

## Chapter 4

# Concepts and Principles of Sustainable Mountain Tourism

### This chapter covers

- The concepts and guiding principles of sustainable development and of sustainable tourism and their interconnection
- The concepts of carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change
- The concept of pro-poor tourism as a new approach to sustainable mountain tourism

## Introduction: Sustainable Development and Mountain Tourism

### Concept of sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development grew out of the limits to growth debate of the early 1970s. This debate discussed whether or not continuing economic growth would inevitably lead to severe degradation and societal collapse on a global scale. By the late seventies, it was realised that economic development could not be sustained without the conservation of the environment. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) in its world conservation strategy report in 1980 first defined the concept of sustainable development as a process which allows development to take place without degrading or depleting the resources so that they are able to renew themselves to support future as well as current generations. Several years later, the World Commission on Environment and Development, popularised and promoted the concept of sustainable development and emphasised the need to address development and the environment simultaneously (Brundtland 1987). It defined sustainable development as “the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In the same year, the World Bank also reached the conclusion that economic growth, poverty alleviation, and sound environmental management are in many cases mutually consistent objectives (1987).

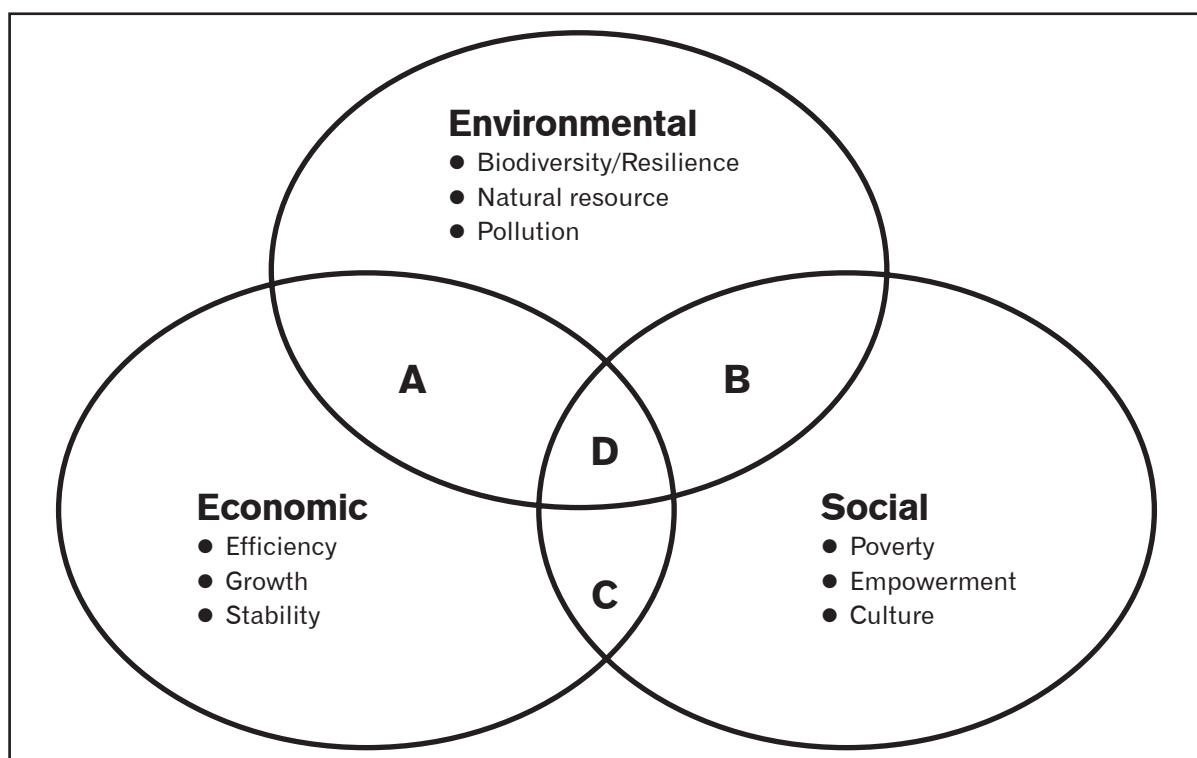
### Dimensions of sustainability

Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept embracing essentially three dimensions or pillars: economic, social, and environmental sustainability (McKercher 2003).

- **Economic sustainability:** Economic sustainability means generating prosperity at different levels of society and addressing the cost effectiveness of all economic activities. It is about the viability of enterprises and activities and their ability to be maintained in the long term. It seeks to maximise human welfare within the constraints of existing capital stock and technologies and ensures the economically efficient allocation of resources that can support future generation.

- **Social sustainability:** Social sustainability means respecting human rights and equal opportunities for all in society. It requires an equitable distribution of benefits, with a focus on alleviating poverty. There is an emphasis on local communities, maintaining and strengthening their life support systems, recognising and respecting different cultures, and avoiding any form of exploitation. It emphasises a development process that empowers people and their social organisations (control over their lives). It ensures that the development process is compatible with the culture, values, and identity of the people and community.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Environmental sustainability means conserving and managing resources, especially those that are not renewable or are precious in terms of life support. It requires action to minimise pollution of air, land, and water and to conserve biological diversity and natural heritage. It stresses preserving the integrity of ecological subsystems for the overall stability of the global ecosystem. It ensures the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biodiversity, and biological resources.

It is important to appreciate that these three pillars are in many ways interdependent and can be both mutually reinforcing or in competition. The real challenge for delivering sustainable development means striking a balance between them as demonstrated in Figure 4.1 (Venn diagram; for more information on Venn diagrams, see Volume 2, Tool 17).



**Figure 4.1: Balancing the dimensions of sustainable development**

While the above definitions provide a neat summary, the meaning and application of the concept of sustainable development is seldom easy because it is broad and complex. While sustainable development allows for economic development within the parameter of resource conservation, sustainability is often viewed from two opposite angles. At one extreme is economic sustainability, where what is being sustained is the economy at whatever cost, at the other is ecological sustainability as a dominant feature, where the natural environment takes priority over economic development. However, all economic, social, and environmental considerations need to be addressed and balanced. Sustainable development is based on principles of sound husbandry of the world's resources, and on equity in the way those resources are used and their benefits distributed.

Sustainable development has different key principles:

- **Inter-generational equity** means that the range of activities and the scope of ecological diversity available to future generations should at least be as broad as for current generations.
- **Social justice and poverty alleviation** means improving the well-being of all residents in a community and not just benefiting the powerful or the rich.
- **Public participation in decision-making processes** means giving all stakeholders a role to play and enabling communities to make decisions on a collective basis rather than having them imposed by external forces.
- **Environmental conservation as an integral component of economic development** implies that economic development without environmental conservation is no longer acceptable.
- **Dealing cautiously with risk and uncertainty** means that in situations where the environmental impacts of activities are not known, the preferred option is to proceed cautiously or not at all until the likely impacts can be determined (McIntyre et al. 1993).

## Defining sustainable mountain tourism development

Sustainable mountain tourism concepts have grown out of the idea of sustainable development. The principles of sustainable development entail a longer-term and more cautious approach to development to ensure that future generations can enjoy at least the same quality of life as the present generation. The UNWTO defined sustainable tourism as early as 1988 as “tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems”. Put differently, sustainable mountain tourism means developing a product that “meets the needs of present tourists and host mountain regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future”, leading to outcomes that improve the tourism product for the good of the economy, the environment, and the local community (UNWTO 1998).

As sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and sociocultural aspects of tourism development, sustainable mountain tourism should do the following:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity
- Respect the sociocultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, provide socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed – stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services for host communities – and contribute to poverty alleviation

An agenda for sustainable tourism, consisting of twelve aims that address economic, social, and environmental impacts, has been developed by UNEP and UNWTO (2005). These twelve aims are as follows:

1. **Economic Viability:** To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term
2. **Local Prosperity:** To maximise the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally
3. **Employment Quality:** To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service, and availability to all without discrimination of gender, race, disability, or in other ways
4. **Social Equity:** To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income, and services available to the poor and marginalised or socially excluded

5. **Visitor Fulfilment:** To provide a safe, satisfying, and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination because of gender, race, disability, or in other ways
6. **Local Control:** To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision-making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders
7. **Community Well-being:** To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities, and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation
8. **Cultural Richness:** To respect and enhance the historic heritage and the authentic culture, traditions, and distinctiveness of host communities
9. **Physical Integrity:** To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment
10. **Biological Diversity:** To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats, and wildlife and minimise damage to them
11. **Resource Efficiency:** To minimise the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services
12. **Environmental Purity:** To minimise the pollution of air, water, and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors

## Key challenges for sustainable mountain tourism

Mountain tourism development, like other forms of development, faces major global challenges that threaten the sustainability of the industry. Some of these global challenges are given below:

- **Managing dynamic growth:** The doubling of international tourist movements predicted for the next 15 to 20 years will place considerable pressure on the very resources on which tourism depends, if growth is not properly planned and managed.
- **Climate change:** Climate change is a major issue for the long-term sustainability of mountain tourism in two senses: firstly, climate change will have consequences for tourism and, secondly, tourism is a contributor to climate change. It is estimated that tourism may contribute up to 5.3 per cent of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, with transport accounting for about 90 per cent of this.
- **Poverty alleviation:** The potential for tourism to contribute to poverty reduction in mountain areas is increasingly being recognised. This is partly because tourism is often a new source of revenue in rural areas where three-quarters of the world's poor are found together with rich cultural and natural tourism assets. The challenge is to find ways of channelling visitor spending towards poor people, minimising leakages, and maximising linkages with local production systems.
- **Support for conservation:** The need to generate more financial resources to support conservation, both of natural, cultural, and historic sites and resources is a worldwide issue.
- **Health, safety, and security:** In recent years, uncertainty about the health and safety of travellers and of certain destinations has caused significant fluctuations in tourism flows. Although this may be a short-term phenomenon, it should be regarded as a global issue for the sustainability of mountain tourism.

The challenge is finding an acceptable balance among the following key elements for sustainability of mountain tourism: preserving the mountain resource base for future generations; maintaining the productivity of the resource base; maintaining and protecting the biodiversity and heritage (culture and history); and ensuring equity within and between generations, and in and between different gender groups, ethnic groups, rural and urban groups, and different economic classes, and so forth.

# Tourism Carrying Capacity and Limits of Acceptable Change

## Concept of tourism carrying capacity

The notion of carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change are at the core of the concept of sustainable tourism. The UNWTO defines the carrying capacity for tourism as “the maximum number of people that may visit a tourism destination at the same time without causing destruction of the physical, economic, and sociocultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors’ satisfaction.”

Carrying capacity should be understood as the maximum level of visitor use and related infrastructure that an area can accommodate, i.e., a threshold beyond which deterioration of the resources, diminished visitor and host satisfaction, and unacceptable adverse impacts on the local area (natural or sociocultural environment) can be expected to occur. Carrying capacity is a multidimensional and dynamic concept and varies depending on place, season, and time; user behaviour and expectations; facility designs; and policy limitations. As a measure or indicator of sustainability, carrying capacity offers an early warning system for problems resulting from over-capacity and/or poor tourism planning or management of tourist destinations. More information on how the concept of carrying capacity can be used as a tool can be found in Volume 2 (Tool 2).

## Dimensions of carrying capacity

Appreciation of the complexities involved in defining carrying capacity has resulted in the development of different components that can be broadly grouped into environmental, economic, and social behavioural aspects (Box 4.1). The application of different aspects of the concept in the case of Upper Mustang in Nepal is shown in Boxes 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4.

### *Biophysical or environmental carrying capacity*

Environmental carrying capacity (also known as biophysical carrying capacity) can be further split into biological carrying capacity (dealing with flora and fauna) and physical carrying capacity (dealing with soil, water, and geomorphology). Researchers have endeavoured to identify environmental thresholds beyond which physical and biological matters are modified by human interaction. Environmental carrying capacity is a range of limits rather than a single fixed carrying capacity. These limits should be determined according to a combination of environmental resource thresholds, investment options, and management policies.

### *Economic carrying capacity*

Economic carrying capacity is defined as the ability to absorb tourism development without squeezing out the desirable local development functions. It is a measure of the number of people that may be welcomed to a location before the economy of the area is adversely affected, for instance in the form of economic leakages, inflation, creation of scarcity, and so forth.

### *Social carrying capacity*

Social carrying capacity, also called behavioural carrying capacity, is defined as the extent of quality of activity allowed before users (visitors and the host population) perceive the environment as negatively changed compared to before. It relates to user perception of the number of other people that they feel comfortable with in any given environment. It differs from physical carrying capacity in that exceeding the social carrying capacity affects both the hosts’ and the users’ experiences rather than the physical environment itself.

#### Box 4.1: Dimensions of Tourism Carrying Capacity

Environmental	Physical	Refers to the amount of suitable land available for facilities and includes the finite capacity of the facilities to cope with visitor pressure. A measure of the number of tourists that may be accommodated on a site.
	Biological/ Ecological	The limit of acceptable impacts on the flora, fauna, soil, water, and air quality. A measure of the number of people that may be accommodated on a site before damage occurs to the environment.
Economic		The ability to absorb tourism development without squeezing out desirable local development functions. A measure of the number of people that may be welcomed to a location before the economy of the area is adversely affected.
Social Behavioural or Perceptual		The level of impacts tolerable before the visitors' experiences are impaired. It also includes the host population and culture and individual perceptions of crowding.

#### Box 4.2: Environmental Carrying Capacity in Upper Mustang, Nepal

Environmental Factors/ Indicators	Present Status	Present Impacts of Tourism	Implications for the Future
Condition of Forests	Very sparse forest cover in a firewood and fodder deficient context; excessive deforestation; limited private plantation	Maybe high because of the use of local fuelwood by porters	Low regeneration capacity, some scope for community plantation in irrigable areas; scope for alternative energy technology
Littering/Garbage/ Pollution	Littering/garbage/pollution fairly low	Little visible at present	Limited environmental pollution/degradation at present; needs better monitoring in future
Wildlife Habitat	Fairly good as settlements and tourist areas frequented are far from wildlife habitats	Very little or none	Damodar Kund area is rich in wildlife; livestock depredation by wildlife is reported; better protection of unique flora and fauna needed
Condition of Pastures	Some degradation of pastures but can be used sustainably with better grazing systems	Very little impact due to tourism	Livestock density at present is fairly high; with better balance, pastures can be managed sustainably
Overall Environmental Carrying Capacity (Perception)	Environmental carrying capacity remains moderate at present	Tourism impacts are low at present.	Alternative energy technology and sustainable pasture management called for

Source: Sharma 2000b

**Box 4.3: Economic Carrying Capacity in Upper Mustang, Nepal**

<b>Economic Factors/ Indicators</b>	<b>Present Status</b>	<b>Present Impacts of Tourism</b>	<b>Implications for the Future</b>
Agricultural Conditions	Scarce agricultural land; low productivity of agriculture as well as livestock; increasing use of livestock manure for energy	Very little as tourists rarely rely on local purchases; demand for animal fodder has increased	Has limited potential for diversification; animal husbandry becoming less viable
Levels of Food Sufficiency; Incidence of Poverty	Very low per cent of food-sufficient households; high incidence of poverty; very low tourism-induced income opportunities at present	Tourists do not depend on local supplies; tourism-induced inflation	Food deficiency bound to rise in the future; poverty will increase unless other income opportunities (including tourism) become available
Migration	Fairly high seasonal migration	Tourism has minimal impact on migration	Seasonal migration may rise in the future
Dependence on Trade	Fairly high	Moderate; imports may have increased due to tourism	Rise in tourism will induce growth in trade thus enhancing carrying capacity
Impacts of Tourism on Local Employment/ Income Opportunities	Very few opportunities opened by tourism	Limited impacts of tourism on 'local' employment and income	Linkage of tourism has to be induced through innovative efforts
Local Human Resource Development with Respect to Knowledge and Technology	No systematic efforts underway at present	Very little inducement for local human resource development	Scope for human resource development related to tourism and energy exists in areas
Overall Economic Carrying Capacity (Perception)	Economic carrying capacity remains extremely limited.	Tourism at present has limited impacts on economic carrying capacity	Needs to be enhanced through better management of productive resources

Source: Sharma 2000b

**Box 4.4: Social Carrying Capacity in Upper Mustang, Nepal**

<b>Sociocultural Factors/ Indicators</b>	<b>Present Status</b>	<b>Present Impacts of Tourism</b>	<b>Implications for the Future</b>
State of Monasteries/ Cultural and Religious Monuments	No detailed inventory of monasteries/ gompas; inadequate maintenance and renovation	Very little	Need to put emphasis on the awareness of cultural heritage through better guidance services; inventory, maintenance, and renovation required; tourists should not interfere with religious rituals; monitoring of impacts necessary
Religious Values, Festivals and Crafts	Relatively intact; exploitation based on traditional feudal relationships exists; Teeji festival is used to attract tourists; craft production remains little affected by tourism	Very little impacts on values, festivals, and craft	Tourism has helped serve feudal interests; although incidence of theft of religious artefacts remains very rare, increasing differences in earnings from tourism could exacerbate it in the future; local crafts that are of interest to tourists need to be identified and promoted.
Effectiveness of Traditional Institutions	Fairly effective; however, decision making is limited to well-off households	Very little	The poor are at a disadvantage in traditional institutions; need to nurture/reorient institutions for local participatory development
Literacy	Very low	Very little as tourists rarely come in contact with locals	Levels of literacy need to be improved. Literacy needs to be tied to employment opportunities.
Health Condition	Poor	Little	Health facilities, sanitation, and basic health care have to be improved.
Hosts Population's Perception of Tourists	Well-off segment of population is probably disposed to tourism; the poorer sections seem bewildered	Some impacts on well-off households; none or very little on the poor; few incidences of begging	Tourism needs to be made relevant for broadly shared local development
Visitor Satisfaction	Moderate	Very little	Need for better destination planning to increase visitor satisfaction; need to plough tourism revenue into local development to attract discerning tourists
Overall Social Carrying Capacity (Perception)	Social carrying capacity is moderate at present, but could be enhanced	Limited impacts of tourism on improving the carrying capacity	Better awareness and facilities can enhance carrying capacity

Source: Sharma 2000b

## Coping with saturation of carrying capacity

Whether the carrying capacity is carefully planned or just happens over time, there is the danger that at some point the carrying capacity of either the natural or social environment or the infrastructure will be reached. When carrying capacity saturates, the tourism experience will naturally begin to decline. Some of the negative impacts resulting from saturation of carrying capacity may include the following:

- Deterioration of the natural ecology and scenic areas due to overdevelopment and intensive use
- Pollution of rivers and underground water due to improper sewerage and solid waste disposal
- Insufficient capacity of the utility service during peak use periods
- Pedestrian and vehicular congestion and resentment between host community and tourists because of overcrowding of tourist areas
- Other social and/or cultural problems

Depending on the saturation level of the tourist sites and areas, different coping strategies can be applied by management bodies:

- Increasing the capacity by expanding the capacity of transport and other service facilities including an awareness programme to change visitor behaviour
- Dispersing the pressure through diversification of tourism products and changing incentives
- Limiting the number of tourists either through higher prices, closure of the area, or the establishment of a (entry) quota

Control methods include the regulation of volumes using rules and prices. Regulatory measures may be in the form of permits, queuing, space allocated for activities, and time rationing. Price measures may include taxing the user externalising impacts and penalties to control littering, and so forth.

Carrying capacity can be expanded if it is properly planned and managed. Box 4.5 illustrates how Austria, being a mountainous country almost half the size of Nepal in terms of both land area and population, is able to sustain and accommodate 65 times more tourists than Nepal.

How to identify the carrying capacity of a tourism site or destination is further explained in Volume 2 (Tool 2).

### Box 4.5: Carrying Capacity Example in Mountain Areas: Nepal versus Austria

Indicator	Unit	Austria	Nepal	Variance
Land Area	km <sup>2</sup>	83,856	147,181	Nepal is almost double the size of Austria.
Population	million	7.82	19.2	Nepal's population is 2.5 times larger than Austria's.
GNP per Capita	USD	20,380	180	About 113 person's incomes in Nepal make one person's income in Austria.
Tourists	'000	19,092	293	For one visitor to Nepal, there are about 65 visitors to Austria.
Tourism Receipts	Million USD	13,956	126	Austria exceeds Nepal's tourism receipts by 110 times.

Source: Gurung 1998

## Limits of acceptable change

A recent approach to carrying capacity is the concept of limits of acceptable change. Limits of acceptable change relates to how much environmental change is permissible or acceptable among the host population, resource managers, and visitors. As it revolves around values rather than resources, it is necessary to distinguish between environmental and sociocultural change and the acceptability of these changes among resource managers and other stakeholders, such as policy-makers and the local population. Defining limits of acceptable change thus becomes a central issue in calculating carrying capacity. Key stages and the underlying process involved in limits of acceptable change are given in Box 4.6.

**Box 4.6: Key Stages and Underlying Process Involved in Limits of Acceptable Change**

Stages	Process/steps
1. Specification of acceptable and achievable resources and social conditions defined by set of measurable parameters	1. Identify area, concern, and issues 2. Define and describe range of tourism activities/zoning 3. Select indicators of environmental resource conditions and social conditions
2. Analysis of relationship between existing conditions and those judged acceptable	4. Make inventory of resource and social conditions 5. Specify standards for resource and social indicators
3. Identification of management action needed to achieve conditions	6. Identify alternative recreational opportunities 7. Identify management actions for each alternative 8. Evaluate and select alternatives
4. Monitoring of indicators of conditions and evaluation of effectiveness of management actions	9. Implement action and monitor conditions

Based on these key stages and steps, limits of acceptable change are defined as the levels of use beyond which impacts overstep levels (thresholds) specified by an evaluative standard. The evaluative standards and thresholds are specified according to existing management objectives, the values of managers, and the preferences of visitors and the host population. Thus, the limits of acceptable change shift away from simply calculating numbers to an emphasis on monitoring the specific conditions subject to impacts. More specifically, the limits of acceptable change represent a reformulation of the concept of carrying capacity in the following ways:

- They concentrate on the management conditions rather than on use levels per se.
- They aim to determine how much acceptable change may occur and what management actions are required to control it.
- They focus on management of the environment and desirable social conditions.
- They represent a means by which various management options can be adopted to ensure that the level of acceptable change set by the management, local communities, or the government are not exceeded at any chosen site.
- They employ a combination of zoning standards and monitoring with the aim of preventing further degradation to an area and focus on explicit and measurable objectives to identify how much and what types of changes are acceptable.

To sum up, carrying capacity is not a single value but a multi-dimensional concept with a range of possible values determined according to the quality of experience that is being sought. Values,

perceptions, users, and activities need to be considered as part of the calculation of carrying capacity value. Carrying capacity must be considered in the context of prevailing management policies, and must be related to specific management objectives for a given tourism destination.

## **Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) as a New Approach to Sustainable Tourism**

More recently there has been a shift of focus in tourism development approaches, with less emphasis on numbers of international arrivals and foreign exchange revenues, and more focus on local, economic development, length of stay, and linkages to local community development. The concept of pro-poor tourism grew out of this shift in emphasis (Ashley et al. 2001).

Pro-poor tourism (PPT) is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor. Benefits may be economic, but they may also be social, environmental, or cultural. PPT is not a specific product or sector of tourism; neither is pro-poor sustainable mountain tourism, but rather an approach to the industry. It aims to ensure that the poor are gaining more from tourism than they are losing. Therefore, as long as poor people reap net benefits, tourism can be 'pro-poor' (even if richer people benefit more than poorer people). The definition says nothing about the relative distribution of the benefits of tourism. The core aim of PPT strategies is to unlock opportunities for the poor, rather than to expand the overall size of the sector. However, experiences show that PPT cannot succeed without the successful development of the entire tourism destination in question.

Pro-poor growth in relation to sustainable tourism development is relatively untried and untested, and there is no blueprint. Nevertheless, early experience reveals a number of common lessons:

- PPT requires a diversity of actions, from micro to macro-level, including product development, marketing, planning, policy, and investment. PPT goes well beyond community tourism.
- A driving force for PPT is useful, but other stakeholders, with broader mandates and broader policy frameworks and initiatives outside tourism are critical.
- Location matters: PPT works best where the wider destination is developing well.
- The poverty impact may be greater in remote areas, although tourism itself may be on a limited scale.
- PPT strategies often involve the development of new products, particularly products based on local culture. But these should be integrated with mainstream products if they are to find markets.
- Ensuring commercial viability is a priority. This requires close attention to demand, product quality, marketing, investment in business skills, and inclusion of the private sector.
- Economic measures should expand both regular jobs and casual earning opportunities, while tackling both demand (markets) and supply (products) of the poor.
- Non-financial benefits (e.g., increased participation, access to assets) can reduce vulnerability; more could be done to address these.
- PPT is a long-term investment. Expectations must be managed and short-term benefits developed in the interim.
- External funding may be required and justified to cover the substantial transaction costs of establishing partnerships, developing skills, and revising policies (not generally as direct subsidies to enterprises).

The rationale for pro-poor tourism is that in most countries with high levels of poverty, tourism is significant (see Chapter 3). It is, therefore, important to maximise the potential benefits for the poor, and minimise the potential harm. A pro-poor tourism strategy needs to incorporate both of these elements.

## PPT and other forms of ‘alternative’ tourism

PPT puts the poor at the centre of its attention and mainly focuses on unlocking opportunities for the poor at all levels. It overlaps with both ecotourism and community-based tourism, but is not synonymous with either. Ecotourism is mostly concerned with the environment, whereas community-based tourism primarily aims to increase local people’s involvement in tourism. Moving the sustainable mountain tourism agenda to tackle poverty alleviation requires action on a number of fronts:

1. Expanding the focus of mainstream tourism initiatives beyond mainstream destinations to destinations where many of the world’s poor live and/or recognising that many of the world’s poor live alongside mainstream destinations and their voices need to be heard
2. Putting the poor and poverty (including the environmental dimensions of poverty) at the centre of the sustainability debate, rather than just the environment
3. Moving beyond a community-based tourism focus to develop mechanisms that unlock opportunities for the poor at all levels and scales of operation

Pro-poor tourism is an approach to tourism rather than a particular form of tourism. It can be encapsulated in a set of principles, including in the following:

- **Participation:** Poor people must participate in tourism decisions if their livelihood priorities are to be reflected in the way tourism is developed.
- **Holistic livelihood approach:** The range of livelihood concerns of the poor – economic, social, and environmental, and short-term and long-term – need to be recognised. Focusing simply on cash or jobs is inadequate.
- **Distribution:** Promoting PPT requires some analysis of the distribution of both benefits and costs, and how to influence it.
- **Flexibility:** Blueprint approaches are unlikely to maximise benefits for the poor. The pace or scale of development may need to be adapted; appropriate strategies and positive impacts will take time to develop; and situations are widely divergent.
- **Commercial realism:** Ways to enhance impacts on the poor within the constraints of commercial viability must be sought.
- **Learning:** As much is untested, learning from experience is essential. PPT also needs to draw on lessons from poverty analysis, environmental management, good governance, and small enterprise development (Ashley et al. 2000).

## Strategies for pro-poor mountain tourism

Strategies for PPT focus on three core areas: increased economic benefits, positive non-economic impacts, and policy or process reform. Within each core area, three distinct (but often overlapping) strategies are recommended:

- **Strategies focused on economic benefits**
  - Expansion of business opportunities for the poor
  - Expansion of employment opportunities for the poor
  - Development of collective benefits for the wider community – fees, revenue shares, taxes, donations
- **Strategies focused on non-economic impacts**
  - Capacity building, training, and empowerment
  - Mitigation of environmental impacts of tourism on the poor
  - Addressing competing use of natural resources
  - Improving the social and cultural impacts of tourism
  - Increasing access to infrastructure and services

- **Strategies focused on policy or process reform**
  - More supportive policy and planning framework
  - Increasing participation of the poor in decision making
  - Pro-poor partnerships with the private sector
  - Increasing the flow of information and communication

Box 4.7 gives an example from the Tourism for Poverty Alleviation Programme of Nepal.

**Box 4.7: Putting Poverty at the Core: The Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) in Nepal**

The Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) in Nepal was set up with the goal of contributing to the poverty alleviation objectives of the government through the review and formulation of policy and strategic planning for sustainable tourism development that is pro-poor, pro-environment, pro-women, and pro-rural communities. The programme is contributing to the national poverty alleviation goal through the development of rural tourism models, institutional set-up for sustainability, and by giving policy feedback to the government to help establish pro-poor tourism policies.

TRPAP has three specified objectives to support its goal of poverty alleviation.

- To develop rural tourism models for policy feedback.
- To set-up institutions from the grass-root level to the central level to look after tourism activities.
- To establish backward and forward linkages and review and formulate conservation-friendly tourism development policies and strategies.