

Part Two

Case Study of Syaphrubesi, Langtang National Park

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is one of the most prominent mountain peaks in one of the several mountain ranges closest to Kathmandu. It is a popular spot for foreign tourists to go to the sacred lake of Gosainkund. The lake is accessible by motor vehicle almost throughout the year.

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the accessibility factor is important for many visitors who do not have time to wait for the road to be repaired. It takes a relatively longer time to travel to the mountain and out of the valley. The lake occupies a special place here as it is the main point of view for visitors. The lake is a limited time while in Nepal. Other trekking areas in the mountains are relatively more accessible and generally require about two weeks to trek.

The Langtang National Park (LNP) includes both Free Independent Trekking (FIT) and group treks, while trekking to Annapurna and Manaslu where only guided treks are permitted. Besides getting a trekking permit for a fee (Rs 650) per visitor, a separate entrance fee to the park has also to be purchased (Rs 650). The Park headquarters are in Blench, Syaphrubesi, Rasuwa district. The Park is spread out across the three districts of Rasuwa, Syaphrubesi, and Nuwakot. Rasuwa district covers the largest portion of the Park in terms of land area.

Objective and Methodology

The main objective of this study is to explore the tourism potential of the Langtang National Park. The study is a case study of the Park. It began almost two decades ago. The study has not been

OVERVIEW OF TOURISM IN LANGTANG NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Trekking is one of the most prominent mountain tourism activities in Nepal. Most trekking takes place in one of the several mountain protected areas. Langtang National Park (LNP) is closest to Kathmandu and, thus, the Park is the third largest trekking destination inside Nepal for foreign trekkers. In addition, many Nepalese make the annual pilgrimage to the sacred lake of Gosain Kunda each year during May/June. LNP is accessible by motor vehicle almost throughout the year, except for a few weeks during the monsoon season when segments of the road are washed out by the torrential rain. This accessibility factor is important to many visitors who do not have time to visit other areas that take a relatively longer time in terms of organization and actual trekking. Thus, LNP occupies a special place from a trekking tourism point of view for visitors who have limited time while in Nepal. Other trekking areas in the mountains are relatively inaccessible and generally require about two weeks to trek.

Visitors to LNP include both Free Independent Trekkers (FITs) and group trekkers, unlike those going to Mustang and Manaslu where only group trekkers are permitted. Besides obtaining a trekking permit for a fee (Rs 650 per visitor), a separate entrance fee to the National Park has also to be purchased (Rs 650). The Park headquarters are in Dunche, the capital of Rasuwa district. The Park is spread out across the three districts of Rasuwa, Sindhupalchok, and Nuwakot. Rasuwa district contains the largest portion of the Park in terms of land area.

Objectives and Methodology

Although tourism in this Park began almost two decades ago, tourism has not been planned or organized. Local people have opened their own outlets to serve tourists' needs for accommodation, food, and portering. Over time, negative impacts have been witnessed, some of which are attributable to tourism (Lama et al. 1996). In 1994, through the initiatives of HMG and UNDP, a Partnership for Quality Tourism Project (PQT) was introduced in the small village of Syaphrubesi to address some of the tourism issues. This present study is primarily concerned with an assessment of the impacts of the PQT and with basically evaluating how such attempts can contribute to both the promotion of tourism and sustainable local economic and environmental development.

Interviews were conducted with key persons in Syaphrubesi in order to understand the situation prior to the PQT project and to assess the changes that have been brought about as a result of the project. The study team spent a few days in Syaphrubesi in December 1996 and discussed the key issues and concerns with various lodges and their owners. About 50 per cent of the lodges (out of 20) were visited.

Setting

Situated in the central Himalayan region, Langtang National Park (LNP) is the second largest of Nepal's eight national parks covering an area of 1,710 sq. km. The Park was gazetted in 1976 as Nepal's second national park after the Royal Chitwan National Park. It is bordered by the Tibetan Autonomous Region in the north and east, the Trishuli /Bhote Koshi rivers in the west, and the Bhote/ Sun Koshi Rivers in the southeast. The southern border lies about 32km north of Kathmandu. The Park covers parts of Rasuwa (56%), Sindhupalchok (38%), and Nuwakot (6%) districts. Its newly designated buffer zone extends up to five kilometres along its southern and western boundaries. Elevations range from 1,000m to as high as 7,245m above sea level. Langtang Lirung (7,245 m), Dorje Lhakpa (6,983m), and a number of smaller peaks are the main peaks inside this Park. The Park supports life zones from upper tropical forest to alpine. LNP is relatively accessible and also offers comparative Himalayan scenery and hence is quite popular.

LNP is the most accessible of the mountain national parks in Nepal. It is accessible all year round by a combination of motor transport and trekking. A motorable road constructed in 1985 reaches Syaphrubesi from Kathmandu via Trishuli within a five to six hour drive. The condition of the road is fairly poor. From Dhunche (the headquarters of Rasuwa district), Bharkhu, and Syaphrubesi, tourists commence walking into the Langtang Valley or up to Gosain Kunda. Gosain Kunda, a famous pilgrimage site, is a lake located above 3,500m high. There are two ways of reaching the park: the first is by taking a 125km bus ride from Kathmandu leading to Dhunche and a second alternative route is from Sundarijal to Gosain Kunda over a 5,122m pass. This route is not recommended during the winter season (late December to late February). A telephone service is now available to the general public in a number of villages in the Park and buffer zone areas, including Dhunche, Kutmsang, Melamchi-gyang, Tarke-gyang, and Syaphrubesi (Lama et al. 1996).

Socio Demography

There is no consistent record of population residing within or depending on the Park resources. The 1977 LNP Management Plan estimated that there were 846 households in some 45 villages located within the Park. Yonzon (1993) estimated a total population of some 19,000 people residing within or using the park resources. Sagun (1995) reported that 2,244 households with a total of 10,600 people lived within the Park. There are altogether 27 Village Development Committees (VDCs) that are partially or wholly included in LNP (Sagun 1995).

Ethnic groups residing within the park area consist of *Lama/Tamang(s)*, *Sherpa*, *Bhotia*, and *Yemlu*. At lower elevations, *Gurung*, *Brahmin*, and *Chhetri(s)* are found. Buddhism

is the predominant religion in the area. The people of Dhunche, Bharkhu, Syaphrubesi, Langtang, and all those from the Thulo Syaphru to the Helumbu area worship deities and spirits associated with nature. *Nhhara*, *Dhukpa Cheju*, *Hyulba Cheju*, *Chombul*, and *Torpe* are some of the important Buddhist festivals celebrated in the area. *Tamang* people, who were originally horse traders (*Ta* means horse and *mang* means traders in Tibetan dialects), are present in most villages of the Park and constitute the majority of the population. The *Tamang*(s), who depend predominantly on agriculture, also work as porters and guides for trekking and mountaineering parties and operate lodges and tea houses to supplement their meagre farm incomes.

Literacy rates are relatively low among the large majority of people living inside the Park as well as the proposed buffer zone. This is fairly true of most northern areas of Nepal. Education of girls is a relatively recent phenomenon. Many young and middle-aged men and women work in the tourist lodges.

Economy and Livelihood

Agriculture, animal husbandry, and tourism are the main sources of livelihood for the people residing in LNP. Some people also earn supplemental incomes through commerce and trade by producing handicrafts or household items such as baskets and mats from forest resources. The major crops cultivated in the region are potatoes; land barley at high altitudes and maize, millet, wheat, and paddy in the middle hills and lower areas. Lodge operators generally return to their villages during off-season to work on their farms. Yaks, sheep, cows, chauri, and goats are the most common livestock owned and are important sources of cash income in the upper Langtang Valley. In the Thulo Syaphru Sing *Gombha* area households can sell milk from yaks, cows, and *chauri* to the government-run dairy factories. The estimated livestock population of the area is about 29,575. The livestock numbers have been increasing in the area. Although the DNWNC restricts the livestock population inside the Park, enforcement has not been effective and alternatives have not been provided.

Tourism has become an important source of income to the Park and buffer zone residents. Almost every household in the LNP Valley is directly or indirectly involved in tourism, although tourism is a seasonal business (approximately six months in a year). Income-generating opportunities, particularly for those living in the remote regions such as upper Langtang Valley, were limited to collection of non-timber forest products for the production of medicines, baskets, and so on, as the main source of income. With the establishment of the Park, collection of natural resources from within the Park has been restricted and, in turn, has reduced income-generating opportunities. However, tourism does not provide employment opportunities all year round and to all those who need employment. Lacking opportunities these people are forced to migrate to Kathmandu or India in search of wage-earning employment. Evidence indicates that as many as 60-70 per cent of the young people in some communities from this region migrate annually to seek jobs (Lama et al. 1996).

Estimates of local residents' use of fuelwood vary from 20 to 40kg per day, depending on the elevation, species of trees, and other factors. On an average, lodges in lower Langtang use about 30-40kg of dry wood per day. Using the 1995 trekker figures, it is estimated that tourists consume about 84,335kg of dry wood per year (Table 1). Although the Kanjin cheese factory is permitted to collect approximately 9,230kg of dry wood, the actual consumption is estimated to be around 175,379kg per annum. Due to the scarcity and high price of purchasing fuelwood at higher altitudes, lodges in Kanjin, Laure Binayak, and Gosain Kunda prefer to use kerosene for cooking as it is more cost effective in these remote areas where kerosene sells for Rs 25/litre and fuelwood sells for Rs 50 per *bhari* (about 25-30kg). Kerosene has to be carried in by porters and thus its price is high.

Table 1: Estimates of Fuelwood Consumption by Type of Tourist in LNP (1996)

Tourist Numbers	Daily Fuelwood Consumption (kg)	Average Duration of Stay	Estimated Total Fuelwood Consumption (kg/year)
Group Trekkers (3,735)	18.6	8	555,768
Individual Trekkers (4,757)	5.5	11	287,617
Total (8,489)	-	-	843,385

Sources: Lama et al. 1996

Timber uses for lodges and for poles for prayer flags constitute other sources of pressure on the forests. Although local residents must obtain permits from the LNP and pay a timber royalty fee of Rs 48 per cubic foot, the trees actually felled for such purposes are reported to be beyond the LNP norms and regulations.

Forests and Vegetation

About 27 per cent of the Park is covered by forests. While shrubs cover five per cent of the land area, agricultural land covers less than two per cent, and the remaining land is either covered by rock, perpetual snow, or is barren (Yonzon et al. 1991). There are 15 forest ecosystems inside the Park. Oak, chir pine, maple, fir, blue pine, hemlock, spruce, and various species of rhododendron constitute the main forest species. The most unusual/unique forest species is *Larix nepalensis*, which occurs in only a few places in Nepal. Out of the 1,000 plants recorded in the Park, 172 plants (23% are edible mushrooms, 53% are used for medicinal purposes, 6% for fodder, and 4% for religious purposes) are used intensively for anthropogenic purposes as alternative forest resources (Table 2). The plant species of LNP represent 20 per cent of the whole flora of Nepal.

Wildlife

The varied topography and ecological zones with extensive forest and varied vegetation types provide habitat for approximately 32 mammals and 283 species of birds

Table 2: Vegetational Zones in Langtang National Park

Vegetational Zones	Area (Km ²)	% Park's Area
Tropical	2.8	0.2
Subtropical	34.4	2.0
Hill	82.9	4.8
Montane	168.6	9.9
Sub-alpine	368.6	21.5
Alpine	428.1	25.0
Snow and Ice	546.7	31.9
Cleared forests	9.1	0.5
Burnt forests	26.7	1.6
Cultivated	43.5	2.5
Total	1711.4	99.9

Source: Kharel (1993)

(Yonzon 1993). Among the most important mammals (i.e, threatened species) found in the Park are wild dogs, red pandas, clouded leopards, leopards, musk deer, and possibly snow leopards. Other mammals include *pika*, barking deer, Himalayan black bear, Himalayan *tahr*, *ghoral*, serow, rhesus, and langur monkey, yellow-throated marten, and others (HMG/UNDP/FAO).

Religious Sites

The monasteries at Shing *Gombha* and Kanjin and the sacred lake at Gosain Kunda are some of the more important religious sites in the Park which attract thousands of Hindus and Buddhist pilgrims during the months of May/June and August.

Tourism Trend

The number of tourists increased from 5,000 in 1986 to 9,000 in 1996. The volume of tourists in the Annapurna conservation area and Sagarmatha National Park were 45,000 and 19,000, respectively. LNP is the third most popular trekking destination in the mountain areas after Annapurna and the Sagarmatha National Park (SNP), and it attracts approximately 13 per cent of the total trekkers visiting Nepal. The potential to increase the number of visitors to LNP is favourable for several reasons. First, the Park is relatively the most accessible from Kathmandu. Second, other popular trekking destinations have already experienced overcrowding compared to LNP. Third, this Park is an ideal destination for trekkers who have limited time in Nepal as it can be reached in a relatively short period of time. Fourth, LNP presents a fairly comparative Himalayan environment like other national mountain parks.

The information on the number of visitors reported by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) (Table 3) is based on the park entrance permits issued, whereas the information from the Department of Tourism relates to the issue of

Box 1

Application Process for Lodge/Tea Stall Permit

- Submit proposed plan.
- Plan reviewed and Warden visits.
- Warden recommends and forwards the plan to DNPWC.
- DNPWC reviews the plan (ecologist, DG).
- DNPWC forwards the plan to the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation.

The applicant may have to go to and fro many times between the different agencies.

Source: Lama et al. 1996

Table 4: Number of Lodges and Tea Shop Permits Issued and Operating by Year

Year	No. of permit issued	Still Operating
1985/86	25	19
1986/87	18	14
1987/88	12	7
1988/89	1	NA
1989/90	0	NA
1990/91	1	NA
1991/92	0	NA
1992/93	9	
Total Permit Issued	51	

Source: DNPWC, Lama et. al. 1996

rates (the previous rate ranged from Rs 150 to Rs 6,000 per year) and appear to be the result of an *ad hoc* decision (Lama et. al 1996).

Many lodge and tea shop owners have complained about this high tax rate. With new lodge permits being granted each year, on the one hand, and a slow or stagnant growth in visitors on the other, lodges (in Syaphru) indicated that their incomes were falling. Moreover, the problem is compounded by the stiff

competition among lodges which tend to undercut prices to attract visitors. An average Grade B lodge with eight beds makes about Rs 80,000 per year and Lama et al. (1996) argue that the tax structure is out of proportion with the estimated income.

Revenue from LNP

Tourism generates significant income for the DNPWC in the form of visitors' fees, royalties paid by lodges and tea shops, and use of timber and other resources (Table 5). Foreign visitors have to pay a Park entry fee of Rs 650. In addition, DNPWC-owned lodges are leased to private operators for an annual fee. In the past the park entrance fee would all go to the central treasury, but, of late, a new law permits part of the fee to be used for local development. Park entry fees contribute between 88 to 92 per cent of the total park revenue. The revenue generated from other royalties is a small percentage of the Park's revenue.

Community Organizations

One Lodge Management Committee, later renamed the Community Development Committee, and different women's groups have recently been formed in Syaphrubesi

Table 3: Tourist Flow to LNP

Year	Langtang (I) ¹		Langtang (II) ²	
	No of Tourists	% Change	No of Tourists	% Change
1980	NA	-	4,113	-
1981	NA	-	4,488	9
1982	NA	-	4,535	1
1983	NA	-	4,030	-11
1984/85	2,448	-	4,792	19
1985/86	3,151	29	4,610	-4
1986/87	3,796	20	5,250	14
1987/88	5,086	34	6,107	16
1988/89	6,161	21	8,423	38
1989/90	6,318	2.5	8,563	2
1990/91	7,180	14	7,826	-9
1991/92	8,674	21	9,603	23
1992/93	8,677	0	9,457	-2
1993/94	8,839	2	NA	-
1994/95	8,489	-4	NA	-

Source: 1. DNPWC

2. Department of Tourism 1993

trekking permits which have to be acquired from the Department of Immigration. The discrepancy between the two records indicates that all visitors who acquired trekking permits did not actually visit the Park. From a tourism point of view, therefore, the DNPWC figures are more useful. What the numbers indicate is that the number of visitors to LNP has not grown since 1991/92.

Being relatively more accessible than other mountain areas, the percentage of FITs to LNP is greater than the number of group tourists. The Department of Tourism records show the ratio of trekkers to be 67 per cent FITs and 33 per cent group trekkers. The duration of stay averages about 11 days for group trekkers and 7.6 for FITs (Banskota and Upadhyaya 1989). In fact, the duration of stay varies by types of tourist, depending on the trekking route that is selected. The average duration of stay is about 20 days for those who travel the entire Helumbu - Gosainkunda - Langtang Valley route compared to those who just trek the Langtang Valley (Lama et al. 1996). The ratio of FITs to group trekkers has widened throughout Nepal over the past few years, i.e., from 36 per cent in 1988 to 56 per cent in 1992 (Department of Tourism 1993).

Lodges

Persons wishing to open or build lodges or tea shops in LNP must obtain a permit and pay an annual royalty to DNPWC according to the Park regulation (Box 1). The process for permit review may take from 12 to 15 months. Once a lodge or tea shop permit is approved and issued, it is valid for five years - after which the permit must be renewed.

The present tax rates for lodges and tea shops located inside the Park as well as in the buffer area are Rs 10,000, Rs 20,000, and Rs 30,000 per annum, depending on the size (beds) and location of the facility. These rates are significantly higher than the previous

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Table 5: Trend in Revenue Returns to LNP

Year	Tourists	Park Entry Fee	Others *	Total
1984/85	2,448	146,890	47,172	194,062
1985/86	3,151	189,070	54,764	243,834
1986/87	3,796	227,790	77,227	305,017
1987/88	5,086	304,010	222,271	526,280
1988/89	6,161	985,320	359,196	1,344,516
1989/90	6,318	1,579,500	237,358	1,816,858
1990/91	7,180	1,795,000	228,689	2,023,689
1991/92	8,674	3,620,900	299,511	3,920,411
1992/93	8,677	5,640,050	534,483	6,174,433
1993/94	8,839	5,745,350	499,776	6,245,126
1994/95	8,489	5,612,750	754,885	6,367,635

* Includes royalty taxes collected from lodges and tea shops on park lands, timber royalties for collecting non-timber forest products, park-owned lodges' lease payments, and other sources of revenue

Sources : DNPWC

under the guidance of the UNDP Partnership for Quality Tourism Project. These groups have taken the initiative of playing a greater role in contributing to the local economy and social development through their involvement in tourism and other income-generating activities. Besides the PQT project in Syaphrubesi, now expanded to Dhunche and Thulo Syaphrubesi, there is a Langtang Ecotourism Project (LEP) which is being implemented jointly by The Mountain Institute and the DNPWC as well as a few other development activities in the area. It is noted that one of the objectives of the LEP is to help improve local organizational and planning skills among park and buffer zone committee personnel in the area, especially those active in ecotourism and conservation. The KMTNC also plans to carry out tourism training courses in LNP using Global Environment Fund (GEF) assistance in collaboration with the Langtang Ecotourism Project and UNDP. There are local NGOs, user groups, and other social organizations emerging throughout the area.

The Langtang Ecotourism Project (LEP) has launched a village planning training programme in Langtang National Park and the buffer zone area coordinated by LNP, PQT/UNDP, and KMNTC. The objectives of LEP are to help improve the skills of local communities and LNP staff to prepare and implement an ecotourism management plan at both the village level and for the entire park. LEP is planning to provide training to local communities in specific tourism skills and help strengthen local institutions with skill development training so that local NGOs can continue to plan for and enforce responsible tourism long after LEP terminates.

Major Issues and Constraints

The major issues and constraints identified on the basis of the information obtained from several secondary sources in tourism development in LNP are briefly highlighted in the following passage.

Unplanned Development of Lodges and Tea Shops

With the establishment of LNP, the people's dependence on tourism for income has been growing over the years as alternative sources of income accruing from traditional forest resource activities (e.g., handicraft production and collection of medicinal and other non-timber forest products) are now no longer permitted. Under the present rate of tourist visitation, the present number of lodges in LNP is believed to have approached its maximum (Lama et al. 1996). New trek routes and products have not been developed to attract more visitors. Repeat trekkers complain of the lack of new destinations. The large number of lodges and tea houses is also creating unhealthy competition among lodges, leading to price wars.

Lack of Community-based Planning and Management

Despite the growing number of lodges and the increasing dependency of local people on tourism, the linkage between tourism and the local economy has remained weak. Most lodges continue to import most food items from outside the district, although there is scope to produce many perishable food items locally. As such, benefits from tourism that could be retained locally and distributed among settlements have not materialised. While those with capital to invest in new lodges are expanding their businesses to reap greater benefits from tourism, vulnerable groups lacking investment capital have few opportunities to benefit from tourism. With the exception of Syaphrubesi, where lodge owners have organized themselves to set minimum prices and to clean up the surrounding environment, most settlements in LNP have no community-based tourism planning and management.

High Tax Rate

The incentive to upgrade and renovate lodges has been hampered by the five-year permit and the heavy tax burden (Rs 10,000 to 30,000). Lodge owners are reluctant to invest in the lodges, since they feel that the five-year permit is too short to make any investment worthwhile. Besides, since the visitation rate has not increased, this adds a greater risk to investment. Price wars and the fact that more permits are being granted add further risk to the operators and, thus, constrain investments to improve quality.

Firewood Use and Absence of Alternative Energy Sources

Forests in many parts of LNP are not properly managed. Regeneration is also not very healthy, largely because of excessive livestock grazing, shading, and unsuitable conditions for seedling germination or growth (Lama et al. 1996). In the absence of feasible substitutes for firewood, the demand for fuelwood is believed to have exceeded the availability of dead or fallen wood that can be legally collected from the forests. For most agencies and lodges, firewood is still the only source of energy. Army personnel and cheese factories continue to use large amounts of fuelwood. Although green

Box 2

Salient Features of the Recently Passed Buffer Zones Regulations

The 1993 Amendment (B.S. 2050) to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2029 (1973) has adopted the concept of the buffer zone. This Amendment empowers HMG/N to declare any forested or agricultural area, including settlements, surrounding a national park or a reserve a Buffer Zone. Although private holdings are part of the buffer zone, land ownership rights will be unaffected. A warden will be appointed to manage the buffer zone. The boundaries of the buffer zone will depend on several factors that determine the impact caused because of the presence of the park/reserve. The Act provides for 30-50 per cent of the revenue generated by the park or reserve being used for community development activities. The money thus received will be spent through user committees. A portion of the money will be spent to compensate for any property losses due to floods in the parks bordering rivers or landslides. Similarly, the committee can be entrusted with the management of fallen trees, grasses, logs, and firewood inside the protected area.

Buffer zones will be divided into several units for management purposes. All heads of households automatically become members of the user groups in each unit and elect their own committees. Establishment of the committees will be facilitated by the warden. Each committee will include at least nine members, who will serve a five-year term. The committees can submit proposals for funding support from the allocated 30-50 per cent of park revenue (the exact amount to be allocated will be determined annually by HMG/N, and the remaining 50-70 per cent will go to the central treasury of HMG/N). The committee can launch community development projects, mobilise people's participation, enforce the user fees for resource use on public lands, and encourage tree planting. The user group committees can form sub-committees for specialised work such as management of community woodlots, operating small-scale leasehold forestry projects, and management of religious forests.

With technical support from the warden, user committees will prepare operational plans for their units which will include community development activities, protection of natural resources, and the use of forest resources in the buffer zone. The committees are also required to submit audited financial statements periodically to the buffer zone office.

The buffer zone warden will coordinate the activities of various line agencies operating in the buffer zone. Industrial enterprises must obtain the warden's written permission before seeking or renewing operating licenses from the Ministry of Industry. Similarly, development activities related to other government line agencies will be required to cooperate with the warden in order to promote a growth pattern consistent with the protected area's objectives.

Buffer zone regulations also detail the steps required to hand over public lands to groups of households for management as community, leasehold (for poor households only), and religious forests. The complete text of the buffer zone regulations is in HMG/N (1996). The buffer zone management regulations are being implemented in LNP through a series of meetings to bring about awareness about the concepts and procedures of the regulations among the buffer zone communities.

wood collection from the forests in the park is prohibited, there is evidence that such collection takes place against LNP regulations for use in lodges and tea shops and, at higher elevations, it is even sold. Most of the local people are poor and, even if alternatives are made available, they will not be able to afford them. Hence, the local demand for firewood will continue to remain high, and this need of the local people has to be duly addressed by the Park authority.

While group trekkers are required to be self-sufficient in alternative fuel supplies (kerosene), porters employed by these group trekkers rely on fuelwood for cooking and for warmth. Many agencies tend to ignore the Park's fuel use policy. Present Park regulations against cutting green wood are not being enforced effectively. Nor is enforcement of the timber felling regulation effective as forests near lodges are being used to meet the needs of lodges which are wood-intensive (given their design), although stone and slate-based designs could be promoted.

Many Hindus visit the Gosain Kunda lake each year on pilgrimage. Many flora are uprooted or cut during this period to make walking sticks. Although such materials are generally confiscated at the LNP gate when the pilgrims return from the Kunda, the damage is already done. Pilgrims are not made aware of the consequence of their actions on the vegetation of the Park. Another problem created by pilgrims is the garbage they leave besides the lake and while camping en route. Although the pilgrimage occurs once a year, the number of pilgrims is large and its effects on the vegetation and the lakeside can still be seen many months later.

Improper Management of Garbage/Litter and Water Pollution

As in other mountain areas, improper management of garbage and litter has been another environmental problem in LNP. With the exception of some places, such as Syaphrubesi, where attempts have been made to manage garbage and litter under the PQT, no such attempts have been made on an institutional basis in other areas inside LNP. Garbage is usually dumped along the river banks, in the streams, or at best thrown into a shallow pit where the wind and animals scatter it (Lama et al. 1996; Banskota and Upadhyay 1989). The trekkers and lodge-owners and tea shops along the more popular trekking routes inside LNP generate waste, rubbish, and, excreta. As many of the tourist destinations lie in cold and infertile areas, garbage does not decompose easily and is already becoming a serious problem in LNP (Lama et al. 1996)

Water Pollution, Sanitation, and Hygiene Problem

Poor health and bad hygiene are common problems in LNP as in other mountain trekking areas. Poor health and bad hygiene affect the quality of services provided to visitors; and these include food preparation and the utensils used to serve visitors. Dumping waste in rivers and streams and defaecating close by cause water pollution. Few households and lodges own latrines in LNP. As a result, most FITs report themselves sick from eating food or drinking water (compared to group trekkers who generally eat food prepared by their support staff [Table 6]).

Additionally, sanitation and disposal garbage are also dealt with inadequately from the visitors' point of view. Based on a 1989 study, a large number of visitors to the Park indicated that the sanitation and garbage disposal arrangements left much to be desired (Table 7). Littering is also a problem that appears to be increasing in the Park.

Table 6: Number of Trekkers Becoming Sick with Reasons

Type of Trekker	Reason for Being Sick		Total
	Drinking Water	Food	
FITs	13 (37)	19 (37)	35
Group	2 (20)	1 (10)	10

Figures in parentheses give in percentages.

Source: Banskota and Upadhyay (1989, Table 23).

Table 7: Trekkers' Opinion on the State of Sanitation and Garbage Disposal Arrangements in the Park

Place	Sanitation		Garbage	
	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	Inadequate
Lodge	26 (32)	53 (67)	47 (59)	33 (41)
Camp Sites	17 (35)	31 (65)	17 (31)	29 (63)
Private Homes	5 (24)	16 (76)	9 (39)	14 (61)
Trekking Routes	25 (34)	49 (66)	16 (20)	62 (79)

Figures in parentheses are in percentages.

Source: Banskota and Upadhyay (1989, Table 29)

Disturbance in Environmentally and Culturally Sensitive Areas

Human activities and their impact on wildlife and vegetation have not been adequately assessed, addressed, or monitored in LNP. Examples of such activities are uncontrolled garbage dumping, construction, grazing, plant extraction, and so on. Lodge establishment close to sensitive places such as Gosain Kunda has not been checked and monitored. Trapping and poaching of wildlife (as these animals are claimed to encroach on crops and domestic livestock) have also been reported. There has been no systematic study on the various aspects of environmental impacts.

Implication of Fly-in Tourism by Helicopter

The Langtang tour is among the most popular chartered helicopter excursions from Kathmandu. An air tour of the magnificent Himalayan peaks and glaciers is provided. Private helicopters (especially the Russian made MI-17) operate tours direct to Kanjin. Pilgrims are also taken to Gosain Kunda by helicopter, and this has become a new attraction. Such helicopter tours do not bring much benefit to the area, although they do bring in revenue for the government and helicopter owners. Helicopter tours may be seen as a new tourism product to be enjoyed by those who can afford them and who do not have the time required to make a regular trekking tour. If properly planned and guided, they could become an additional source of revenue that could be channelled back to local community development. However, proper planning and management of such a new tourism product has not received attention from the concerned authority thus far.

The 1977 LNP Management Plan dictates that helicopters be permitted to land only in specified places near Langtang village (and not at Kanjin due to the elevation) and that both the number of helicopter flights and fly-in tourists should be limited. The long-term impacts and implications of fly-in tourists in LNP is an issue that warrants investigation.

The disturbance to wildlife and trekkers' sense of peace and wilderness experience from the noise created by helicopters, as well as the implications of landing helicopters at high altitudes, not counting the possibility of high altitude sickness, are some of the serious concerns already raised by both the tourist and host populations. Some lodge owners have even experienced a shortfall of 50 per cent in their business incomes during the tourist season as a result of fly-in tourists in LNP. Another closely-related issue of significance is that helicopter services pay a royalty fee to LNP as mitigation for any negative impacts caused by this new product that could be used for tourism infrastructure and skill development and conservation.

People-Park Conflict

A majority of the local people living inside the Park and outside indicated loss of benefit due to the establishment of the Park. This loss takes the form of crop damage and livestock depredation by wildlife. Wild boars, Himalayan black bears, monkeys, and deer are the main crop predators. It has been suggested that wild boars be trapped to control crop damage by them (Kharel 1993). Wild pigs would, additionally, provide meat and thus economic benefit to the local people. Trapping should, however, be carried out carefully by Park personnel only or else it could lead to abuse. Controlling other wildlife degradation is either too expensive or not feasible. The buffer zone concept, if properly planned and implemented, can provide feasible solutions to such problems (Mackinnon et al. 1986; also see Kharel for details on People-Park Conflicts).

ASSESSMENT OF THE VILLAGE TRAINING PROGRAMME IN SYAPHRUBESI

Introduction

This section makes an attempt to assess the impacts and implications of the village training programmes carried out by PQT in Syaphrubesi, a small settlement area consisting of lodges and a village with about a dozen houses in the buffer zone. An attempt has also been made to identify critical factors underlying the sustainability and replicability of the project.¹

Details on the various problems in mountain areas with respect to tourism have already been identified in Banskota and Sharma (1995a). Suffice it to say that the main problem

¹ Syaphrubesi is not a destination in itself within the Park, but it is an important point as most buses going to the area halt and collect passengers from this point. Usually, trekkers opt to return via Syaphrubesi, stay the night, and catch the bus next morning to Kathmandu.

with Nepal's mountain tourism has been the lack of supply side management, which in the case of LNP is reflected in the poor quality of accommodation and food facilities provided to visitors.² Many settlement areas within LNP and the surrounding villages have opened lodges and tea houses or campsites from which they make a modest income from tourism. As a matter of fact, accommodation was provided free to visitors who decided to stop overnight in the lodges and eat two meals (dinner and breakfast). A similar situation was also reported in the Annapurna area prior to the establishment of ACAP (Banskota and Sharma 1995b). Since lodges were not making money from accommodation, there was little incentive to promote the quality of their services. In addition, sometimes when fees for accommodation were charged; they were very modest, ranging from Rs five to 20. Since the main income of the lodges was from meals, the quality of food (preparation, serving, cleanliness, hygiene, etc) needed improving. Menus and food prices had to be standardised, since lodges were constantly cutting prices to attract tourists to their lodges. Although the visitors were able to enjoy food, accommodation, and other services at fairly cheap rates, local owners were not encouraged to improve their facilities as recovery of the full cost of services provided was not being realised. Thus a better quality 'tourism product' had to be developed and marketed.

The Partnership for Quality Tourism Project

Nepal is facing internal and external challenges which are eroding the growth potentials of tourism. Failure to develop new products and to diversify, environmental deterioration, lack of public and private sector coordination, and poor promotion and marketing are the main problems facing the tourism sector in Nepal. Nepal's ability to effectively develop and market quality products has been the result of its institutional framework which does not allow for a strong partnership between public and private sectors. Additionally, tourism in Nepal is facing new and very aggressive competition in terms of product development, promotion, and marketing and Nepal has failed to address these issues. As a result, Nepal's comparative advantage in tourism is decreasing. Unless action to address these issues is taken, it is unlikely that Nepal will feature as an important destination in the coming century. The PQT project was introduced in 1994, jointly by HMG and UNDP, to address the above issues (Banskota et al. 1995).

The PQT project sought to build new capabilities around a more appropriate nucleus within the existing institutional framework (i.e., Tourism Development Board) rather than strengthening the Department of Tourism, since it was realised that the Department was unable to accommodate the private sector. The key issue which PQT addressed was partnership between the private and public sector to increase revenue through the promotion of quality tourism services in Nepal. This issue was addressed through a pilot scheme consisting of three separate pilot projects being directed by a steering committee composed of representatives from the public and private sectors. These pilot

² Accommodation, services, transportation, information, and promotion constitute the five broad areas on the supply side of tourism (see Gunn 1994)

projects consisted of International Promotion, Urban Environmental Quality Improvement, and Village Tourism (Banskota et al. 1995). The rationale for UNDP support was justified on the following grounds.

- Both public and private sectors require external assistance to accelerate the process required to establish an appropriate institutional framework and UNDP has a comparative advantage for helping both sectors.
- The project will immediately address the environmental problems of Kathmandu Valley and, in the long run, environmental conservation through creating strong awareness and sustainable management practices.
- The project will contribute to poverty alleviation efforts by increasing opportunities for additional employment and income in rural areas.
- Tourism development in Nepal will depend very much on international promotion.
- Finally, UNDP as the executing body, aims to capitalise on the experience it has gained from its involvement in tourism in Nepal over many years.

The project in Syaphrubesi was executed by UNDP (technical and overall management). It is being supervised by a steering committee. Task forces were established to implement the projects, and this was all managed by a coordinator.

For the implementation of the Village Tourism Project, Syaphrubesi was selected for the following reasons (PQT unpublished file).

- Due to the motorable road, the site acts as a gateway for tourists and locals both coming and going from Langtang.
- It would be a sample village for all the lodge owners to see as they have to come there to collect or buy goods for their lodges. The sight of the example village will certainly motivate and inspire lodge owners to improve their lodges and the area.
- It would certainly make a good impression on trekkers.
- The government organizations and offices could be approached to aid in launching, implementing, monitoring, and following up.
- The lodge owners themselves also suggested it as a site for training in lodge operations.
- Due to the school and health post, it would be easy to implement hygiene, sanitation, and clean-up campaigns.
- People in the area are aware of the benefits of cleanliness but are not motivated to be clean, and the area is dirty.
- It is also on the short route to Kanjin.
- As it is a small, well-organized village, it is felt that, given the stipulated time and resources, results could be best achieved at this site.

With the completion of the first phase of PQT in Syaphrubesi, the project has now selected Dhunche and Thulo Syaphru as its two new sites. Experiences so far in

Syaphrubesi provide an interesting basis for evaluating the PQT from the point of view of sustainability and replicability in other mountain areas.

PQT Interventions

The Village Tourism component of PQT implemented in Syaphrubesi was a pilot project which aimed to address the issue of sustainable rural tourism. In particular, the project aimed to improve the ability of the population of Syaphrubesi to increase incomes from tourism. For this purpose a number of activities was undertaken.

- Establishment of a task force responsible for the design and execution of village training programmes
- Assessment of the tourism resources and facilities in the village and its surrounding areas
- Identification of opportunities for product service improvement and additional livelihood activities based on tourism
- Identification of the training needs associated with raising product /service standards
- Development of additional livelihood opportunities and design of outreach training packages to meet this need
- Implementation of a pilot training package in the village and discussion of the results with the steering committee with recommendations for the institutionalisation of the programme ensuing.

Activities designed and implemented in Syaphrubesi included:

- observation tour,
- training in lodge operation,
- hygiene and sanitation programmes,
- training in income generation,
- follow-up training,
- standardisation of menus and prices,
- development of guidelines for a Community Development Committee (CDC) for tourism promotion, environmental management, and for enforcement of new rules,
- hospitality and language training,
- health camp, and
- promotion of the use of alternative energy (back boilers).

Syaphrubesi, a village adjoining the Park inside the buffer zone, was extremely dirty and a clean-up campaign for the entire village was organized. Training was provided to lodge owners in several tasks; maintenance of accounts, hospitality, cleanliness in the kitchen and bedrooms, development of a standard menu, and setting uniform prices in all lodges for food and accommodation. Rubbish pits and public toilets were developed and garbage cans were located in several places. Training was, therefore, provided to the lodge owners to improve the quality of tourism products sold to visitors.

As long as there is flow of external resources , many programmes appear to do well in Nepal, but as soon as the external funding is taken away, such projects quickly succumb to inefficiencies and generally fail to achieve the objectives they set out to accomplish. In the case of this Partnership for Quality Tourism, therefore, it is interesting to observe whether positive impacts have accrued from the training and whether they are likely to be sustained. If, after nearly two years of intervention, the positive impacts have been sustained, then an interesting case emerges since the intervention made and the modality used can be replicated in other mountain areas.

Impacts and Implications

As stated earlier, a variety of programme activities were designed and implemented by PQT in Syaphrubesi with the intention of improving the ability of the villagers to increase their incomes from tourism. The purpose of this section is to examine the impacts and implications of these programme interventions. An attempt has also been made to draw lessons from the main activities of the project. The critical factors underlying the sustainability of positive impacts will be discussed later.

Observation Tour

The objectives of the observation tour were to arouse interest, create awareness, and generate incentives among participants so that they would become motivated from the visit to upgrade the existing service standards, giving maximum emphasis to hygiene and sanitation and thus becoming confident of catering to the basic demands of trekkers in terms of service and safety.

A group of 26 participants, 20 men, and six women, was organized to visit hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara. After this urban hotel tour, the participants were taken to Ghandruk where they were allowed to interact with the lodge owners and observe how things were being done. The tour proved to be successful in motivating many participants to upgrade their facilities.

During the observation tour to Kathmandu, the participants were taken for a visit to the Soaltee and Everest Hotels, both of which are ranked as Five Star hotels. The impact of the visits, based on the discussions with the lodge owners, was one of shock. All the members of the observation team that were consulted indicated that they had never seen anything so clean and had never realised that a place could be kept so clean.

This trip was then followed by a trip to Ghandruk in the Annapurna area, i.e., ACAP. The members of the tour group visited the lodges in Ghandruk and interacted with the lodges owners. They observed the menus and how food was prepared. They were impressed by the standard menus and the uniform prices set by the Community Development Committee (CDC) and by how every lodge was abiding to the rules set by them. The cleanliness and hygiene observed in Ghandruk by the tour members had impressed the Syaphrubesi guests. The lodge owners indicated that achieving the Soaltee

and Everest Hotels' standards was not possible for them but achieving the standards of lodges in Ghandruk was possible.

The tour was an eye-opener to most of the lodge owners. The tour helped increase their awareness of the need for cleanliness of facilities – rooms, beds, kitchens, dining rooms and tables, utensils, and the overall environment of their surroundings. In the past, this awareness was lacking. The cleanliness programme introduced by PQT; namely, to keep the lodges clean, the streets, and the big meadow on the west bank of the Bhote Koshi River, has been sustained. Some lodge owners have carried out renovations to their lodges as well improving the overall cleanliness and hygiene. The quality of services provided to visitors has also improved (as told to us by some repeat trekkers we met during our visit to Syaphrubesi in December 1996).

Training in Lodge Operation and Refreshers' Training

The objective of Training in Lodge Operation was to provide technical knowledge, skills, and most essentially to improve the attitudes required to upgrade and develop the existing standards of services and safety to cater to guests.

A two-week training programme for 68 participants, of which 34 participants were women, was provided by the Hotel Management and Tourism Training Centre (HMTTC). Training was provided in food preparation; kitchen, dining hall, and bedroom management; hospitality; and accounts' preparation. This training proved to be the first of its kind for the lodge owners of Syaphrubesi. It has helped them improve the overall conditions of their lodges. All lodge owners agreed to standardise menus and also prices. They also agreed to use white bedsheets and white pillow cases and to change them after each use, although changing bedsheets and pillow cases after each use has not been effective.

Refresher or follow-up training was also provided to 34 lodge owners (20 women and 14 men) in food preparation and service and kitchen management. For two weeks, two cooks were stationed in Syaphrubesi, to demonstrate in the local kitchens the art of preparing food in a clean and hygienic environment. This refresher training course proved to be very useful to the lodge owners. After this training course, there was unanimous agreement among lodge owners that they would contribute two rupees per guest to their committee (CDC).

Most lodge owners indicated that they had learned to maintain their accounts better after the training. Prior to training, the lodge owners asked the visitors to calculate how much they owed for the services and the food they had consumed.

The most visible impacts of this training were observed in the following areas.

- Food is now prepared and served in a relatively clean and hygienic environment.
- Rooms are kept generally clean and white bedsheets are used by most lodges.

- Most lodges have begun to keep proper records of income and expenses.
- Menus have been designed and standardised in all the lodges with standard uniform prices.

Hygiene and Sanitation

This component of the programme was designed to upgrade the hygiene and sanitation conditions of the whole village (cleanliness campaign) and also to renovate the tourist products within the village. The objective was to introduce and motivate the villagers, along with the lodge owners, to participate in maintaining the hygiene and sanitation in and around the village.

This was very necessary since the entire village was buried in garbage and human excreta, as described to us by several people from the area. Local people were not in the habit of using toilets and whatever open area was available was used to deposit garbage and excreta. This was an awful situation and thus a campaign was launched to build two public toilets. In addition, all lodges were encouraged to build such toilets for their visitors and also to attach an adjacent shower room. Other activities carried out include, a) construction of six rubbish pits for dumping sorted garbage (plastic, bottles and biodegradable), b) development and repair of the hot springs, and c) construction of a trail leading to the hot springs on the west bank of the Bhote Koshi River.

The lodge owners indicated that the lodge management training had been very useful for instructing them how to maintain the hygiene and sanitation in their lodges. Field observation revealed visible impacts. Kitchens were kept clean. Kitchen utensils were organized on shelves. The dining area was also generally clean. Food was served on trays and plates, spoons and other utensils were wiped by kitchen towels kept for the purpose. In most lodges the rooms had white sheets, although not all lodges had begun using the white sheets. Such lodge owners indicated they were planning to make the change. The cooks, generally females or wives of the lodge owners, used aprons while cooking and serving guests. The lodge yards were also kept fairly clean. The lodge owners indicated that they had realised the importance of cleanliness since visitors would generally opt for a cleaner lodge.

Six rubbish pits were dug in separate places for dumping garbage and litter. In the morning, a member from each lodge could be seen sweeping the road in front of the lodge. The trash was collected and dumped in the garbage pits. The pits have two compartments, one for dumping biodegradable garbage and the other for non-degradable. Glass and bottles are kept separate from other garbage. The villagers were separating the garbage and throwing it into the pits accordingly. In old Syaphru on the eastern side of the river, the garbage disposal system is not functioning well now. With the closure of the rubbish pit, garbage was reported to have been dumped into the river. We were told that new pits would be dug before the tourism season begins in February. Overall there are good indications that the hygiene and sanitation campaign

and activities carried out by PQT through people's participation have had a positive impact and are likely to be sustained.

Hospitality Training

A hospitality training programme was launched with a view to imparting basic communication knowledge and skills required for lodge owners in dealing with clients. After all, how clients are treated is important in improving visitor satisfaction. Training on basic communication in English and, upon the request of the participants, some basic training in Japanese was also imparted to 21 participants (8 women and 13 men). The impact of this training was that participants were practising to greet and speak with guests in English.

Standardised Menu

The objective of designing and developing a standard menu was to enable all the lodges to prepare and serve the same types of food to their visitors with standard prices. During the food preparation training, food items that could be prepared from locally available materials were emphasised and included in the menu.

A standard menu has been printed upon the approval of the CDC and food is uniformly priced for all the lodges of Syaphrubesi. The standardisation of prices and dishes has been welcomed by the lodge owners. This has cut down the bargaining by visitors over five or ten rupees considerably, although it cannot be said that the bargaining has stopped. The menu is in the form of brochure which contains some basic information about LNP and can be purchased for Rs 25, some of which (Rs 5 and Rs 3) is ploughed back into the lodges and the CDC respectively with the remaining being set aside for printing costs.

Lodge incomes have also increased modestly. However, not all lodges have been able to offer the dishes that are on the menu, and this has been a complaint of many visitors. With the number of visitors to LNP remaining more or less steady, the number of visitors to any one lodge in Syaphrubesi has also not increased. At times, especially during the slack season, some lodges have even reduced their prices to attract visitors. Although, this price undercutting is not approved by the CDC, nothing seems to have been done about it.

Institutional Building (CDC)

The CDC, which PQT helped form in late 1994, has become a fairly effective institution in Syaphrubesi among the lodge-owning community. The CDC carries out its duties and responsibilities fairly effectively. The duties and responsibilities were agreed upon by the Syaphrubesi community itself. Guidelines for CDC in Tourism Promotion and Environment Management were also designed and developed by the PQT project, with a view to enabling CDC to be an effective grassroots' organization for managing tourism promotion, resource generation, and environmental conservation in the area.

The first-hand knowledge acquired by lodge owners through their observation tour to Ghandruk was instrumental in establishing the CDC in Syaphrubesi. During the observation tour to Ghandruk, the lodge owners from Syaphrubesi had an opportunity to interact with a similar committee (CDC) in Ghandruk. The committee in Ghandruk was fairly old and over time had already established itself as a fairly effective institution. Members of the committee in Ghandruk briefed the visitors from Syaphrubesi about the situation among the lodge owners prior to the establishment of such a committee. There was no standardization of menus and prices, visitors were given free lodging if they decided to eat their meals in lodges and this had led to the under-cutting of prices. Lodges were poorly maintained. Rooms, kitchens, and dining areas were not kept clean. There was no management of garbage. These problems were similar to those actually faced by the lodges in Syaphrubesi prior to the formation of their own CDC. However, after the formation of the CDC, things had begun to improve. This first-hand knowledge was instrumental in establishing the CDC in Syaphrubesi.

Starting was difficult since not all lodge owners were pleased with the rules made, and there was tension between lodge owners and the village community. Initially, CDC lacked good representation from the village community on an institutional basis. This made it difficult to ensure the real participation of villagers from the surrounding villages. As such, the enforcement was weak initially. This situation has now been rectified as the CDC is also represented by some members from the village community on an institutional basis. The CDC has thus become a fairly strong participatory institution in Syaphrubesi. All the lodges had designed new sign boards and used the colours (yellow and black) that the Park uses. The PQT has been successful in establishing an institutional foundation at the grassroots' level through good representation from the community.

The Syaphrubesi lodge owners explained that prior to this committee formation and training, things were very different. Lodges were setting their own prices and, to attract visitors, a price war prevailed. This did not benefit any lodge and recovering investments was also difficult.

The decision-making process of the CDC has certain features that need to be highlighted. Transparency in decision-making in the CDC was fairly apparent. Most of the activities carried out by the PQT were carried out through the CDC. This gave the lodge owners an opportunity to feel that the project was theirs. Decisions were carried out only after consensus was reached in most cases, although some members did not participate. However, as time passed, the participation rate improved. As is to be expected, consensus has not always been possible, but the decisions made appear to be enforced and accepted. A secretary (one of the lodge owners) has been appointed and maintains a log book and minutes of all the meetings held.

In a short period of time, the CDC has been able to identify different sources to generate revenue, namely:

- a membership fee of Rs 100 per annum,
- Rs five from sale of the menu-cum-brochure,
- Rs two per guest (lodge visitors as well as those who camp in tents),
- Rs five from households in the community,
- Rs 10 per month from each tea shop,
- Rs 20 per month from each lodge,
- Rs 500 from any new tea shop build in Syaphrubesi,
- Rs 1,000 from any new lodge built in Syaphrubesi,
- Rs 500 for any violation of the rules made by CDC by trekking parties,
- Rs five per visitor for use of the hot springs, and
- Rs two per Nepali for use of the hot springs.

Drinking Water and Public Toilet Construction

The objective of this activity was to provide Syaphrubesi with safe drinking water and construct toilets for demonstration purposes. A novel step was taken with respect to the drinking water project. The water source was in the village above where the lodges were located on the west bank of the Bhote Koshi River. Given that Syaphrubesi was only a point en route on the trekking trail and was not a destination, there was little scope to involve the village community in tourism. Through the PQT, the village people were given the labour contract for construction of the drinking water project. This enabled them to earn wages and also, since taps were provided to the villagers, they were able to appreciate the PQT. This helped to reduce animosity between the lodge owners and the village community. There are currently four taps at the bus stops, three taps in the meadow area, and two taps in Kami gaun.

Two public toilets were also constructed by the PQT. Generally public toilets are constructed on public lands and, since ownership rights are not clearly defined in such a situation, toilets generally stop functioning in a short period of time due to lack of maintenance. To avoid this problem, the PQT experimented by constructing public toilets on private land, assigning maintenance responsibility to the land owner. Those who wanted to use them had to obtain the keys from the land owners (lodge owners). Since the public toilets were constructed on the land of two lodge owners and were used by the tourists visiting the two lodges, the lodge owners were forced to keep the toilets clean. The provision of water helped. After over two years, the public toilets have continued to function. Across the river where another lodge community is settled, two public toilets were constructed by international NGOs prior to the PQT. These toilets were not functioning on our first visit to Syaphrubesi in April 1995 and also during the last visit in December 1996. Although the toilets had been renovated several times, there was no maintenance and they were effectively not functioning.

By December 1996, almost all lodges had constructed their own toilets. The small community scattered around the lodges had also constructed toilets, some of which are of a temporary nature. The construction of toilets has eased the sanitation problems which a few years ago was the prime problem in Syaphrubesi.

Box 3

Drinking Water Project: Linking Tourism with Local Community Development

The water source of the currently constructed drinking water project under the PQT was in the uphill community (Kami Gaun), on the west bank of the Bhote Koshi River. Initially, there was disagreement from this community about allowing their water source to be used by the population below (lodge community mostly). The CDC took an active role in the dispute and decided to contract out the project to the community and also to provide several water taps. Since the community was able to make monetary gains and also enjoy easy access to water, an agreement was quickly reached and the water project was undertaken. Each user unit has to pay a differential tariff for the use of water. The funds are collected by the CDC who uses it for maintenance. A new relationship and solidarity between the two communities have, thus, been fostered and a link between tourism and the community established.

Alternative Energy

Realising the need to reduce the demand for fuelwood and hence pressure on forests, a new fuelwood saving device, namely the back boiler³, was introduced by the PQT. With the successful demonstration of this technology, there has been growing interest among all lodge owners in installing this energy saving device. Even the tea shops are eager to install it. Moreover, the surrounding villagers have talked to the CDC about installation. So far, 25 back boilers (15 back boilers of 75-litre and 10 of 50-litre capacity) were ordered after the demonstration. One person has been trained to develop and install back boilers. The trained persons will receive 75 per cent of the installation charges and 25 per cent goes into the CDC fund. The cost of the materials is borne by the purchaser.

The installation of back boilers is instrumental in reducing the pressure on forests as there should be a significant decrease in firewood consumption. Evidence available from Ghandruk shows that this system has been able to save on an average 675kg of

Box 4

Community Toilet on Private Land

Prior to the PQT, people did not use toilets. In response to this poor sanitary situation, a clean-up campaign was launched by the project. This included the construction of two public toilets on private land. Lodge owners were also encouraged to build their own toilets. The use of private property for public use, although creating some dissatisfaction initially, ensured that the public toilets constructed would continue to be maintained. This is exactly what has happened and, after nearly two years, these toilets are functioning and well maintained.

This system consists of a piped and galvanized iron drum with a capacity of from 50 to 75 litres. The pipe is connected to the drum and then buried within the traditional cooking hearth. The cold water from the bottom of the tank flows through the coil and is heated by the heat generated in the hearth.

wood per month per lodge during the peak tourist season - a net reduction of 23 per cent in firewood use (Banskota and Sharma 1996). Clearly this system needs to be expanded. So far in the development and installation of this technology, it has been learned that it is more desirable from the cost point of view to develop such systems on site as at least 20 per cent of the pieces were damaged while carrying the water drums from Kathmandu. Currently, Syaphrubesi receives electricity and this has helped even further to introduce electrical gadgets to lodge owners, with a far-reaching impact on reducing the demand for firewood and hence pressure on the forests.

An Income-generating Programme for Women

Realising the importance of linking the community to tourism development, the PQT has also introduced income-generating programmes directed towards women. The scale of tourism in Syaphrubesi is small, and there is little scope for the members of the community in the nearby village who do not own lodges to benefit from tourism. However, unless links between community and tourism are established, tourism is not likely to be sustainable. This is a lesson that has already been learned in the context of Nepal's mountain tourism.

An eight-day long entrepreneurship development training programme was carried out in association with the Women Entrepreneurs' Association of Nepal (WEAN), and this resulted in 21 women becoming very enthusiastic about setting up tourism-related businesses of their own. In addition, a total of 11 women from the villages was also brought on an observation tour of WEAN projects to Kathmandu and Nagarkot. Several women's groups or *Ama Toli* (13 mothers' groups with 71 members) have already been organized and about 20 women have so far been trained in several skills such as vegetable production, poultry raising, and rabbit (angora) farming (Satyal 1996). A credit programme was also developed for the women trainees to establish income

Box 5 WEAN Micro-Credit and Savings' Programme

WEAN introduced a Micro-Credit and Savings' programme in March 1995. The main objective of this programme is to arrange capital for micro-level women entrepreneurs and help them to develop the habit of saving. WEAN began this programme from a capital of Rs 2 lakhs. In this programme, there are 17 groups in Kathmandu Valley and 25 groups in Syaphrubesi. In the Syaphrubesi programme, the funds have been expanded further by an additional amount of Rs 206,000. The general features of this programme are as follow.

Make groups consisting of five to 15 members

1. Begin saving on the basis of the capacity of the members
2. Extend loans of up to Rs 15,000, for a period of one year
3. Interest will be charged at 18 per cent
4. Repayment should be carried out on a monthly basis
5. No collateral is needed and the group itself stands guarantee

Box 6

Income-generating Activities for Women

Several women from Syaphrubesi were brought on a tour to Kathmandu by the PQT and were provided with training in several areas by WEAN. Through a loan scheme developed by WEAN, women have been encouraged to take small loans to run their own small-scale businesses. The size of the loan is Rs 5,000 in the beginning and Rs 8,000 for repeat borrowers. The *Ama Toli* conducts regular meetings and each member contributes Rs 100 to a membership fund. The fund is used for revolving credit among the members. Vegetable production has helped minimise the leakage of tourist-generated income as the lodges in Syaphrubesi can now purchase most of their seasonal vegetables locally. Thanks to WEAN, this programme has been instrumental in motivating women to take part in community development and in developing linkages between tourism and the community.

generation. Kitchen gardening, poultry, weaving, and small tea shops have already been established with the help of loans. This loan scheme has expanded to surrounding villages. The PQT first contributed Rs 50,000 and later doubled the amount through WEAN to expand its loan scheme to the mother's group in Syaphrubesi (Satyal 1996).

Although a move in the right direction, the income-generating programme has not been able to gain impetus, mainly due to the lack of funds on the one hand and the lack of staff on the part of WEAN. The size of the loan is small and revolving credit does not permit many women to acquire loans. Unless loans taken are already paid up, new loans cannot be sanctioned.

Community Identified Projects

The component of the action taken by the project in Syaphrubesi was to develop, repair, or maintain community-identified projects and to build social capital in the community on a sustained basis. Under this component, development work identified by the community was carried out upon the CDC's recommendation. Work includes a 365-metre long drainage system in the Bus park, repair to the hot springs, stone paving in old Syaphru, Gombha and *mane* repair in old Syaphru, and installation of 12 dustbins.

LESSONS LEARNED AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Introduction

The PQT programme in Syaphrubesi has already been phased out and the project has now selected Dhunche and Thulo Syaphru as its new locations. Although it is premature to assess the sustainability of a project in a short period of time, it is possible to identify some critical factors underlying the success achieved by the PQT in Syaphrubesi from the experiences gained so far.

The objective of the PQT in the context of Syaphrubesi has been to promote sustainable tourism development (hosts and visitors). This becomes clear when examining the

beneficiaries identified by the PQT; namely *"the village tourism project's beneficiaries are the rural people. The Village Tourism Project attempts to introduce a process to improve supply management through a variety of short-run action programmes. To promote the link between tourism and community development, it aims to introduce income-generating programmes targetted at women, thus addressing gender concerns as well."*(Banskota et al. 1995).

Sustainability can be seen to have three critical dimensions; namely, social, economic, and environmental. Overall sustainability requires that there is sustainability on all three fronts. Lessons learned so far from the PQT help to identify a number of critical factors deemed important for the overall sustainability of the project. Critical factors are meant to be crucial variables, the presence (success factors) or absence (failure factors) of which is vital for the attainment of at least one element or object of sustainability and which do affect other aspects of sustainability. Thus *critical factors are those which need to be changed from their current state, or conserved or protected in their current state, in order to improve the carrying capacity of the environment based on some predetermined standard or perceptive judgement.*

Project Design

One important point that merits attention is the manner in which the PQT was conceptualised and implemented. The PQT was formulated on the basis of UNDP's Sustainable Human Development (SHD) framework (Banuri et al. 1994). Within this framework three factors are important for sustainability; namely, social experiment, social learning, and social innovation. An important concept in SHD is social capital formation. Social capital is argued to amalgamate human, physical, and natural capitals. Stated differently, ways to promote and accumulate decision-making, public action, institutional capability, participation, leadership, etc (all intangible attributes) are important in the formation of social capital. While there are ideas on how to accumulate other forms of capital, accumulating and building social capital are still in the learning stages. Therefore, social experimentation becomes essential. One example in social experimentation could be considered constructing a public toilet on public land. The PQT took this approach rather than a target-oriented approach in the Syaphrubesi project context, and this approach appears to have had some success. The steering committee composed of members from the public and private sectors (partnership approach, Box 7) provided both groups with an opportunity to interact and share their experiences in decision-making. Members of the steering committee opined that this approach had been mutually beneficial in putting a sharp focus on the project. Additionally, the roles played by the Syaphrubesi team and the coordinator of PQT have also been instrumental in achieving success. The motivator stationed at Syaphrubesi was trusted by the lodge owners, and they frequently sought his advise. Later, as the project progressed, lodge owners from other neighbouring areas had also begun to seek advice from the motivator.

Box 7

Partnership Approach

The partnership approach tried out in the PQT project has been effective in the context of decision-making and taking quick action. In the past, the private sector and the government blamed each other for doing whatever they did or for not doing things as the main reason for poor relationships. Under the partnership being tried out, mutual understanding had been strengthened. As a result, the government was always eager to help in whatever way they could and reciprocity from the private sector was equal.

Examining how the partnership approach has worked in the pilot area, several success criteria merit attention. It is important to judge the extent to which the pilot activities are continuing as a direct result of public and private sector partnership and coordination at the global, national, and local levels. Partnership at the national level is the formation of the steering committee with private and public sector participation and their active roles in the PQT. Similarly, the formation of the task force for each pilot project has meant that it was able to provide a catalytic role for the newly-formed, local participatory institutions. At the local level (operational level), this partnership is still weak and, unless it is strengthened, quality tourism development will not be completely successful. At the global level, UNDP's involvement has been crucial.

Source: Banskota et al. 1995

Observation Tour and Training

The observation tour was a critical innovation of the PQT. The tour to Kathmandu's five-star hotels gave the Syaphrubesi lodge owners an idea of what standards of cleanliness foreign tourists are accustomed to in their countries. This tour was then followed by a tour to Ghandruk in which 'seeing is believing' became a crucial element of success in Syaphrubesi. The training programmes provided impetus to the entire process of improving the quality of tourism in Syaphrubesi.

The observation tour helped in other ways also. The lodge community was motivated to keep the area clean, as people realised that cleanliness is an important part of quality tourism. The construction of public toilets was a key entry point for the PQT. As an incentive to lodges to build their own toilets, a complementary facility; namely, the provision of piped water, was also provided. Ways to mobilise financial resources were also quickly devised by the CDC.

Involvement of the Local Community

Institutional building at the grass roots is another critical factor that has the potential for sustaining positive impacts. The Conservation and Development Committee (CDC) and different women's groups formed in Syaphrubesi, under the guidance of the PQT, have taken a greater role in contributing to the local economy and social development through their involvement in tourism and other income-generating activities. The observation tour to Ghandruk was critical to the emergence of a strong CDC in Syaphrubesi. During the observation tour to Ghandruk, the Syaphrubesi lodge owners

Box 8

Crucial Factors for Social Sustainability

Observation Tour

- The observation tour has been an effective way of increasing participation, generating awareness, and disseminating new knowledge and was crucial for developing a vision.
- Inclusion of women members from the lodge community was instrumental for disseminating knowledge among other women in Syaphrubesi.
- The observation tour inculcated a sense of competition among the lodge owners in Syaphrubesi, as they realised that, if their standards did not improve, they will have difficulty in competing with mountain tourism areas such as Ghandruk.

Institutional Building/Social Capital Formation

- It is essential to incorporate all the key people of the community in the CDC.
- Selection of various office bearers should be left to the CDC members themselves.
- Guidance from the PQT (external agent) is necessary.

were able to appreciate the need and importance of the CDC in making rules and regulations and enforcing them. Had they not been able to observe and appreciate the functioning of the CDC in Ghandruk, the formation of the CDC in Syaphrubesi would perhaps have not been as effective as it has been in such a short period of time. Another important lesson learned in the context of sustainability is the need for a good representation of members from the village community on an institutional basis. The CDC in Syaphrubesi makes its own rules and regulations and enforces them. Decisions are generally made through consensus. In the early stages, the CDC was not very effective, but, over time, greater understanding among the members has developed, and this has helped to strengthen the CDC. The CDC chairman in Syaphrubesi is a very dedicated lodge owner and his leadership qualities are appreciated by the community.

Technology Suited to Local Conditions

The introduction of new technology requires adaptive experiments. Local people who have little experience with new technologies are generally reluctant to use such technologies. The back boiler stove has perhaps been the correct technology to introduce into Syaphrubesi. During the tour to Ghandruk, the Syaphrubesi guests were able to see the technology in use in Ghandruk. When introduced to their area, they were quick to accept it.

Another critical dimension of sustainability in the environmental context relates to the use of firewood. Although the PQT made efforts to promote new technologies to reduce the dependence of lodges on firewood, this has not been very successful so far. But, as more lodges begin to use the new technology, this will have a positive impact on the environment in terms of firewood use (Banskota and Sharma 1996). Other factors

that have contributed to improvement in the environmental situation are the establishment of toilets in most of the lodges and their proper use, garbage separation and proper disposal, availability of piped water, cleanliness, etc.

Skill-based Training and Complementary Activities

With regard to developing linkages between the community and tourism in Syaphrubesi, two tangible efforts have been made. In the first place, drinking water has also been provided to the community located above the lodge area. This community has thus been able to appreciate tourism, since, without tourism, they would not be able to enjoy the potable water facility.

Second, women are involved in income-generating activities, for which the PQT involved WEAN. Although the WEAN loan scheme helped women to set up various small-scale businesses, the size of the revolving fund from which the women could borrow was small. Thus, the scale of intervention of the income-generating scheme has not been strong enough to establish a strong linkage of tourism with the local economy. Leakages from tourism income can be minimised by developing stronger linkages between tourism and community production activities. Many of the lodge owners travel regularly to Dhunche (a one-hour bus ride) and Trishuli to purchase various items, such as vegetables, milk, and meat, that could be produced locally.

Educating Visitors

On the demand side, the problem is that visitors have the tendency to bargain with the lodge owners over food and accommodation prices, complaining that the prices are too high. This has at times created problems for the lodge owners who have made investments to upgrade their facilities. Without charging the higher prices set by the CDC, there is no way the facilities can be maintained. There has been no effort on the

Box 9 **Crucial Factors for Environmental Sustainability**

- The drinking water project has helped sustain cleanliness in lodges.
- Construction of public toilets on private land has been an effective way to maintain toilets.
- Construction of toilets and provision of water have been important in improving tourism quality.
- The community feels proud because the projects identified by them have also been addressed by the PQT.

Hygiene and Sanitation

- Initiating a clean-up campaign created an immediate positive, visual impact on the local community.
- The donation of land by two people to construct community toilets is a case in point. Involving local people in designing activities in their interest was vital for ensuring participation.
- When local people see immediate benefits from new interventions they are motivated to sustain the benefits.
- Hygiene and sanitation training should focus more on women/mothers.

part of the Park Management to educate the visitors. This problem can be resolved only through a concerted effort to educate the visitors. Unless the demand side is also addressed through marketing and promotional activities, the investments being made by the Syaphrubesi lodge owners may be difficult to realise.

Factors Hindering Sustainability

There are some issues that have not been addressed adequately by the PQT, however. Some of the points discussed do not fall within the mandate of the PQT, but in the government policy arena, which in the context of tourism in LNP, means that the Department of Tourism and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation are the responsible agencies.

On the one hand, visitors to LNP have not increased but new lodge construction permits are being issued. This is not a responsible action on the part of the Park authority. The Park authority needs to assess the viability of investments and advise the lodge owners accordingly. This does not appear to be happening. On the part of the Department of Tourism, LNP has not been promoted sufficiently to attract more visitors to the Park.

The steep rise in the royalty fee also does not appear to be justifiable. Improvements in the tourism supply side have only begun to take place and those also in Syaphrubesi, which is not by any means an important tourist destination in LNP. Increasing royalty fees sharply when improvements and investments are just beginning is a false step and could halt the process of Quality Tourism begun in LNP. This gives wrong signals to investors. Although intervention to improve the supply side of tourism in Syaphrubesi has been fairly successful, policy and demand side issues related to visitors need to be addressed to achieve overall success.

Replicability

Can the success achieved in Syaphrubesi be replicated elsewhere? It is very difficult to give a precise answer to this question. Since the programme has recently been phased out from Syaphrubesi, sufficient time is needed in order to come to any firm conclusion regarding both sustainability and replicability. The modality used by the PQT has been fairly effective as has been noted above and is worth trying out in other places. Note that the modality involves complementary activities that reinforce one another. Already lodge owners in Thulo Syaphru have begun to try the Syaphrubesi process in their own community .

Conclusions

The PQT has demonstrated how a well-designed programme can improve the capabilities of the rural lodge community involved in tourism to improve the quality of their products. Besides the successes that have been observed in Syaphrubesi, significant demonstration

Box 10

Crucial Factors for Economic Sustainability

Increasing Human Capital

- The training provided was quickly internalised by the lodge owners and helped in improving tourism services.
- Hospitality training should focus more on women as they are equally involved in lodge management.
- Standardising the menu has helped to maintain standards in the lodges and in marketing their products to visitors.
- Standardisation in accommodation and meal prices has brought improved understanding among the lodge owners.
- The menu-cum-brochure helps to provide financial contributions to the CDC.
- Since some training was organized at the beginning of the trekking season, lodge owners were able to use the skills immediately.
- Training should be carried out jointly by experts such as HMTTC (mobile training unit) as they are fully experienced and equipped.
- Group training followed by practical demonstrations in most of the individual lodges was extremely useful to the lodge owners.
- Since there are many women involved in lodge management, having women trainers is essential.

Tourism-Community Linkage

- Those in the local community who do not own lodges have been able to appreciate tourism development in Syaphrubesi as they too have benefited from the drinking water project.

Women's Involvement and Income Generation

- WEAN has been instrumental in providing capital for women who do not own lodges and motivating them to form groups and engage in income-generating projects.
- The loan scheme is currently too small for greater participation of women in income-generating activities.

and spill-over effects on surrounding villages have also begun to take place. Several factors have been noted as the keys to success and hopefully to sustainability: the observation tour, in-house training at Syaphrubesi with follow up training, formation of the CDC and project design, and motivated staff are identified as the key elements of success.

Some issues that need to be addressed originate on the demand side of tourism and policy. Visitors need to be made aware that bargaining may have negative impacts on the motivation to maintain and improve standards. From a policy point of view, the Department of Tourism has to promote the efforts made in Syaphrubesi so that more visitors are motivated to visit the area. The Syaphrubesi example can have strong demonstration effects throughout LNP. Secondly, the DNPWC needs to consider seriously revising its royalty rates, which do not appear to be justifiable. This factor can lead to negative incentives and, thus, retard the process of improvement that is taking place in the Park.