to make 25 to 30 carvings to sell every month. He displays all of his items on his veranda by the trekking trail to attract the attention of his buyers. He says that he is now making a monthly income of over Rs. 6,000. Two years ago when unemployed he had taken a loan of Rs. 30,000 from ADB/N, but had failed to repay it. "*It was one reason why I was planning to go to Qatar for labouring, leaving my family behind,*" he admits. He has now not only been able to repay the old loan, but has also savings of Rs. 25,000 in the bank. He no longer needs to go abroad. He has two apprentices studying under him, Mr. Jit Bahadur BK and Mr. Nar Bahdur BK. They are planning to collectively market their stone carvings at tourist spots like Phaplu, Lukla, Namche, and Kathmandu.

Beautiful local caps become tourist souvenir items, Rasuwa

Goljung VDC is a beautiful Tamang settlement on the edge of Rasuwa. Ms. Phurpu Yangjen Lama, 32, Ward no. 6 has been making a good income producing local tourism products to support her daughters' education.

Phurpu's earlier story was pathetic. Six of her seven children are girls, as the family expanded in the hope of a baby boy. She was soon to regret this, as the farm was insufficient to support them for the whole year. Her husband had to frequently work as a porter for them to survive. It was hard for the family to meet basic needs, so sending the girls to the school was a luxury for them.

In 2005 Phurpu joined a 15-day TRPAP handicraft-training course and became a member of Goljung Handicraft Production Group. The VTA helped her increase her income by optimising available local resources and her skills. Now she weaves woollen bags, belts and Tamang caps. It turns out to be her successful new profession. The quality items are sold at better prices to tourists and local people. Her caps became popularly known as '*Goljung ko topi*' (Goljung's cap), and she has started selling these abroad. This extra work earns her additional income of more than Rs. 6,000 annually.

Now Phurpu is planning to take a VCF loan for a handicraft shop, which should further improve her income and comfortably finance her daughters' education. She says: "*I am no longer worried about the family survival, and the problem of educating the girls*".

Mr. Mingma Ghale of Rasuwa also has Tamang cap-making skills, and has been in the business for 15-20 years. It takes 2 days for him to sew a cap that is sold for around Rs. 200. He believes that his cap-making time could have been reduced to one day if he had received skill training earlier. Seven villagers in Goljung who received skill training now weave local bags. Sales are increasing over the years but so far, the bags are only sold to local people.

7.5 Hotel Management and Hospitality

91. TRPAP has provided training courses in small hotel and lodge management, small-scale enterprise development and menu setting, which were greatly appreciated by entrepreneurs working in restaurants, hotels and handicrafts. Women running small restaurants and lodges are aware of the importance of hospitality, quality maintenance and sanitation in their business. The training has taught them to offer a diversity of food items in their restaurants.

Padam Bahadur has become an example, Dunai, Dolpa

Only 22 years old, Mr. Padam Bahadur Shahi from Dunai is upbeat about his hotel business. He gives TRPAP credit for his success: "*Since I improved my hotel business with the help of TRPAP, there has been a surge in local as well as outside customers.*"

Things were not so good in the past. Padam ran the hotel with his friends but once it started making a loss his friends left him, forcing him to manage the hotel alone. At this time TRPAP, with DESERT NGO, conducted an enterprise development training course. Padam Bahadur remembers how he learned the importance of planning and implementation while running a business. After the completion of his training, with the help of TRPAP, he took a study visit to different places. During the course of this trip he learned how businesses are run in other places. He has incorporated these ideas in his own business that has helped him. He also received cook training which further assisted his progress.

He has already paid back his VCF loans. He stays in a rented house but even after paying rent he is able to earn a good income and plans to eventually purchase land on which to run his hotel business. His family members have helped in his success and are wholeheartedly engaged in managing the hotel with him.

Padam Bahadur has become an exemplary figure in the village by demonstrating that there can be large benefits by learning new skills, following a business plan, and managing with perseverance and hard work.

Small hotel and lodge management training helps, Rupandehi

"Before TRPAP I never received training in hotel management. We local restaurant owners have received training in small hotel management. We are now conscious of sanitation, setting a menu, making quality food and maintaining goodwill with guests. This was made possible because of TRPAP. The training on small hotel and lodge management means I now have foreign tourists in my restaurant, which was not possible before. I have been able to make different food items. My daily income during the season (October to December) has increased from Rs. 1,800 to about Rs. 2,500 per day," says Ms. Gyanu Maya Gurung, local restaurant group, Lumbini.

7. In summary:

- Capacity building and skills enhancement are the key components of TRPAP training courses. Recipients confirm that training is one of the most highly appreciated TRPAP activities.
- TRPAP courses covered professional tourism skills, management and business studies, handicraft manufacture and marketing, environmental conservation, health and hygiene, and alternative energy.
- Over 13,000 people were trained in a total 348 training courses. Of the trainees, 50.65 percent were women.
- Training is conducted with HRA, KATH, KEEP, NATHM, TAAN and other local partners.
- The impacts of the training are monitored through better sanitation, neighbourhood cleanliness, local produce, improved handicrafts, new small businesses and improved tourism services such as courteous behaviour.
- Innovative training techniques were applied such as role-playing and drama.
- Learning about improved seeds and advanced harvesting techniques helped two women farmers in Chitwan and Solukhumbu. A farmer in Taplejung learned more efficient methods and now sells his surplus vegetables, earning enough to feed his family and send his three children to school.
- Business development training enabled a woman to start a small poultry farm in Solukhumbu. Other villagers have now opened convenience stores.
- Under skills training programmes, two Chepang men have learned to make souvenir items from locally-available bamboo; a stone carver in Solukhumbu has started selling his sculptures, thus giving up his idea of having to seek employment abroad; a woman in Rasuwa is now selling her improved quality woven Tamang caps to tourists.
- TRPAP has offered training for small-scale enterprise development including hotel and lodge management. Case studies include a woman restaurant owner in Rupandehi and a man in Dolpa who have upgraded their quality of standards.

8. Tourism and the Environment

92. Environmental conservation is a crucial part of tourism development. Many tourism products in Nepal depend upon natural and cultural resources. Tourism can contribute positively to the care and maintenance of the environment, and can also threaten it if not carefully managed. Mitigation measures need to be prepared in advance to preserve a green and healthy environment. A conservation approach that safeguards the natural environment not only benefits the tourism industry, but also the entire country.

8.1 Sagarmatha National Park Management And Tourism Plan

93. One of TRPAP's most notable contributions has been supporting the DNPWC to produce a new SNPMT 2006-2011. Unlike the 1981 document that focussed solely on biodiversity conservation, this Plan integrates conservation and tourism management. Its formulation involved extensive consultation with local people, conservation experts and the tourism industry. The Plan advocates that fostering responsible tourism will strengthen conservation of the Sagarmatha area. Careful preservation and commercial utilisation of local culture is recommended as a component.

94. The SNP is a world heritage site and attracts great international interest. In this new Plan, all national and foreign stakeholders who receive tourism and other benefits from the area have a voice in its responsible management through the creation of the Sagarmatha Tourism Coordination Forum. The Forum has been constituted and has held several meetings, organised by TRPAP. Integrated park and buffer zone management have placed a strong emphasis on the use of tourism in the Plan and a cultural and environmental database has been prepared. There is strong support from key stakeholders to maintain Sagarmatha's international reputation as an outstanding tourist destination and world-renowned model of ecotourism. GoN has recently approved the Plan.

8.2 Tourism and Environmental Awareness Programmes

95. Believing that rural poverty has some direct links with over exploitation of natural resources, TRPAP has focused on environmental education in order to mobilise villagers for conservation. The Tourism and Environment Awareness Programme (TEAP) has been successfully pioneered by TRPAP in Nepal. It counsels the people on tourism and the environment, including health, hygiene and sanitation. Over 27,000 people have been benefited by around 1,010 TEAPs organized by TRPAP.

96. A two-pronged strategy has been adopted for TEAP. The first involves "software" that helps to raise awareness among villagers of the importance of tourism and protection of the environment. The second strategy is concerned with "hardware" aspects such as the development of infrastructure. TEAP aims to sensitise local people, COs, FGs, BZUCs, BZUGs, school children, local authorities, protected area managers and other concerned stakeholders.

97. As modules, a one-day TEAP is conducted for CO members, two-day for FG members, and a half-day for school students. TEAP provides communities with a thorough grounding on the potential impacts and benefits of tourism, and its linkages with environmental protection.

98. TRPAP has prepared a range of TEAP educational material in coordination with the DDCs. A number of sustainable tourism booklets were produced in 2003. TRPAP has highlighted the need for environmental development activities in the six districts. Villagers have undertaken a series of activities to develop tourism infrastructure for the environment. Examples include waste management, installation of incinerators, and distribution of rubbish bins. TRPAP has provided financial support to construct numerous private and public toilets, contributing from Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 5,000 for building a toilet based on the wellbeing ranking of the users. Besides financial support, materials such as toilet pans, corrugated sheets and cement are provided to the ultra-poor. Hardly anyone now defecates in the open, thereby promoting better hygiene practices.

99. TEAPs have been successful in making local people aware of the benefits and linkages between tourism and the environment. Many changes have been achieved, especially in the attitudes of local villagers towards tourism and waste management. Eco-clubs have been formed in schools and several communities have started regular village clean-up campaigns. Garbage pits have been constructed and dustbins are now regularly used. Households have begun to build latrines, and schools have started plantations around their buildings.

100. As TEAP examples, in Rasuwa 295 local people from Gatlang and Thuman villages initiated a clean-up campaign in preparation for the Langtang festival. In Rupandehi, Punnihawa and Sonbarsa villagers planted 400 ornamental and evergreen saplings around the pond and along roadsides, protected by bamboo and barbed wire fences. In the school compounds of Madarsa, Tenuhawa and Buddha Adarsa Secondary School in Bhagwanpur VDCs, 500 saplings are planted.

Students in environmental conservation, Rupandehi

Students from Karmahawa Secondary School now show greater interest towards environmental conservation. The school falls under the Ekla VDC, one of eight TRPAP VDCs in Rupandehi. The SM regularly visits the school where she met Mr. Banarasi Bishwakarma, the environment teacher.

Both the SM and Mr. Bishwakarma told the students about TEAP. An interaction was organised about what students can do to help tourism and conservation. Influenced by the session, the pupils decided to form an eco-club. The Rising Eco-Club was formed in November 2003 with 21 members, 18 students and three teachers. The Club organises monthly meetings and several activities such as street dramas, essay competitions and forestation programmes. TRPAP has granted Rs. 3,000 for eco-club activities.

TRPAP has taken club members for a 4 day study tour to Chitwan National Park (CNP), and helped them to understand the impacts of tourism and caring for the environment. Nowadays, students are using dustbins in every classroom, and every Sunday they clean up the school compound. Classrooms, school compound and surroundings now look clean and tidy.

The DDC and TRPAP have helped students to plant saplings of different species in the school compound. The pupils tend the plants and a fence has been erected to protect the planted areas. The Principal of the School, Mr. Prem Shanker Pandey, says: "*I have found greater awareness and interest amongst the students about the environment after the formation of our eco-club.*"

Cleaning campaign, Solukhumbu

Nagpokhari in Kangel VDC-7 is six miles from the headquarters of Solukhumbu district. Although surrounded by great natural beauty, Nagpokhari used to stink with foul smells because many houses there had no toilets. Residents had to defecate outside, causing a polluted environment. Of its 21 households, 15 were of specially targeted disadvantage groups.

TRPAP began by forming various COs in the village and the Jwalamukhi CO of Nagpokhari became particularly active. TEAPs were conducted along with several practical waste management exercises, including a clean-up campaign in Nagpokhari. Those people who had showed the least interest previously, became the most active in the clean-up campaign. Every household constructed a pit-toilet, had dustbins around the house, and made a pit to burn waste. As a result, paper and plastic waste were easily disposed of. The area became neat and clean. Mr. Mohan Singh, the chairman of CO, says: "*Defecating in the open is a punishable offence now. Offenders have to pay Rs.500 fine.*" This worked effectively as a control mechanism. Once a week the waste is collected and burnt, and Nagpokhari looks and smells much better now.

In the course of the clean-up, Ms. Subhadra Nepali emerged as a leader. She feels that her home is like a heaven. She says: "*I really enjoy cleaning my house, compound, clothes and utensils.*" Today, she has enough courage to offer food and lodging to tourists in her home. She adds: "*I can offer tourists hygienic and delicious local dhindo and gundruk at my home instead of standard town food.*"

The CO manager, Mr. Hira Basnet, says: "*Households affiliated with the CO hold regular meetings on cleanliness. Communal roads and water taps are cleaned every month. The clean-up campaign has revitalized residents and has changed the village into a more civilised settlement.*" Mr. Kul Kumar Basnet, teacher at Jivanjyoti Secondary School, says: "*Due to cleanliness there has been a dramatic change in the village as compared to earlier days. Travelling has become easier. People are committed to attracting tourists to the village by providing better services.*"

One stove, many advantages, Rupandehi

Ms. Suman Gupta from Ekla VDC-2 in Rupandehi is delighted with the advantages of using an improved stove in her home. There were many problems with her traditional stove such as the heavy use of fuel wood and cow dung, and smoke throughout the house resulting in headaches, lung and eye diseases. Women are nowadays pleased to use the improved stoves as they consume less fuel, create less smoke, and cook faster.

TRPAP with the DDC gave 23 local participants a one-week training course on the construction of improved cook stoves in 2004, and provided the required materials. As a result, 90 improved stoves were made in seven VDCs in and around Lumbini. In Ekla VDC alone, 10 improved stoves are in use. This has not only helped the environment but has positive direct impacts on the daily lives of local villagers. TRPAP had developed 4 VDCs, Madhubani, Ekla, Khudabagar and Tenuhawa, as model villages for study tours.

Ms. Suman Gupta praises the improved stoves, saying: "*With a traditional stove it takes one sack of cow dung to cook four or five meals, while with an improved stove for the same amount of cow dung I can cook eight or nine meals. With an improved stove there is less smoke at home. This has reduced eye disease as well.*" Similarly, Ms. Bindrabati from Madhubani-8 says: "*With my improved stove I can cook rice and lentils at the same time, and save time of cooking. During the extra leisure time gained, I can make handicrafts.*"

Ms. Rubina Khatun is one of the trainers in making improved stoves. She says: "*There is increasing demand for improved stoves from other villages, I am planning to visit there during my free time to construct and sell them improved stoves. It is becoming my main source of income.*"

Waste Management and Bottle Disposal, Langtang

101. Dhunche and Langtang are the gateway to Langtang National Park (LNP). A popular trekking destination, these villages are facing waste management problems, particularly the disposal of empty soft drink and beer bottles.

102. In Dhunche, the Park, DDC and local community formed a joint Waste Management Committee for the collection of waste from every household. A range of fees was imposed, according to the category of establishment. The committee built a public toilet in the market, constructed a dumping site, installed an incinerator nearby, and placed rubbish bins at strategic locations. Staffs are employed to administer all these activities. TRPAP has provided the rubbish bins and pushcarts for collecting waste, and with the Park has helped construct the dumping site. Groups have been organised and trained on the benefits of communal waste management. Nowadays, Dhunche is noticeably cleaner.

103. Waste problems in Langtang VDC were compounded by the dumping of bottles by tourist hotels and restaurants, leading to many complaints from tourists to Langtang. Trekking trail garbage became an issue with villagers. As a result TRPAP, with three hotels, started a clean-up campaign to collect bottles from the region and bring them to Syabrubesi. Altogether 20,397 beer bottles were carried down. Of the transportation cost of Rs. 5 per bottle, the DDC and TRPAP contributed Rs. 2 each, and the hotel groups pay Rs. 1. From now onwards, every hotelier deposits Rs. 60 as collateral against each carton of bottles being properly disposed, a sustainable system organised and monitored by the Waste Management Committee. This ensures a lasting positive effect by eliminating littering in Langtang and Kyanjin.

104. Mr. Naba Ratna Yadav from Rupandehi wanted to improve the health and hygiene of his home. He has installed biogas in his premises and bought buffaloes through a VCF loan. As a result, he uses slurry for biogas generation, has a soot-free kitchen and sells compost manure for organic vegetable farming which is in high demand in tourist lodges. He even has surplus milk for sale in the market.

Iron *lingo* saves the environment, Rasuwa

105. There is a tradition among Tamang communities to erect a religious *lingo*, a wooden pole with prayer flags, by each family during the New Year festival of Lhosar. A tremendous number of 15-meter pine trees used to be cut down for this purpose. TRPAP is able to convince the locals of the damage caused by such significant deforestation every year. They have been persuaded to replace the *lingo* with an iron pole, the cost of which is shared by TRPAP, the DDC and local people. Until 2004, a total of 808 *lingos* are replaced with iron poles in the Timure, Briddhim, Langtang, and Syabrubesi VDCs.

8. In summary:

- The GoN has recently approved the SNPMT) that was prepared by TRPAP with the DNPWC. The Management Plan integrates conservation and tourism management, and advocates that conservation will be strengthened by fostering responsible tourism. The Sagarmatha Tourism Coordination Forum is constituted and has held meetings.
- TEAP is a TRPAP innovation. A total of 1,010 TEAPs have been organised with COs and FGs, for over 27,000 persons. TRPAP has published a range of TEAP booklets and other supporting material. TEAP focuses on grassroots environmental awareness, health, hygiene, and sanitation. The potential benefits and impacts of tourism are linked with the protection of the natural and cultural environment. TEAP has sensitised the local people, COs, FG, BZUGs, BZUCs, BZMC and school children.
- TRPAP has constructed garbage-dumping sites, installed incinerators, introduced rubbish bins, and helped building private and public toilets.
- Eco-clubs are formed in schools, and students encouraged to plant tree saplings.
- TRPAP's improved cooking stoves are increasingly used in village households in Taplejung, Rupandehi, and Chitwan. The stoves save fuel and cooking time, and produce less smoke, thus protecting users from eye and lung diseases.
- TRPAP has partnered with local lodges and user groups to share the cost of cleaning-up thousands of empty bottles from upper Langtang, and set up a sustainable system to prevent further littering.
- 808 *lingos* in Rasuwa are substituted by iron poles to save the forest environment.

9. New Tourism Products

106. Piloting new pro-poor sustainable tourism products in rural areas is envisaged as a major activity in the TRPAP design. The mid-term evaluation directed TRPAP to put more private sector focus, small business emphasis, and tourism marketing effort into the creation of these models. Subsequently, the TRPAP team has developed and promoted a range of new tourism products.

107. Extensive preparation is needed in order to introduce new sustainable tourism products of a style and scale with which local communities can engage and benefit. In addition to the aspirations of the local people, TRPAP assessed market demand with the wider Nepal and international tourism industry, working closely with the NTB and Kathmandu-based tour operators. Because of the lack of healthy tourism flows during much of the TRPAP period due to the effects of the insurgency, the results of these efforts cannot be easily measured. Trends over the years are an indication of progress. Arrival trends for the TRPAP areas do not necessarily reflect the potential benefits that will flow to the prepared village products when tourism patterns become re-established.

108. TRPAP has successfully introduced tourism products to new areas and new communities, with special efforts to target women and deprived groups. Even in established tourism destinations, TRPAP has sought to spread tourism benefits to new and more remote areas. For example, in Solukhumbu efforts focussed on new products in the more neglected parts of the district, leveraging off the strong tourism flows on the Everest route. In Langtang, the third most popular trek area, the Programme developed a completely new circuit trail. Chitwan is popular for wildlife and jungle safaris in the Chitwan National Park (CNP), so TRPAP sought to develop a trek and cultural circuit in the eastern hills to appeal to tourists from Sauraha and lengthen visitor stay. Similarly, in Kangchenjunga and Dolpa, the focus was on developing new trek circuits to broaden the base of tourism benefits. In Rupandehi, Lumbini attracts tourists and pilgrims as the birthplace of Buddha, so TRPAP's emphasis was on involving local people in transportation, village tours and handicrafts.

9.1 Chitwan Chepang Hills Trail

109. The Chitwan Chepang Hills Trail starts from Hugdi in Dhadhing district on the Prithvi Highway, passes through Kaule and Siddhi, and ends at Shaktikhor in Chitwan district. It is an easy 7-day trek in the middle hills, offering a cultural experience in home-stays with the Chepang people, a nomadic ethnic group of hunters and gatherers rare in Nepal. Other attractions include beautiful scenery, bird watching at Chisapanitar, magnificent sunrise and sunset views from Siraichuli, the historic citadel of Upardang Gadhi fort, the Chitram waterfall, the Sinti and Nok caves, some Magar and Gurung villages, and a living museum of Chepang culture in Shaktikhor.

110. Siraichuli is the highest peak (1,945 m) in Chitwan with a new view-point featuring views of Annapurna, Dhaulagiri, Ganesh Himal, Gaurishankar, Gurja Himal and Manaslu. The southern trail offers extensive views of the Rapti and Narayani rivers, the CNP - world heritage site, and the green Terai lowland plains. Over 400 species of birds have been recorded on the trail, and Paragliding is another potential activity. The Chitwan Chepang Hills Trail is a model of ethnic inclusiveness. Although the Chepang community are the highlight, other ethnic groups are also involved such as Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Newars, Brahmins, and Chettris.

111. These northern hill villages were selected for development to supplement the established wildlife jungle safaris in CNP. Nepal's cultural diversity is promoted by featuring the Chepang people, and creating tourism opportunities for them to improve their livelihoods with additional income and infrastructure. Hattibang, Kaule and Shaktikhor villages showcase Chepang culture on this trail. Product development advice from Kathmandu tour operators followed a series of agent familiarisation tours. TRPAP has undertaken a marketing and media programme to establish this new product in Nepal. The following table demonstrates a gradual increase of visitors to this new trail developed by TRPAP:

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Visitors	N/A	17	37	268	251

* Up to September, 2006, TRPAP

Hattibang

112. The remote village of Hattibang is mainly Chepang, with some Magars and Giripuris (Chettris). The Chepangs are one of the most neglected and disadvantaged ethnic groups in Nepal, with an isolated language and distinctive life style. They depend on forest resources gathering fruits, roots, leaves and bark, and practice shifting cultivation. They hunt inside the forests, and are expert in the use of wild roots and fruits for food and medical cures. Hattibang village offers cultural diversity, home-stays and beautiful scenery.

113. Successful tourism in Hattibang will help forest protection and highlight the indigenous culture. The community will be empowered through better understanding and knowledge, and their lifestyles will correspondingly improve. The people are now sensitized to the potential of "self-development" through village tourism. Most households have constructed toilets, and their village is already cleaner. They grow orange, peach, banana and vegetables for home-stay visitors. Lodge management has helped the hotel owners to improve their skills. Some residents have taken a loan for developing home-stay facilities, vegetable farming and goat rearing enterprises. Other improvements include a community centre, drinking water pipe maintenance, temple renovation, torches and umbrellas for women health workers, and an iron railing on the Siraichuli hill. Cultural groups for each of the Chepang, Giripuri and Magar communities perform collectively for tourists on request.

114. Mr. Lal Bahadur Giri, the secretary of the STDC says: "*I appreciate TRPAP for explaining about the relationship between tourism and us. In the beginning we did not trust TRPAP because we had lost confidence in outsiders who did nothing for us in the past. But TRPAP is different. Our access to resources has been improved, and we are hopeful of bettering our livelihoods with economic development*".

9.2 Tamang Heritage Trail and Home-Stays, Rasuwa

115. LNP is the third most popular trekking destination in Nepal. TRPAP has introduced a completely new eight-day trail passing through backward but culturally rich villages of Goljung, Gatlang, Chilme, Tatopani, Brim dang, Nagthali, Thuman, Timure, Briddhim and Syabrubesi. This trail features Tamang culture, Parvati Kunda and Tatopani religious sites, magnificent Himalayan views from Nagthali meadow hilltop, and Rasuwa Gadhi the historical fort bordering with Tibet. Lodges and home-stays are being developed in villages along the route, and Gatlang now has accommodation in the Community Lodge and Cultural Centre.

116. A relatively easy soft trekking product, the trail includes Buddhist *chortens*, monasteries, traditional mountain villages, interesting architecture, crafts and

customs, exquisite landscape and a natural hot spring. The Tamang Heritage Trail (THT) offers authentic cultural performances, and ethno-botanical and cultural features. Its promotion will help bring tourism benefits to many excluded communities.

117. The table below reveals that despite fluctuations in overall visitor numbers to Rasuwa, trekkers to the THT are slowly picking up.

Year	Visitors to Rasuwa District	Visitors to THT
2002	29,880	1,220
2003	28,660	1,435
2004	25,215	1,705
2005	35,400	5,135
2006*	43,300	4,650

* Up to September, 2006, TRPAP

Home-stay in Briddhim, a new tourism product

118. Briddhim has emerged as a replicable model of community-managed village tourism, first initiated by Sirubari near Pokhara. It has the most successful home-stays on the THT, demonstrating how unity amongst villagers can bring prosperity to the locality. The village is not located in a particularly good site, with Himalayan views blocked by mountains in the north, yet it has emerged as one of Rasuwa's leading tourist attractions. The widely distributed Briddhim brochure introduces the lifestyle activities, costumes and traditions of the village along with a code of conduct for tourists. Visitors to the 25 home-stays are aware that they contribute directly to the wellbeing of the local people and the local economy.

119. Building on a concept generated during an APPA exercise in 2002, the whole village collectively decided to go for home-stays. Supported by TRPAP, the DDC and the LNP, VCF loans are made available to enable these innovations. All the loans have now been repaid with the exception of only five households. The park helped the villagers by providing wood for construction. TRPAP has upgraded the trails, constructed culverts, provided drinking water, built and furnished a community centre, helped with village beautification, constructed toilets and solar-heated showers, and improved cooking stoves. DDC and TRPAP gave a mix of grant and loan for purchasing bed sheets, quilts and blankets, and for costumes for the dance performances. Impressed with such community enterprise, a visiting tourist even contributed Rs. 40,000 to paint the village houses.

120. In Briddhim village experience, traditionally dressed residents welcome every visitor with a drink of local *raksi*. After a blessing at the monastery, guests are taken to their home-stay, selected on rotation, and receive local style hospitality from the extended family. Each house has a standard menu. Tourist activities include a village and nature walk, and a cultural performance in the community centre. Tourists feel they get a good value for money and since 2004, more than 150 foreigners and over 250 domestic tourists have stayed in Briddhim. Mr. Ngwang Tamang, the chairperson of the Home-stay Management Committee says excitedly: "*We expected that development would come gradually, but here in Briddhim things happened dramatically.*"

121. A group of four women and five men from Briddhim greatly benefited from a study tour to Sirubari to replicate their village tourism success. TRPAP has arranged two TEAPs in the village, and skills training on home-stay management, business

practices, cooking and bakery, English language, vegetable production, and handicrafts. To ensure sustainability, the Home-stay Management Committee is registered with the LNP, and the BZUC as the overall responsible institution. A full time staff member acts as the contact person, based in an office in the community centre.

9.3 Pikey and Dudhkunda Cultural Trekking Trails, Solukhumbu

122. These innovative cultural trekking trails are promoted as alternate one and two week routes in the southern Solukhumbu. TRPAP developed the new trek circuits through joint collaboration with the private sector, DDC, TAAN and NTB. Both can be accessed from the popular Jiri to Namche to Everest Base Camp trail, from Phaplu, Rumjatar and Lamidanda airports, and from the Katari to Okhaldhunga road. The Pikey Cultural Trail starts from Phaplu and passes through Magar, Tamang and Sherpa villages, crossing the Solu Khola. In addition to trekking the Pikey Cultural Trail, features include paragliding, mountain biking, bird watching, marathon running, pilgrimage and meditation activities. The Dudhkunda Cultural Trek passes through Kaku, Basa, Taksindu and Beni, and features dense rhododendron forest, colourful ethnic settlements and a variety of wildlife.

123. The main aim of inventing these trails is to successfully improve the livelihood of local people through community-based rural tourism. TRPAP interventions include upgrading the trails, information signage and managed campsites with drinking water, toilets, kitchens and waste disposal facilities. Local people receive awareness and skill training in lodge management, cooking and baking, and fruit and vegetable production. Several study visits to other developed sites have been conducted for residents. Entrepreneurs have received VCF loans to begin micro-enterprises related to tourism. TRPAP has produced a website and a number of brochures, posters, booklets and audio-visual materials to publicise the new treks. Other national and international marketing activities include trek agent and media familiarisation trips.

124. Although heavily dominated by attractions in the SNP area, visitors to the southern part of Solukhumbu have been slightly improving over the years.

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Visitors to Southern Solukhumbu	163	248	365	294	240

* Up to September, 2006, TRPAP

Tour of Monasteries

125. Two world-renowned monasteries are situated on the Pikey and Dudhkunda Cultural Trekking Trails, Chiwong and Thuptenchoeling. The Thuptenchoeling monastery is the largest monastery in Nepal with more than 500 monks and nuns, headed by HH Trulshik Rinpoche, a teach of the Dalai Lama and 33rd reincarnation of Terton Donak Lingpa, a famous spiritual master. A foremost centre of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism, Thuptenchoeling attracts Buddhist followers from all over the world. The Chiwong monastery is across the Solu Khola in a commanding hilltop position. One of the oldest monasteries in the district, Chiwong has both monks and nuns and is famous for its spectacular Mani Rimdu dance festival, celebrated every year in October or November.

9.4 Eco-Treks at Phortse, Solukhumbu

126. Phortse village, situated at 3,900m in the SNP has problems providing even basic necessities for tourists. Poor villagers are unable to afford the high prices of gas and kerosene, and therefore depend on firewood for cooking and heating. Forest regeneration is very slow due to the high altitude and cold climate. TRPAP partnered with the BZMC, Laligurans BZUG, Khumjung VDC and the community to develop a 60kw micro-hydro generated from the Thulung River. A British tourist even made a donation. Since 2005, all 83 households in Phortse now have electricity, with 53 households using power for cooking and heating. Payment for the consumption of electricity is fixed for families, depending on their economic status.

127. Electricity has transformed the village and enabled it to become an attractive ecotourism destination. Being off the main Everest Base Camp trail, authentic Sherpa cultural traditions are preserved. The micro-hydro has reduced impacts on the forest so the environment is maintained. Buddhist non-hunting culture nurtures biodiversity. Other TRPAP improvements noticed by tourists include the positive effects of TEAPs, safe drinking water, sewage systems, a dumping site, incinerator, and smoke-free kitchens.

128. Phortse received Rs. 80,000 through the Laligurans Users Group, jointly funded by the SNP and TRPAP, and villagers contributed in labour to upgrading the Phortse to Nala trail. Since the route has improved, linking the village to the main trails, a local lodge operator Mr. Pasang Dhiki says: *"Now the numbers of tourists this season are rising."* The former ward chairman of Phortse says: *"This trail has not only helped humans, but also yaks. Many yaks used to fall off the poor track and die, but no such deaths occur now."* Phortse can now accommodate over 150 guests as lodge owners have added new rooms and built new lodges. *"Tourists are increasing because the Phortse to Nala trail is easier and safer for trekkers since it has been reconstructed,"* says the chairman of Laligurans Madhyawarti Users Group of Khumjung 9 of Phortse, Mr. Palden Namgye.

129. Visitor numbers are not available for Phortse. However the following table shows the trend in the northern part of Solukhumbu, where the worlds highest peak Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) is situated.

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Visitors to Northern Solukhumbu	13,766	19,300	21,396	19,063	13,781

* Up to September, 2006, TRPAP

9.5 Lumbini Village Tour

130. Tourism in Lumbini is centred on the three square mile Lumbini garden, a pilgrimage to the holy birthplace of Lord Buddha. Visitors come mainly from Thailand, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, China and neighbouring India, as well as Nepal. There are sufficient accommodation, food and transportation facilities. Several comfortable hotels and monasteries are available in Lumbini, but the visitor stay is very short, often less than one day. In order to add value to this world-class destination, TRPAP has attempted to introduce a new tour to the surrounding villages.

131. The TRPAP village trail offers a unique experience of a rural Terai experience that confronts the issue of poverty alleviation through tourism. TRPAP has supported the LDT to train local guides, replacing the imported guides of Indian origin who were taking tourists around Lumbini. The local guides have been instrumental in motivating tourists to go beyond the Buddhist sites and visit the seven Programme VDCs. To develop these VDCs for tourism, a traditional Tharu museum has been constructed in

a Muslim village, and souvenir making using natural materials such as banana fibre, local grasses and clay sculptures is demonstrated for tourists. These new destinations offer native Tharu and Biraha culture, and natural sites such as wetlands for bird watching, historic ponds and village farms. Villagers are excited to receive tourists and offer hospitality. Local products are gradually replacing souvenir items imported from Indian.

132. TRPAP has contributed to developing a circuit around different Buddhist sites in Nawalparasi, and Kapilvastu, directly related with Lord Buddha, helping to spread benefits from pilgrimage tours. LDT's information centre, which is also supported by TRPAP, provides displays and information about all of these new ventures. As a result, visitor flows to Lumbini has been noticeably increasing over the years as follows:

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Visitors to Lumbini	9,036	28,053	37,892	39,792	29,595

9.6 Dolpa Experience Circuit

133. Dolpa, the land of Bon Po, has many exquisite products, but tourism patterns tend to focus on the lower Dolpa circuit and the prime attraction of Lake Phoksundo. This magnificent lake was featured in the famous Oscar-nominated film "Caravan" ("Himalaya") and is of great interest to international visitors. In order to spread the tourism benefits, Dolpa Experience Circuit runs through Juphal, Dunai, Lingdo, Laisicap, Nawarpani, Dho, Numala Bhanjyang, Bangala Bhanjyang, Yak, Kharka, Phoksundo, Raich, Chhepka, Sangta, Suligaad, Dunai, and Juphal. This 15-day trek passes through the spectacular high Himalayan valley of Dho Tarap. If lucky, one might sight snow leopard and musk deer. This hidden valley offers scenic landscapes, and unspoiled local traditions and culture.

134. Recent visitor numbers to Dolpa are minimal due to its remoteness and the adverse security situation.

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Visitors to Dolpa	N/A	119	132	254	283

* Up to September, 2006, TRPAP

Dolpa Heritage Sites

135. The Dolpa Heritage Sites trek features a true taste of local life with many monastery (*gompa*) tours. In this predominantly Tibetan Buddhist area there is at least one monastery in every settlement and over 130 in the region. Some of the oldest *gompas* in the Himalaya can be visited in Saldang, Dho, Chharka and Bhijer, some being over 700 years old. Northern Dolpa is Buddhist while the south is Hindu influenced, although both religions coexist in many places. The circuit starts at Juphal airport and goes through Dunai, Dho, Saldang, Phoksundo and Dunai to end at Juphal again. Covering both upper and lower Dolpa and passing through Dho Tarap, this circuit can take up to 20 days or longer.

Shorter Treks in Dolpa

136. There are a few shorter one-week treks in Dolpa such as the Sundaha Nature Trek (Juphal-Dunai-Sundaha-Sahartara-Dunai-Juphal) which features good views, Himalayan peaks and colourful rhododendrons in the spring. Another exciting one-week route starts from Juphal to Lake Phoksundo and back. The third Sahartara

Tour is named after the campsite near Dunai, which is an opportunity to experience a Magar community with a unique Kaike language following lowland culture.

9.7 Pathibhara and Limbu Cultural Trails, Taplejung

137. Most established trekking packages in Taplejung focus on the conservation area and its main attraction, Mt Kangchenjunga. Pathibhara (3,794m) is a popular pilgrimage destination. TRPAP has tried to leverage on its established visitor flows by introducing some new cultural heritage products in the region. Tourism in Kangchenjunga has been severely constrained due to security issues over the past years, so the success of these new trails is yet to be proven. The new products are in place and the communities sensitized for when tourism flows return. The following table shows the visitors status in Taplejung

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Visitors to Taplejung	576	648	472	246	184

* Up to September, 2006, TRPAP

138. Both Hindus and Buddhists worship the Pathibhara Devi shrine with equal reverence. The usual Pathibhara pilgrimage takes four or five days and is best visited during March to June or September to November. The forest along the trail offers wildlife, birds, flowers and butterflies, with views of the Kangchenjunga range.

139. The journey to Pathibhara starts from Suketar (2,840 m), the airport site of Taplejung and about a two-hour walk from Phungling Bazaar. From Suketar the Pathibhara-Limbu Cultural Trail is about 8-10 hours walk passing through Deurali, Ramitedanda, Chhatedhunga, Bhalugaunda, Phedi and finally to Pathibhara. There are food and lodging facilities, and basic pilgrim accommodation is available at the shrine.

Limbu (Sewaro) Cultural Trail

140. The Limbu people are the dominant ethnic group in the lower regions of the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area in Taplejung. A new trekking route between Kabeli and Khaksewa offers a unique Limbu cultural and traditional lifestyle experience through beautiful countryside, staying and eating with local families. Passing through thick cardamom forests, the trail has panoramic views south over the lowland Terai. The six to seven day trek starts from Phungling and passes through Suketar, Lalikharka, Simbu, Kande Bhanjyang, Phungphung, Phumpe, ending at Mamankhe. From here there is an option of either joining the main Kangchenjunga Trail, or retracing the route back to Phungling.

9. In summary:

- **TRPAP has developed new sustainable tourism pilot products in the six districts. These are designed to expand the established tourism patterns in order to bring benefits from tourism to new and disadvantaged communities. These products are of a style and scale suitable for involving local people, and have been selected in response to domestic and international market demand. The insurgency has constrained the immediate success of some new products, but new attractions are in place for when tourism flows return to Nepal.**
- **The Chitwan Chepang Hills Trail is an easy four to seven day trek in the middle hills, designed to complement the popular wildlife safari experience in CNP and extend visitor stay from Sauraha. Features include the culture of the nomadic Chepang people, forest-based hunters and gatherers, Home-stays and cultural performances are available.**
- **The Pikey and Dudhkunda Trekking Trails in Solukhumbu are jointly promoted by the DDC, TAAN, and NTB as interesting cultural and scenic alternatives to the established Everest Base Camp route. The route features the Thuptenchoeling and Chiwong monasteries, and Sherpa culture.**
- **The THT has been successfully developed in Rasuwa along with home-stays, cultural programmes and village tours in order to expand tourism patterns from the usual LNP circuits. Tourism is introduced to the scenic village of Gatlang with the GLCC. The Nagthali viewpoint and Tatopani hot springs are now on the tourist map. Briddhim has won ecotourism awards for village tours and home-stays.**
- **Phortse has now emerged as an attractive ecotourism destination. A micro-hydro plant provides electricity, and access from Nala has improved with an upgraded trail. The numbers of visitors are increasing and the local people are also rising.**
- **TRPAP's innovations in Dolpa include the 15-day Dolpa Experience Circuit to the attractive Lake Phoksundo, and some shorter options from Dunai.**
- **The new TRPAP Pathibhara and Limbu Cultural Trails in Taplejung are yet to prove their success, probably due to the security situation in the district.**

10. Tourist Information, Marketing and Promotion

141. TRPAP undertakes publicity and promotional activities at both national and international levels. Several familiarisation trips for trek and travel agents, media persons, government officials, donors and other personalities have been organised to the six districts during the Programme period. Providing effective market linkages, access to travel industry networks, and effective publicity is recognised as often being a great challenge for community-based rural products. Since 2005 TRPAP has given focus to marketing and promotion, once the new tourism products were ready to be promoted and when the country's security situation had improved.

10.1 Travel Industry Marketing

142. TRPAP's marketing and promotion activities included targeting the Kathmandu based private sector, the organisation of agent familiarisation trips and visiting media programmes, production of publicity material and websites, and promotion at national and international exhibitions and travel fairs. Institutional linkages through the NTB and private sector arrangements will ensure sustainability of these efforts.

10.2 Community Awareness

143. TRPAP community campaigns create awareness of tourism opportunities in rural village communities in the TRPAP area. Women and disadvantaged groups are often bypassed from access to information due to weak social ties. TRPAP's initiatives provided tourism awareness and related information by organising a number of events at community level. These included international day campaigns (such as women's day, HIV/AIDS day, tourism day and environmental day), drama in schools and colleges, direct dialogue between SMs and the community, posters, pamphlets, radio and television, and exhibitions.

Clay sculptures, a good business, Rupandehi

A sculpture group in Bhagawanpur, Rupandehi became aware of marketing opportunities for clay-made sculptures in Lumbini through a TRPAP exhibition programme. Fifteen households are now making and selling clay sculptures. Besides Lumbini, their products sell in Kathmandu.

Mr. Shiva Shankar Kurmi, a sculptor, is happy with TRPAP for promoting his skill in clay-made sculpture, now his major source of livelihood: *"I came to know that sculptures that have a good market in Lumbini came from Benares in India. I realised there was a market opportunity so began sculpting work. In 2003, TRPAP motivated us to form our own sculpture FG of 15 households. We received training on sculpture and tourism development. Sculptures used to be made only for worshipping Durga in the Dashain festival in our village. We had to learn the process of dyeing and colouring the sculptures, quality painting and preparing clay for sculpting. The group now makes 250 sculptures a week and we get a good income, selling them in Lumbini and Kathmandu. We were illiterate. Now, we are able to understand the way an enterprise operates and the way we need to show courtesy with tourists. We have started a group savings scheme to expand our business"*.

"Women in our village are also aware of self-development. They learned the importance of cleanliness in houses, children and among themselves. They began to wear clean dresses. They were shy at first and did not want to attend training, even when we men encouraged them. Our local SM talked to the household women, and they started to attend training courses and meetings. Now they enjoy the training, and are no longer shy to talk to outsiders," says Shiva.

10.3 Community Exchange and Study Tours

144. Exchange and study programmes have empowered community members. They have a new confidence to confront issues and manage relations within and beyond their villages, such as with government officials and development agencies. These exchanges enable a shared learning process between different community initiatives in different VDCs. They encourage local groups to collaborate with each other and to mutually learn through constant support for community-to-community exchanges. TRPAP has supported local groups to preserve and value local cultural heritage by extending support to buy traditional dresses and musical instruments.

145. In Nepal there are some excellent examples of community-level rural tourism. TRPAP conducted several exchange and study visits with local people from the newly emerging tourism areas in order that they could be familiarised and motivated by seeing how tourism really works. Organising these observation tours, especially for illiterate women and men, proved to be one of the most effective tools for teaching village tourism techniques to new communities.

Lajem Phuti breaks with tradition, Dolpa

In Lawan village, Dolpa, householders traditionally maintain their roof and mud walls only once a year on the eve of the Chaiti festival. But Ms. Lajem Phuti Rokaya of Ward 9, has just broken with tradition. The DDC and TRPAP study tours to tourism destinations in Pokhara, Ghandruk, Sauraha Chitwan and Lumbini motivated her to look after her house more regularly. She first applied her new ideas to herself, before sharing them with her fellow community members.

Lajem says, "I wanted to teach my community. But although my neighbours say my teaching is worth following; actually no one followed my advice." She adds: "Even if not many people are interested to copy me, I shall anyway do it myself. If I set an example by maintaining my house and yard, I am sure they will all learn some day. I have now taught all my family members about cleanliness and hygiene." These days, Lajem always looks clean and happy. She strongly believes that one day soon her village will be a cleaner place, and hopes that many tourists will be attracted to visit her village.

146. Observation and study tours were arranged by TRPAP to expose local people to the successful village tourism destinations of Sirubari in Syanja, Ghandruk in Kaski and Madhubasa in Dhanusa. Many useful aspects of rural tourism were learned through these visits to established products, including home-stay management, looking after tourist sites, guided village walks, linkages with support agencies, using local customs for welcoming visitors, and rotational systems to ensure equality for each household. As a result, they are able to relate these lessons to their own village for tourism.

147. TRPAP has encouraged a constant process of exchange between communities, sharing of experiences between communities first locally, then outside the community. For example, some community members from Nunthala were taken to Ghandruk on an observation tour. They learned about tourism products and management in the busy village of Ghandruk. Upon return, they concentrated on developing similar tourism products in their own village. They identified cultural programmes as having good tourism potential. Initiated by a local schoolteacher, dance training is now being given to local students. Local tradition is preserved and valued by Magar, Rai and Sherpa cultural performances using authentic folk music.

10. 4 Multiple-Use Visitor Centres and Village Museums

148. To disseminate information to visiting tourists, TRPAP has focussed on improving existing visitor centres and establishing new ones in potential locations. The emphasis is to expand the functions of these visitor information centres to make them as useful as possible, including as village museums, sales outlets for local produce and handicrafts. The idea is that these MUVs are managed by the community, or through a joint mechanism with government and local organisations.

149. There are improved visitor information centres at Dhunche and Junbesi, which are managed by LNP and local community respectively. The LDT visitor centre in Rupandehi has been upgraded by TRPAP and attracted nearly 50,000 visitors in 2006, up from 9,000 in 2002. The Lumbini visitor centre not only provides information concerning Lord Buddha and his birthplace, but also helps visitors with information on the new community-based products, such as the village walking tours and handicraft demonstrations started by TRPAP.

150. TRPAP has built a new MUV at Monju at the entrance to SNP in Sherpa architectural style. Formerly a park office and registration point for trekkers and mountaineers entering the park, its functions are now expanded to include visitor information, brochure distribution, Solukhumbu displays from the Park and Buffer Zone and the sale of local products. An outlet local souvenir sales and audio-visual facilities are planned. Two local girls are being trained to run this locally decorated centre, wearing Sherpani dress. The Centre is jointly managed by SNP, BZMC and the community.

151. As museums can be useful for showcasing and reinforcing pride in traditional cultures, several local village museums are being developed by TRPAP as part of MUVs. A Limbu Museum and Tamang Museum are underway in Taplejung and Rasuwa. The construction of both buildings is complete, and local organisers are collecting antiques and other contents. A community-based management group runs the village museums. The size of these committees varies according to the VDCs, ethnicity, and social organisations. For example, a 13-member committee is proposed in Rasuwa. A Tharu Museum and handicraft sales outlet in Sonbarsa VDC, Rupandehi, is proposed to revive and showcase the local Tharu culture. Another museum and sales outlet is being built at Madhubani VDC in Rupandehi. Living demonstrations are planned, with local people making handicrafts from local *mooj* grass, bamboo and clay sculptures. A community-managed Khaling Rai museum is under construction with TRPAP support in Solukhumbu, displaying local culture, musical instruments and traditional dress.

10. In summary:

- TRPAP marketing activities with Nepal-based and international travel industry include familiarisation trips for agents, media, government officials and donors; the production of collateral including a website, printed and audio-visual publicity material; trade exhibitions and travel fairs; and strong ongoing linkages with the STDU and NTB.
- Community tourism awareness campaigns and interactions have helped villagers understand how tourism opportunities can improve their lifestyles. Many have started small enterprises and home-stays.
- TRPAP exchange and study tours for local people to observe community-based tourism products in other parts of Nepal are a very successful learning tool. They inspired and motivated even illiterate participants to get involved with tourism and learn how to present their culture as a tourism product
- Community-managed multiple-use visitor centres in selected locations are upgraded to include visitor information, displays and sales outlets. TRPAP helped with equipment, management and staff training. In some key destinations, village museums in the multiple-use visitor centres showcase and build pride in traditional cultures.
- The local people in Shaktikhor are excited to have received support from TRPAP for establishment of Chepang museum and teaching them about saving and credit schemes and running home-stays.

11. Summary of Lessons Learned

Introduction

152. It is important that the lessons learned from TRPAP are shared locally, nationally and internationally.

153. TRPAP has demonstrated that livelihoods can be improved and poverty reduces by the community's involvement in local tourism development activities. A participatory approach is more likely to be sustainable than one imposed from the outside. There is sufficient enthusiasm amongst villagers in the TRPAP areas to embrace tourism, providing initiatives are of a style and scale that suits their abilities and skills.

154. Rural community development such as health, water, bridges, trails, power supplies etc. and sustainable small tourism businesses such as home-stays, guesthouses, teashops, guide services, handicrafts etc. must be complementary and undertaken simultaneously. TRPAP did not engage in focused market-led tourism product development early enough in the process.

155. TRPAP has confirmed the existing belief that with conventional tourism the majority of benefits are generally retained in the central and city areas, with only a minor share reaching the villages. However, by using pro-poor sustainable tourism strategies and the inclusive planning model adopted by TRPAP, local communities can become meaningfully engaged in tourism, including women and disadvantaged groups.

156. Meaningful community participation and social mobilisation empowered villagers and harnessed support for TRPAP activities. This approach enabled TRPAP to continue to perform even during the most difficult days of the insurgency facing civil unrest and security problems. It is a credit to TRPAP managers and stakeholders that the Programme did not collapse.

157. A common thread was found in all TRPAP districts. Due to TRPAP tourism activities, beneficiaries experienced growth in their household incomes, diversity of revenue sources, more employment opportunities, and increased self-esteem and self-confidence resulting in an improved ability to work with government officials.

158. Local villagers are more comfortable embracing small projects that fit with their aspirations and often with their traditional occupations. These include the construction and maintenance of trek trails; fixing sign posts; constructing buildings in local styles for visitor centres; improving drinking water and sanitation facilities; and making alternative energy schemes such as micro-hydro and biogas plants. They need skills training, microfinance and help with organisation.

159. A lack of sufficiently strong tourism advice early in TRPAP implementation has hampered tourism planning, particularly with pilot products. The result has been the development of some small businesses without sound tourism market or product rationale. TRPAP would have created more flourishing tourism small enterprises, and avoided some disappointments and raised expectations from beneficiaries had this weakness been recognised early on. The lesson is to ensure enough experienced tourism professional and responsible private sector input at the early planning stages so that the realities of market demand and tourism flows can be matched to the aspirations of the local communities to create successful tourism businesses.

160. TRPAP has made great efforts to identify the most deserving poor and STGs, and to provide them access to resources and tourism opportunities. However this was not always easy to implement. Direct tourism interventions are not always suited to the poorest and least educated members of the community. For example, home-stays did not suit their small houses, and credit facilities were benefiting them little.

161. TRPAP is partnership funded by DFID, SNV and UNDP with the executing agencies being MoCTCA, NTB and DNPWC. DFID provided 80 percent of the funds, SNV contributed only technical assistance, and UNDP managed the five-year Programme. Although in general this is a successful combination, some communication and coordination challenges were faced by clashes in culture between these various organisations. Credit must be given to the TRPAP team for managing such a complex project.

Pro-poor policy interventions

162. Poverty alleviation is a declared priority in Nepal's national tourism. TRPAP has been able to mainstream the pro-poor tourism theory by developing a sustainable tourism policy for adoption by MoCTCA. In order to reduce poverty in Nepal and help economic expansion of the sector, the new policy seeks to enshrine pro-poor sustainable tourism strategies throughout all aspects of Nepal tourism

163. The six districts have recognised tourism as a core economic sector. For the very first time, PDTDMPs were prepared through wider consultation with the community and included in the District Periodic Plans.

164. By adopting a participatory people-oriented approach, communities can identify their immediate and long-term goals and work towards achieving them. APPA exercises proved very successful not only as a planning tool but for social empowerment and capacity building to enable self-sufficient local-level planning and implementation. Community-based tourism is well suited for underdeveloped economies like Nepal.

165. TRPAP is hampered by inadequate government policy support in some instances. In addition to security and safety constraints in Dolpa and Taplejung, there are no direct air services from Kathmandu, airfares are high and special trek permits are still required for these remote areas. Foreigners are still restricted from visiting Thuman and Timure VDCs in Rasuwa. To achieve satisfactory results the lesson is that the Programme objectives need to be supported by all government departments.

Operational model

166. TRPAP has proven that to achieve the sustainable development of tourism a programme needs to focus on institutional, legal and governance reforms. Community tourism programmes need a sound institutional framework within which the poor and underprivileged can exercise their rights to act, to organize, to make demands, and to claim resources from public funds. Having an independent, relatively empowered, community-based presence to ensure that the community mobilisation is sustained is important. This can be provided by partners such as NGOs, COs, private sector and local government.

167. The active involvement of stakeholders at the community, district and central level is essential for maintaining sensible backward and forward tourism linkages,

and for promoting ownership of projects. This can only be achieved through representative institutional arrangements and flexible procedural formalities, as has emerged through TRPAP. As tourism is increasingly an integral part of NP management, an institutional mechanism is needed embedded in the DNPWC administrative structure, with a dedicated Tourism Unit in the central and relevant park headquarters

168. The key to the institutional model is social mobilization that unites and empowers the villagers to form a grassroots CO. The COs provide the forum for the poor and discriminated groups to raise their voices. TRPAP has given technical support through VTAs and SMs who have championed meaningful community participation. However, a lesson learned is that ongoing capacity building and training is needed until villagers are confident enough with their tourism activities.

169. The facilitation roles of VTAs and SMs, trained in social and institutional development and village tourism processes, are essential to local success. They help COs and STDCs be sensitive to gender rights, and to make their plans accordingly. SMs are crucial to organize all field level activities and VTAs for supervision. Retaining them within the DDCs after TRPAP ends is therefore essential to ensure the sustainability and build on current successes. SMs were recruited and remunerated at government levels for easy adoption as DDC staff in the post-TRPAP period.

170. In a democratic setting like Nepal, the TRPAP experiment of bringing together an illiterate community with local government succeeded in creating a bond and feeling of ownership. This was embodied in the innovative model of joint signature for withdrawal of funds. The formation of a separate unit, the STDS, within the DDC demonstrates true decentralisation. The community like the increased role of the DDC in tourism and expect it to continue after TRPAP. Due to precarious security and weak tourism flows, the STDS in Taplejung and Dolpa are not as effective as the other districts.

171. Although TRPAP was able to work unhindered during the insurgency because of its people-centred programmes and locally recruited staff, the lack of local elections due to the political situation raises questions of ownership and sustainability in the future, when new politicians are elected to DDCs.

172. Sustainable implementation of rural tourism programmes requires the institutionalisation of "social inclusion". A strong central institution is needed to link district and village government bodies, tourism entrepreneurs and local service providers. TRPAP has convinced NTB to have the STDU, and DNPWC to have a Tourism Unit for this purpose. As of now, however, the STDU is still under-resourced to take responsibility for promoting rural tourism products, and establishing links donors. The STDU requires considerable strengthening.

173. The STDU, STDS and STDC are crucial to establishing ongoing and sustainable linkages between the central government, local bodies and the COs. The institutional design therefore has to be legally assured within government regulations. This has yet to be achieved by TRPAP.

Fund mobilisation

174. TRPAP has created the IDF to finance grants for tourism and socio-economic infrastructure developments. These funds were used with and monitored by the COs, and STDCs / BZUCs, thereby reducing costs and ensuring payments are transparent

and free of corruption. In the post-TRPAP phase when resources are not so plentiful, care must be taken that these funds are not captured by self-interested local leaders and that ownership and management responsibilities of these investments are maintained.

175. One of the greatest needs of villagers is access to financial resources for new enterprises. The TRPAP VCF has been very successful and is replicable in other parts of Nepal. It provides soft loans to CO members identified on a wellbeing ranking during APPAs, and using social collateral. Entrepreneurship training is given before extending a loan. Small sums are extended for operating lodges and restaurants, producing handicrafts, poultry farming, livestock rearing, milk production, vegetable growing, fruit farming and other ventures, often to poor, women, and disadvantaged communities. The STDC with the DDCs and VDCs are responsible for these transactions.

176. The VCF is a revolving fund. Over 70 percent of the loans disbursed are already repaid, a good success rate achieved by community peer pressure. To ensure continued success in the post-TRPAP phase, it is important that the linkages between COs and STDCs are continued

177. No VCF loans should be extended without rigorous assessment of market demand and potential profitability. Rural villagers cannot be expected to understand international and domestic tourism market demand or preferences, and will rely on linkages with the STDU and NTB for input.

Social mobilisation

178. TRPAP VTAs and SMs have invested their time and resources in forming social capital in rural villages during a period of fragile security in Nepal, and they have soundly succeeded. TRPAP has reached needy people, and formed well-represented COs, FGs, BZUGs, BZUCs and STDCs. The social mobilisation aspects of TRPAP, including TEAP and APPA has provide some excellent replicable models.

179. Over 50 percent of CO members are women and a significant number of members come from STGs. In this exemplary model of community-based approaches every segment has an opportunity for discussion and decision-making of key issues. Women and disadvantaged people have had the chance to be trained in leadership and organisational management.

180. Women groups have contributed labour for community centres that are used as learning centres, cultural performances, community meetings and social work. The GLCC has succeeded in generating tourism to this remote part of Rasuwa. Once tourism grows and local people develop their own home-stays and lodges, it will fully turn into a cultural centre and museum.

181. TRPAP has managed to overcome the fact that communities are usually not homogenous entities so the smooth running of COs is not assured. Some villages need greater attention in the form of technical help and financial support. There is flexibility of each CO to make its own rules.

182. TRPAP has focused on gender mainstreaming. Rural women have been made aware of tourism opportunities by involving them in celebrating international events, taking them on observation tours, involving them in wider forums, and providing skills and business training. Self-confidence has been gained by women

and illiterates. They are no longer shy to speak in public and can earn money indirectly from transportation, handicrafts and produce.

183. Despite some women being able to transform their livelihoods and speak out confidently as a result of TRPAP trainings, their influence at village meetings is still often negligible. In rural Nepal, men are yet to be convinced about women's role in leadership and business, and are reluctant to share household duties.

Tourism Infrastructure Development

184. In order to access rural tourism products, it is necessary to upgrade and maintain roads, trails, bridges and other essential infrastructure. These improvements not only help tourists, but also greatly ease the livelihoods of local people. For tourism infrastructure development, TRPAP joined with GoN, local bodies, NGOs and communities in the six districts. This partnership approach successfully generated a feeling of ownership amongst local users.

185. These partnerships ranged from upgrading or renovating access roads and trails; creating tourism facilities; repairing religious sites; building public utilities, social infrastructure and environmental conservation facilities, and alternative energy systems. This implementation model proved to be flexible, transparent, responsive, and cost effective.

Capacity Building and Skills Training

186. Engaging local people in new tourism activities starts with tourism awareness and then requires capacity building and skill training. When they are attracted to adapting their skills for tourism, training helps them to understand what tourists need, how to arrange finances, present and market their products. Therefore capacity building and skills training is a core activity to promote rural tourism. It was considered by many villagers as being TRPAP's most important contribution.

187. Training enabled local people to take VCF loans to start enterprises and other income generating activities that helped the family feed and send children to school. TRPAP's training inputs had to be flexible to individual community needs, so the lesson is that no specific model could fit all settings.

188. Training courses covered aspects of business, management, organisation, health, language, agriculture, environment, alternative energy, handicrafts, marketing and tourism services. As a result new small enterprises were started by local people. These included selling fruit and vegetables, poultry farming, convenience shops, lodges, restaurants, and a range of handicrafts.

Tourism and the Environment

189. Tourist impacts on natural resources and cultural heritage have to be controlled, especially in fragile areas and NP. To balance the positive benefits of tourism to rural areas, threats that need to be managed include waste disposal, deforestation, and pressure on biodiversity. Tourism and environmental planning is the key to balancing the needs of the local community with the protection of the resource.

190. TRPAP prepared the SNPMT with the DNPWC, integrating conservation and tourism management to maintain this high-profile World Heritage Site as an

outstanding tourist destination and world-renowned model of ecotourism, through partnership between key stakeholders.

191. To help local people value their vital resources, TRPAP organized TEAPs extensively throughout the districts. These awareness programmes were developed in Nepal and have proven successful in explaining basic benefits and impacts of tourism to remote communities. Settlements are cleaner as villagers are mobilised through counselling on health, hygiene and sanitation, and students planted tree saplings. Booklets and posters were produced and distributed. TEAPs are considered one of the most successful TRPAP outcomes.

192. Other environmental improvements include improved cooking stoves that save fuel wood and improving household conditions, and the construction of local dumping sites, incinerators, rubbish bins, and public toilets. Private houses were also encouraged to have toilets and good sanitation system.

New Tourism Products

193. TRPAP is an ambitious experiment in mainstreaming pro-poor tourism. Whilst the project document captured many of the main issues, greater emphasis could have been placed on demonstrating successful sustainable tourism business models.

194. The downturns and fluctuations in international tourism to Nepal during the TRPAP period created a very difficult atmosphere for new tourism products. Visitor arrivals dropped from 490,000 in 1999 to a low of 275,000 in 2001 and 375,000 in 2005. The creation of new tourism products was difficult, particularly those trying to establish themselves in new destinations away from traditional tourism areas.

195. In order to retain the confidence and enthusiasm of the communities, it is important that new products at least show signs of delivering tangible returns and living up to expectations. This has been hard to achieve in some areas due to diminishing visitor flows in response to Nepal's overall political situation. Some of the disappointment could have been mitigated with less ambitious product design, with more attention to market demand and existing tourism patterns.

196. The local culture emerges as being a key product in presenting and interpreting rural tourism. The beneficiaries can be women and deprived people, with awareness and skills training. The exchange and study programmes to successful tourism destinations proved useful in providing confidence and motivation to start new tourism initiatives in remote areas.

197. While assessing the performance of new TRPAP products it should be taken into consideration that the Programme was designed during a buoyant tourism period in Nepal, and the sites were selected during a time when very different conditions prevailed. Flexibility by donors and managers needs be retained in order to adjust Programme initiatives to fluctuating conditions.

Tourism information, marketing and promotion

198. The promotion of the new rural tourism products was undertaken on local, national and international levels in close cooperation with NTB. TRPAP arranged a series of marketing activities that included the production of a range of booklets, brochures posters, audio-visuals, a website and other publicity material, agent and media familiarisation trips, and travel exhibitions and trade fairs.

199. Tourism promotion was achieved by the organisation of local events, interactions, drama, and study visits to tourism areas with successful community-based tourism. These observation tours contributed greatly to changing attitudes of local people towards cleanliness of their homes and neighbourhood, and motivating them to initiate new ventures to support tourism in their areas.

200. Whilst some new flows have been established, there has been a general lack of strong tourism markets. This is partly due to the prevailing insurgency situation in Nepal during most of the TRPAP period, and poor tourism planning in the early stages of implementation. More effort could have been made to create successful models for products to reach markets by involving the private sector tourism industry earlier in the product planning process.

201. Developing new tourism products in areas with no established flows is extremely difficult and presents formidable marketing and promotional challenges. This is especially relevant in the context of Nepal's geographically constrained tourism patterns. Linking new rural tourism businesses with Kathmandu tour operators should have been an essential part of any new product development process.