Introducing this Resource Book

This resource book covers

➢ Participatory sustainable mountain tourism planning and development at regional, national, and state levels

➢ Resource materials for informed active support for the development, formulation, implementation, management, and monitoring of sustainable mountain tourism development projects at state and national levels

➢ Tools to improve a variety of skills in project formulation, implementation, management, and monitoring of sustainable mountain tourism development projects

Introduction and Background of the Resource Book

The Himal Alaya – the Abode of Snow – has, for a long time, caught the imagination of travellers. The mountain range, commonly known as the Himalayas, is characterised by immense natural beauty and is inhabited by over 150 million people who have an unmatched rich cultural diversity. It is also one of the poorest regions in the world. Many mountain dwellers are dependent on subsistence agriculture and, faced with a booming population and a rapidly deteriorating natural environment, the call for alternative and sustainable livelihood options has become the need of the day. Studies have shown that tourism is one of the more promising alternative livelihood options for people in the Himalayas (Sharma 2000a; East et al. 1988; Kruk and Banskota, in preparation). With its unique natural and cultural resources, the Himalayan region has indisputable tourist potential, and the demand for mountain tourism is growing rapidly. Mountain tourism provides opportunities for, as well as challenges to, providing gainful employment, income, and other socioeconomic benefits, while at the same time conserving the rich natural and sociocultural heritage of the region. Various tourism development projects and plans have been formulated, developed, and implemented in different parts of the Himalayas to promote sustainable mountain tourism – some on a state and national scale, others set up as (sub) regional collaboration projects.

One of these subregional initiatives is the South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Tourism Development Plan. Commissioned by the SASEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) for the initial four SASEC member countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (later joined by Sri Lanka in 2005), this plan builds upon the existing tourism plans of these four attractive but utterly different Himalayan countries. The TWG agreed that the plan should be a thematic framework based on common themes for future tourism development. The plan proposes core strategic directions for the TWG that build upon and add value to the national mountain tourism agendas of the SASEC countries. One of the components of the plan is a human resource development component to train national tourism organisations (NTOs) and state tourism organisations (STOs) on project facilitation and management in sustainable mountain tourism development, in order to increase their skills in facilitating sustainable mountain tourism projects in the region and boost their confidence in participating in subregional tourism cooperation projects.

At the request and with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, and Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), developed and organised a training programme on facilitating sustainable tourism projects from June 12 to 17, 2006, at the ICIMOD Headquarters in Khumaltar, Nepal. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal selected five representatives each to attend this training. Additional trainees from Tibet/China and Myanmar were sponsored by ICIMOD in order to increase the benefits of the training in the wider Himalayan region.

Given the success of the training course, as assessed by internal and external evaluations, and the clearly voiced need of participants to receive more theoretical and practical reference materials on the subject, ICIMOD and SNV were requested to transform the original course materials into comprehensive reference material. This request was endorsed by ADB, and with financial support from ADB and technical input from the NTB and other partners like the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP), and the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), ICIMOD and SNV reworked the initial course materials into a separate but interlinked Resource Book (Volume I) and Toolkit (Volume 2).

Based on the course evaluation results, as well as on wider assessments of information needs, some of the course contents were adapted to become more suitable to the industry's needs. Some subjects originally covered in the training programme have been omitted altogether (such as proposal writing), and some new subjects have been added or expanded upon (such as enterprise development for sustainable mountain tourism, market linkages, and partnerships in sustainable mountain tourism clusters). The reason for doing so was to produce a market-compatible and more complete knowledge database that transcends its original use as a mere source of further reference for the original trainees, and which reaches out to a wider network of professionals and practitioners with an interest in the subject.

Guiding Principle of the Resource Book

NTOs and STOs are involved in planning and developing sustainable mountain tourism in their countries and states. Policies and plans (like the government's five-year plans) are drafted, and sustainable mountain tourism projects are developed and implemented on different scales and by different stakeholders. What are sustainable mountain tourism projects, and how can they be planned and managed? What is the role of the country or state in coordinating and facilitating this process? And how can all the stakeholders work together effectively? This Resource Book strengthens the capacities of NTOs and STOs and/or other facilitators to support a process of planning for sustainable mountain tourism development and plan-based project facilitation in their respective countries or states.

It is assumed that NTOs and STOs are often involved more in supporting planning processes for sustainable mountain tourism (for instance in providing for long-term national tourism development plans) and tourism project formulation and monitoring, rather than implementing the tourism projects themselves. As tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world and becoming more and more competitive, there is an urgent need for proper planning and management of the industry, while ensuring benefits accrue to local mountain communities and conservation of the rich (though fragile) natural and cultural resources. The focal question in this Resource Book is, therefore, how to facilitate a process from sustainable tourism planning to project formulation and monitoring back to the next tourism planning cycle.

NTOs and STOs facilitate projects in project cycles: they initiate and support project formulation in the 'analysis' phase; they support project implementation and monitoring in the 'action' phase; and they evaluate project results (directly or through other organisations) during the 'assessment' phase. These evaluations in turn support national and regional policies and plans and form the base of a new cycle of project formulation (analysis), implementation and monitoring (action), and evaluation (assessment). This process is graphically depicted in Figure 1.1.
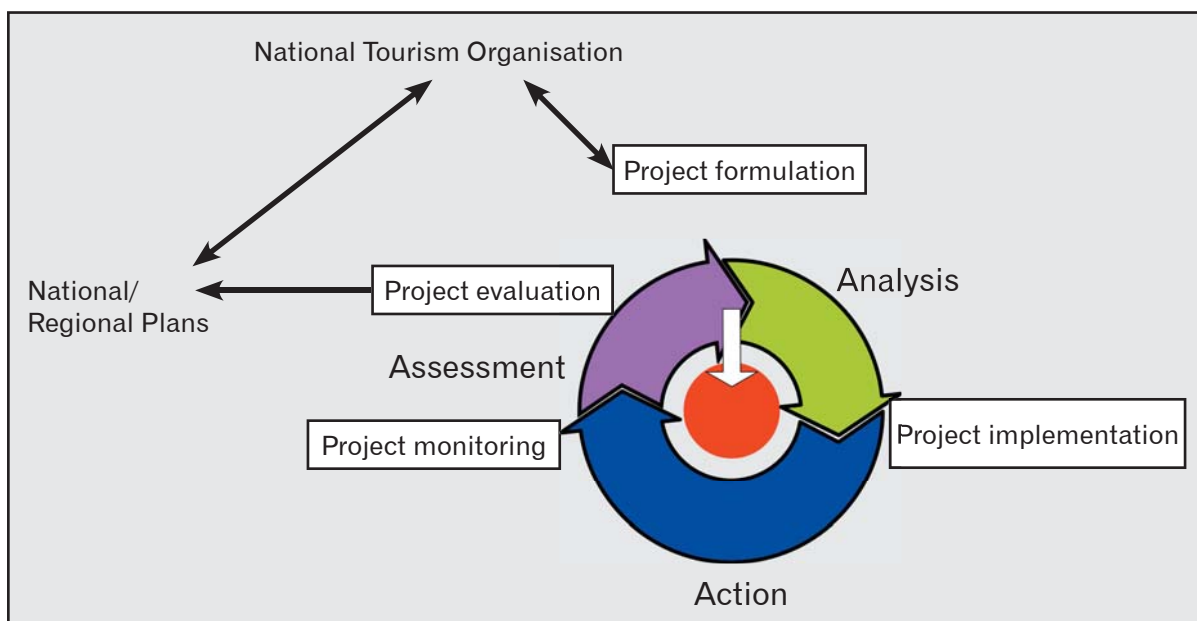
Figure 1.1: Facilitation of the project cycle

In this Resource Book, facilitation of the project cycle is introduced as a guiding principle and ordering process for tools in sustainable mountain tourism planning and development – emphasising poverty reduction, gender, and social inclusion, and the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources – and the planning and management of activities in tourism organisations like NTOs and STOs.

Resource Book Flow

The Resource Book flow is based on the understanding of sustainable mountain tourism planning and the role of different stakeholders in the implementation of these plans through projects. The role of facilitators like NTOs and STOs is highlighted in this process, and tools to support the guidance of the process are introduced.

The Resource Book first introduces recent concepts in sustainable mountain tourism development. It then introduces the framework in which all NTOs and STOs have to work – regional and national plans, national policies, and laws. Then the Resource Book introduces tourism planning and management to develop tourism in a more sustainable, pro-poor, inclusive, and participatory way. Together the combination of these plans, policies, and laws and the participatory planning process form the context in which the NTOs and STOs function.

Thereafter NTOs and STOs are placed more in the centre stage of sustainable mountain tourism development activities. Approaches and tools are introduced through which NTOs and STOs can support tourism development activities, so that NTOs and STOs can scan the context in which projects are formulated and implemented, and determine who are or need to be involved. Finally, project formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation are explained and facilitation tools discussed.

Regional and Mountain Perspective

Throughout this Resource Book, the term 'sustainable mountain tourism' is used to describe approaches and practices that take full account of current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, while addressing the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment, and host communities, especially the poor and other socially disadvantaged groups such as women and minority mountain people. As such, the concept of sustainable mountain tourism is based on pro-poor, pro-local, pro-women, pro-social, pro-environment, and pro-culture inclusion, as well as

other sustainability principles. It equals concepts that elsewhere may be referred to as pro-poor tourism, community-based or small-scale tourism, ecotourism, green tourism, alternative tourism, or responsible tourism, insofar as they rest on the same principles.

'Mountain tourism' is not a specific type of tourism. It refers to any tourism activity taking place in mountain areas in a sustainable way and includes all tourism activities for which mountains are seen to have a comparative advantage such as trekking, mountaineering, white water rafting, cultural tourism, and pilgrimages. The need to address mountain concerns and the potential contribution that tourism can make to mountain communities was recognised at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Since then, the term 'mountain tourism' has been taken up and developed by ICIMOD and other partners in the Himalayan region. Taking place in regions that are remote, difficult to access, and characterised by a rich natural and cultural diversity, wilderness, and often a subsistence way of life, mountain tourism has its specific issues and characteristics. This 'mountain perspective' is an integral part of this Resource Book and is emphasised and illustrated in case studies and examples from the region (Bangladesh, Bhutan, China/Tibet, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) which highlight practices and issues in sustainable mountain tourism from a regional perspective.

Structure and Overview of the Resource Book

This resource consists of two separate but interlinked volumes. Volume I – the Resource Book – deals with all aspects of the project cycle (project cycle planning, implementation, management, and monitoring of sustainable mountain tourism development) from a theoretical and practical perspective. Volume 2 – the Toolkit – gives an overview of all the tools that can be used within these different stages of the project cycle. The chapters and tools in both volumes are organised in a chronological sequence that follows their stage in the project cycle.

Volume I is organised into four parts: Introduction, Overview of Concepts, Overview of Approaches, and Issues and Trends in Institutional Development. Chapter 1 introduces the structure and general context of the Resource Book. In Chapter 2 the central and overarching theme of the Resource Book – project facilitation and management in sustainable mountain tourism development – is explained in more detail. This is followed by a conceptual part (Part 2) in which an overview is given of the tourism industry (Chapter 3), concepts and principles of sustainable mountain tourism (Chapter 4), and sustainable mountain tourism planning and development (Chapter 5). In Part 3, emerging approaches and cross-cutting issues in contemporary sustainable mountain tourism are discussed such as participatory planning and organisation (Chapter 6), multi-stakeholder issues (Chapter 7), gender and social inclusion (Chapter 8), tourism enterprise development (Chapter 9), the use of geographic information systems (GIS) (Chapter 10), and monitoring and evaluation in tourism (Chapter 11). Part 4 (Chapters 12 and 13) concludes with a discussion of the most important issues relating to institutional development, focusing on the specific role of NTOs and STOs and discussing the most important analysis and assessment instruments for sustainable mountain tourism planning and development. The tools for use within these different conceptual frameworks and approaches are described in detail in Volume 2.

Intended Use of the Resource Book

This Resource Book is designed as a reference book. Although the training programme on which it is based was initially designed for state and national tourism organisations, it is intended for wider use. Its broad perspective, covering all stages of the project cycle, and its inclusion of practical tools for use in this cycle, will make it of interest to tourism professionals working at all levels, including those working in tourism planning and development, implementers of sustainable mountain tourism projects, monitoring and evaluation officers, policy makers, and people working in mountain development. The Resource Book may also be a useful source of reference for those studying or working in tourism training institutes or tourism management schools, as well as in academia.