

Draft Action Plan for Tourism Development

Based on the analysis and discussions with tourism officials, local administrators and members of the local trading communities, specific plans have been drawn up for each of the case-study areas. The financial details of each specific activity have not been worked out, but the overall financial requirement for implementation has been calculated as less than what the Government has been spending, or has proposed to spend, in these areas.

Draft Plan for Kinnaur District

In the case of Kinnaur, it is an important and fundamental question whether tourism as an industry should be promoted at all. Investments in tourism are not likely to bring immediate returns, compared to the returns from orchard farming. The right way may be to dovetail investments with the marketing of horticultural products. One alternative route to tourism could be as an international trading centre for apples. The investments in this, along with the possibility of providing sophisticated communications' technology, can pay off significantly as both tourism and apple production in the region could mutually benefit. This view is also held by some of the local people though they are unable to articulate it in a comprehensive manner. While we have cursorily investigated the possibility of such a development, the existing policy and institutional framework will make this almost impossible in the short term. Therefore, it would be practical to shape the action plan in the light of the Government's plan programme and modify it slowly so that a more relevant and directly beneficial strategy may be adopted for the development of tourism in the district. Thus, the specific areas of concern identified and the Government's plan programme have been analysed to draw up the draft action plan.

Accommodation

Accommodation is the most critical limiting factor in Kinnaur district. The Government had proposed two specific means in its plan. One is a high investment tourist complex which will only serve the destination of Sangla; the other is a scheme for the building of paying guest accommodations by the local people.

Tourist Complex. A 20-room complex is to be developed at Sangla by the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC). The budget

estimate is Rs 10 million. This ought to be avoided as the HPTDC investments are high and most of their construction entails using materials from outside, e.g., steel and cement, and even the skills for construction come from outside the region. Further, it is even being sought to hand over existing tourist complexes to private enterprises. The idea, of a tourist complex in the style of HPTDC, or even of outside enterprises in other tourist centres, needs to be avoided in the case of Kinnaur. In case the Government wants to pursue such a scheme, priority must be accorded to the local people. There are a few people from Sangla who have indicated that they are interested in establishing a tourist complex. They should be supported with the necessary technical and financial assistance to establish and operate the complex.

Paying Guest Accommodation. The Government has proposals for introducing paying guest accommodation. In fact, some guest houses are already operating. This is a viable strategy for increasing accommodation, and the cost of additional rooms will be only one-tenth of the estimates of the Tourism Development Corporation. A truly large-scale public participation in Himachal Pradesh's tourism development process, and the accrual of benefits to the local people, can be envisaged from such a programme. In implementing such a programme subsidies must be carefully avoided. While subsidies to weaker economic sections may be legitimate, they have to be based on performance. To ensure this, the banks may be asked for loans and the last segment of funds may be provided as a subsidy rather than providing it up front. The paying-guest scheme is particularly applicable in Kinnaur where outsiders cannot purchase land to set up accommodation facilities.

The success of the paying-guest accommodation scheme requires that information about availability of accommodation be available to all visitors. This could be dove-tailed with another plan programme for improving telecommunications facilities. All guest-house operators can be provided with long distance calling facilities, and local telephone exchanges at all the centres can be improved. By doing so and avoiding construction by the Government, of high-investment tourist complexes which appeal only to the 'Mass Tourist', some dispersal of the benefits of tourism may be discussed among the local people, and they also might understand the tourists better, and a greater understanding of tourists by the village community might be achieved.

Sanitation and Sewerage

This is the next critical input required for increasing the tourist inflow without burdening the local environment.

A financial allocation of Rs one million each has been proposed for strengthening and improving the existing drainage and sanitation system, developing parks, and undertaking landscaping work at Rekong Peo, Kalpa, and Sangla. Rs 5.7 million has been made available for the development of sewerage facilities at Rekong Peo.

In each of these cases, the technologies adopted for developing sanitation and sewerage systems have been a poor replica of towns in the plains. No fundamental thinking has thus far been noticed in the hill areas. Research into developing sanitation and sewerage systems should be initiated, and it should enable future expansion.

Investments should be made only after designing these facilities effectively, as there is time for Kinnaur to become a destination for a large number of tourists and the results could well be replicated in many other hill towns.

Creation of Parking and Bus Stands

Rs one million each has been made for the construction of vehicular parking spaces at Rekong Peo, Kalpa, and Sangla. The location and the sloping conditions where parking spaces are built would be very important. In many towns in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, it has been noticed that such spaces are either located where they obstruct the traffic and/or on slopes where vehicles have to accelerate while other vehicles are turning or moving. This causes very high levels of pollution. It is necessary to set up or improve the bus stands at Sangla, Rekong Peo, and Pooh, and bus stands also allow for smoother traffic flow.

Along the travel routes, certain wayside amenities including parking and sanitation need to be created, and for this there is already a provision of Rs two million.

Exploring Options for Creating Alternative Tourism

- a) Skiing. Skiing could be an important sport in terms of attracting tourists to the region. Given the fact that through their apple trade the Kinnauri's have some linkages with the national capital, a small but rich segment could choose to come to Kinnaur. Kalpakhand has potential for skiing.
- b) Trekking. Trekking has yet to pick up in Kinnaur. Only a very small number do the Kinner Kailash *parikrama*. Detailed mapping of trekking routes and training for local people as trekking guides are essential. There is a provision of Rs 10 million for the development of trekking tourism; this is sufficient

- for the investigation and the establishment of basic facilities for trekking to different primary destinations.
- c) Eco-tourism. There is a significant rise in awareness among urban tourists of ecological concerns. Their urge to learn more about the environment can be harnessed to find opportunities for eco-tourist trails. For governments, eco-tourism means only wildlife sanctuaries and developing facilities such as parking places, benches, parks, and bird-watching towers. Investments are required to establish interpretation centres within the region and also to locate knowledgeable guides. To begin with, in the Rakcham-Chitkul region, the tourism department could collaborate with the Wildlife Institute of India, or other agencies, and set up a model eco-tourism programme. This could be achieved with an investment of Rs 1.5 million, which includes the training of local people.
 - d) Camping Tourism. Kinnaur is not listed as a potential site for camping, but it offers various sites where tents could be put up. Camping tourism will also avert the immediate construction of more accommodation. The district administration could provide assistance under various programmes for local people who could provide services on hire or pitch basis in specific places for tourists.
 - e) Shilpgram. The Government proposes to start a *shilpgram* at Rekong Peo at an estimated cost of Rs 7.5 million to promote handloom and handicraft items, e.g., Kinnauri shawls, caps, and angora products as well as other horticulture and agro-based products. Live demonstrations and displays of the crafts and horticultural products have also been proposed.
 - f) Fairs and Festivals. The Government proposes to encourage the festivals of Kinnaur for the promotion of tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

Support Systems for Promotion and Monitoring

- a) Publicity and Promotion. The Government proposes to undertake large-scale publicity and promotion efforts through the media, trekking/city/circuit maps, brochures, and other such materials. Currently, publicity materials are designed to reach only the mass tourist segments in metropolitan centres. It would be ideal to provide detailed information on the region, particularly in Shimla and other crowded centres, where tourists seek alternative destinations. A computerised information base would be very useful, and it could be achieved for a wide area with limited investment. A financial outlay of Rs 0.5 million would be sufficient to accomplish this task.
- b) Survey and Statistics. In 1989-90, the Himachal Pradesh Government's Directorate for Economics and Statistics conducted a tourist traffic survey. Such periodic assessment is essential, and the methodology needs to be standardised to enable comparisons. This can be achieved by providing

training to the District Statistical Office, and the information can be computerised and made available through the National Informatics Centre's Network (NICNET). The additional investments will be marginal.

Specific destinations, such as Recong Peo-Kalpa, and Sangla, should be monitored regularly for changes in 'carrying capacity'. The district tourist office could be trained to undertake such an analysis so that seasonal variations can be detailed.

- c) Rescue and Safety. Keeping in mind the fragile landscape of Kinnaur, and hence the necessity for rescue and safety with provisions for mobile medical facilities, it is surprising that there is no financial allocation for such coverage in Kinnaur. The district hospital should be equipped with such a facility which would also serve the local people.

Draft Plan for the Badrinath Tourist Zone

The uncertainties prevailing in the region have been emphasised in the overview studies and in the course of this report. However, building a very cogent plan for the zone seems to be possible. There are specific aspects that need to be dealt with before discussing specific tasks in each of the destinations. The legal framework on various aspects needs modification. The specific ones are as follow.

- 1) There is no justification for designating the Valley of Flowers as a sanctuary and banning the use of Valley resources by local communities. The communities strongly resent this step, but since they are a minority their voices tend to be ignored.
- 2) The entry-tax to Badrinath has been abolished. This has resulted in the non-availability of funds for the town *panchayat*. The state has not been releasing funds for the upkeep of the town, and this has been attributed to procedural delays. The number of tourists is so high that there could be an entry-tax per vehicle, which the tourists are already willing to pay. This would certainly help to maintain the town.
- 3) The Government's attempt to acquire land and distribute it at very low prices to outside business interests should be stopped. The Government's privilege, through legislative means, to acquire land should not be misused as it will deprive the local people of benefits.
- 4) The attempt made by certain sectors to build a road up to Ghangaria has to be legislated against. Road construction along, the route to Hemkund Sahib and the Valley of Flowers will be totally detrimental to the environment of the region, which abounds in rhododendrons and birch.

The draft plan looks at the immediate activities in specific destinations and seeks to identify what could still be done in a period of uncertainty.

Mana Village

Sanitation facilities and foot routes need to be improved. This can be achieved by supporting the village *panchayat* with technical and marginal financial assistance.

The villagers produce excellent woollen carpets and other woollen goods. Proper marketing outlets should be devised for them. The Scheduled Caste and Tribal Development Corporation in the region should be asked to include this in their priority work area. This will entail no direct investments as the corporation has allocated funds for such a purpose, and it is autonomous in its operations.

The villagers of Mana also have their winter homes at Gopeshwar. Almost all their children are studying. The peak season overlaps with the summer break and, therefore, it would be ideal to train some youths to guide tourists to tourist sites beyond the village, e.g., Vasudhara falls, *Vyas gufa*, *Ganesh gufa*, and *Bhim-pul*. Since they are ethnically different, the people themselves are something of a tourist attraction. This makes them very uneasy, particularly the elders. One way of avoiding this would be establishing a trekking route that does not necessitate people walking through the village and which takes tourists to areas beyond the village. This can be constructed by the village *panchayat*, with additional funds being provided through employment generation schemes.

Badrinath Town

The Master Plan for the town needs to be thoroughly reviewed, and there must be a fundamental research into town planning. The existing plan allocates specific areas to designated zones as is done in the plains. As a result, Badrinath Temple is now almost hidden behind mindless constructions. Further, as the town *panchayat* itself is seasonally located at Badrinath, there have been significant violations of bye laws. Proceedings against the offenders have become a problem, as they avoid coming during the season when the *panchayat* is in Badrinath; thus, it is hard to pin them down. Moreover, there is a steady stream of VVIPs into the town, and they provide a shield for the offenders.

Badrinath requires a thorough analysis that is much beyond the scope of this project. The variables are too many and the uncertainties that plague the region make it impossible to make any piecemeal recommendations. The review of the master plan must be carried out by an independent agency other than the Town and Country Planning Organisation, which has singularly demonstrated, in many towns, that classification does not consider the special nature of the mountain environment and is not sensitive enough to the various issues that need to be considered.

The investment for undertaking such a process can come from the Uttarakhand Development Department, through Uttar Pradesh's Department of the Environment. This would make it official and legitimate and would also provide a basis for reorienting town planning processes in the region.

As an immediate measure, the pending wages of Badrinath municipality's sanitation workers must be paid forthwith, and they should be encouraged to undertake their activities with greater vigour. Afforestation has also been initiated, but the programme lacks imagination. Thus, the primary requirement of Badrinath is a well-drawn out town plan, considering its seasonality, setting building standards that are aesthetically pleasing and making the plan suitable to the local environmental conditions.

The Valley of Flowers

The fundamental requirement is to denotify the area as a National Park. To ensure that camping, which is currently prohibited, does not become a menace, specific sites in different parts of the Valley can be made into permanent camping areas so that any adverse impact is limited. If denotification occurs, private agencies will be willing to set up permanent camping grounds in the region without impinging on the Government's financial resources.

Tapovan

This is a hot spring located 14km. from Joshimath. This should be developed as a health resort by the local community, in collaboration with other technical agencies. The investments can come from the private enterprises in Joshimath, with priority being accorded to investments by local people.

Development of the Panch Badri(s)

Three of the five *badri(s)* are *en route* to Badrinath, and are accessible during the off-season from Badrinath. The season could be extended with initial visits to these areas. The Garhwal *Mandal Vikas Nigam* has become interested, as a result of this research programme, in investigating further the possibilities for developing this circuit. This will be carried out through the budgetary provisions already available.