

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

This chapter covers

- The role and functioning of different types of collaboration in sustainable mountain tourism
- The lessons and principles of multi-stakeholder collaboration and factors for successful collaboration within a sustainable mountain tourism context
- The functioning of multi-stakeholder collaboration processes in sustainable mountain tourism

Introduction: The Need for Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The sustainable mountain tourism sector is complex, multi-faceted, and embraces a wide variety of stakeholders from the public and private sectors. These actors include local communities, a number of government agencies and departments (local and national), INGOs, NGOs, banks and donor agencies, business associations, accommodation and transport providers, restaurants, retail outlets, journalists, guidebook writers, tourists, and tour agents (at the local, national, and international levels). To get these different stakeholders working towards common goals and to achieve the best results in sustainable mountain tourism, collaboration is needed. Stakeholder collaboration stimulates the active involvement of all parties involved. It helps to create common understanding and encourages local ownership of projects.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration in sustainable mountain tourism can help to promote poverty reduction. This chapter identifies the different types of collaboration processes. It draws on a recent study of UNWTO/SNV Asia on multi-stakeholder approaches in pro-poor sustainable tourism (Buysrogge 2006, unpublished). Collaboration is found at different levels (national, provincial or district, and village levels) to coordinate and promote the interests of the tourism sector and its stakeholders. Many of the experiences with multi-stakeholder collaboration in tourism have been positive. To have a greater impact on poverty reduction, however, a greater understanding is needed of what is happening between stakeholders at micro, meso, and macro levels in different countries.

Multi-Stakeholder Processes in Sustainable Mountain Tourism

As stated before, sustainable mountain tourism is complex, involving many different stakeholders at different levels. Achieving sustainable mountain tourism is an ongoing process. Collaboration is necessary to work towards common goals and to get better results in reducing poverty.

A general term for all different kinds of interactive processes, between multitudes of different actors, is multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs). MSPs are participatory methods aimed at involving stakeholders at different levels in processes of planning and preparation of, for example, sustainable mountain tourism development. Multi-stakeholder processes can help to coordinate activities, pursue

programmes of common interest, and facilitate regular meetings to exchange information. The main characteristics of multi-stakeholder processes can be summarised as follows (Woodhill 2005):

- Dealing with a clearly bounded context and set of problems
- Involving an explicitly defined and evolving set of stakeholders with common (but often conflicting) interests
- Having an agreed, clear, yet dynamic process and timeframe
- Guided by negotiated and understood rules of interaction and cooperation
- Involving stakeholders in learning processes (not just negotiation)
- Dealing consciously with power and conflict among stakeholders and sectors
- Working across different sectors and scales
- Aiming for a balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches
- Aiming to contribute to effective institutional change

Reasons for collaboration

There is a growing awareness of the benefits of cooperation and partnerships in the tourism sector. Various authors have emphasised the added value of collaboration and it is acknowledged that, often, much more can be achieved by working in partnership. Collaboration between various stakeholders does allow for more successful tourism planning, management, marketing, product development, training, and education. Multi-stakeholder processes and partnerships ensure consistency within a framework and act as an effective agent for planning, management, problem solving, and change; and, therefore, enhance rather than reduce the competitive advantage of the tourism product. Public-private partnerships, for example, represent a pooling of knowledge, expertise, capital, and other resources from various stakeholders.

The motivation of individuals or organisations to collaborate varies. In general, people collaborate simply because they are better off collaborating than not. Expected benefits are often the motivation behind an actor's collaboration or participation in a multi-stakeholder process. Benefits can be financial or material, like, for example, profit or working space, or more intangible like image, or knowledge development.

Other reasons to collaborate are the inability to act alone, lack of resources or capital, the complexity of the situation, the need for innovation and efficiency, or ethical and normative reasons. Important to note is the added value of synergy, i.e., being able to develop a product with characteristics that would not have been available without a public-private partnership. In sustainable mountain tourism, one important reason to collaborate is to share knowledge and experiences in poverty reduction through tourism.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration provides many possibilities. Contact (formal and informal) presents an opportunity for dialogue between stakeholders, allowing them to share experiences and methods. Through collaboration, actors can have closer relations with other (key) actors and learning about each other is facilitated. Actors can use the resources of others, whether this is expertise, money, or connections. A group of stakeholders has more bargaining power.

Besides sharing information, sharing experiences, and lessons, collaboration bodies can act as implementing agencies or be used for product development (linking up the resources of actors to develop products), and even for global marketing, putting countries and areas on the map as sustainable mountain tourism destinations.

Factors in successful collaboration

Multi-stakeholder collaboration bodies vary in their effectiveness. Some are successful in their operation, others less so. Although there is no blueprint for collaboration, some general remarks

can be made about factors critical to the successful functioning of multi-stakeholder processes. The following are important factors in collaboration: process design; internal organisation, participation, involvement and commitment; facilitation of the process; and the context.

Process design

The design of a multi-stakeholder collaboration process is important to get good results. For a successful multi-stakeholder collaboration an interactive process design is crucial. Openness, content, safety, and progress are all crucial elements between stakeholders in the collaboration.

Internal organisation

In addition to a good design, the internal organisation of the stakeholder process is also important. As decision making in a multi-stakeholder process is not simple, dividing responsibilities and splitting a project up into sections reduces the complexity of the decision-making process. The following four factors can be useful in assessing the degree of a successful internal organisation:

- Initiation (who sets the terms of reference and agenda?)
- Inclusiveness (representation, accountability, openness, and involvement in decision making)
- Influence (delegation of authority in decision making)
- Information (circulation)

Participation, involvement, and commitment

The internal organisation should emphasise the participation, involvement, and commitment of the stakeholders involved in the multi-stakeholder process. Stakeholders should be able to identify with the process. The strong commitment of high level and qualified public officials and private sector managers with the necessary authority and capacity to reach compromises is also crucial. A process involving stakeholders that possess resources like expertise, information, and contacts will have more chance of operating successfully. These parties will have valuable (grass roots') support and/or a shared ideology and be capable of taking strategic positions and using their influence. Facilitative support (economic cultural capital) and leadership qualities (sociocultural capital) are also important preconditions for fruitful cooperation and collaboration.

Context

It should be mentioned that the context in which the collaboration occurs is important. External issues influence the functioning of any collaboration process. Factors related to the institutional (policy, legal, funding, and cultural) context may affect a multi-stakeholder process and must be carefully considered. Power relations (political, economic, and social) also influence the outcome of the collaboration process. Some stakeholders may coerce others; stakeholders with less power may be excluded from the process or may have little influence. An example of multi-stakeholder collaboration in the tourism context of Nepal is given in Box 7.1.

There is no one single formula for public-private cooperation. However, UNWTO (2000) has made a similar list of factors contributing to the successful functioning of multi-stakeholder processes in tourism:

- The need for a balanced structure (internal organisation) within the partnership with clear roles and responsibilities for all partners
- Shared leadership between the public and private sector with well-defined, shared goals, realistic expectations, and the identification of benefits for each partner
- A flexible approach on the part of all partners, combined with a willingness to understand each other's needs and to contribute to shared resources

Box 7.1: Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Institutional Development in TRPAP

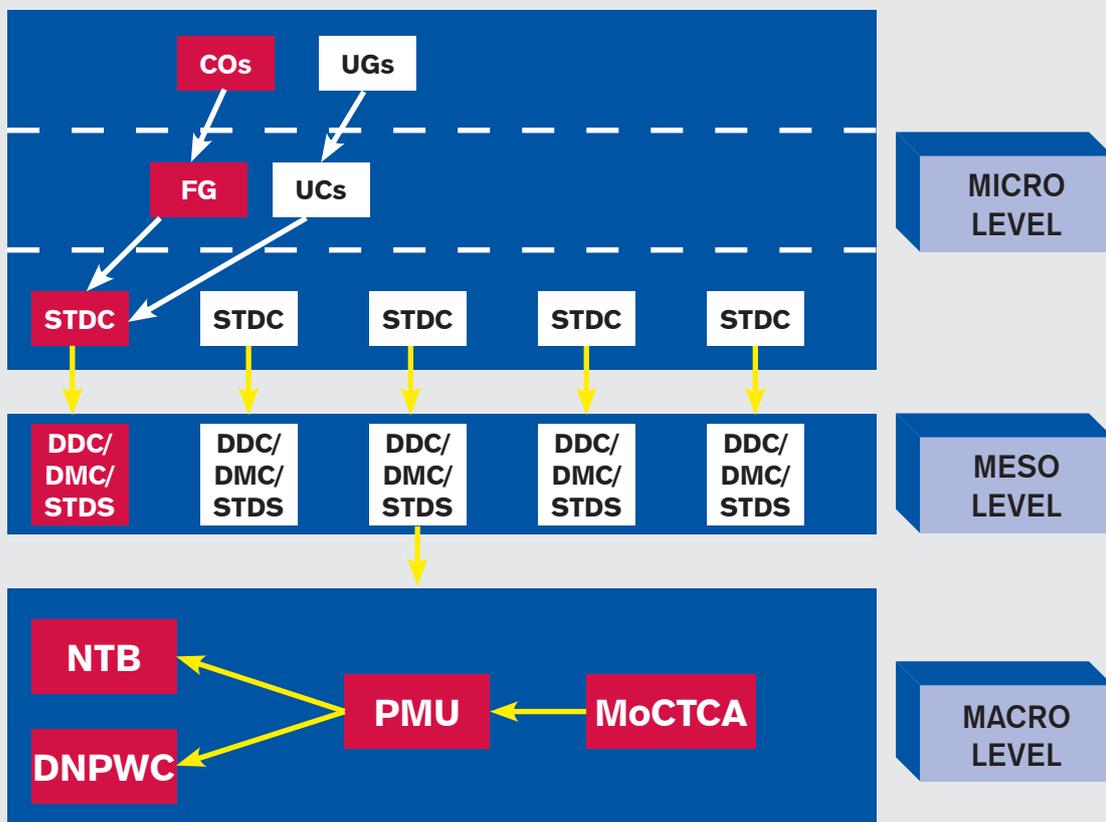
In order to make rural tourism a continuous process of development, TRPAP has formed different community organisations (COs), entrepreneurial groups called functional groups (FGs), and sustainable tourism development committees (STDCs) at the grass roots' level. Where COs already existed, the programme works with existing COs. In national park areas, the programme has recognised buffer zone users' groups (BZUGs) at the village level and buffer zone users' committees (BZUCs) at the VDC level, considered equivalent to COs and STDCs respectively.

TRPAP has established sustainable tourism development sections (STDSs) in all programme districts which look after all aspects of tourism development at the district level, backstop grass-roots organisations, and establish linkages at the central level for forward linkages. Tourism management units (TMUs) are established in national parks to coordinate tourism activities between district development committees (DDCs) and national parks.

At the macro level, a sustainable tourism development unit has been established within the Nepal Tourism Board to strengthen forward and backward linkages. The sustainable tourism development unit will take over TRPAP's activities once TRPAP is phased out.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) has designated a focal person to coordinate TMUs, STDSs, and Sustainable Tourism Development Units to ensure environmentally friendly tourism development in protected areas. All these institutions are legally binding entities and are permanent structures at different levels.

TRPAP does not plan activities for communities. It only facilitates the planning process each year at the local level through its COs, FGs, and STDCs. Once the plan for the upcoming year is developed at the grass roots' level, the communities send their plan to the districts who thoroughly review whether or not the proposed activities match the tourism development and planned actions in the settlement-level APPA reports. After removal of non-tourism activities, the final district-level annual plan is sent to the Programme Management Unit (PMU) at the centre. The TRPAP central team again thoroughly reviews the district plan, makes necessary corrections, and forwards it to the ministry concerned and to UNDP for final approval.



Source: TRPAP 2006

- An understanding between all partners that tourism development must be sustainable economically, socially, and environmentally
- A long-term commitment combining a strategic vision and plan with shorter-term goals and measurable initiatives
- Good communication between partners and from partners to all other stakeholders

Box 7.2 shows an example of successful stakeholder collaboration in Bhutan.

Box 7.2: Successful Stakeholder Collaboration in Bhutan

The Nabji-Korphu trail for trekking and community tourism in Bhutan, is a trail planned and managed by the communities along the trail.

To develop this trail as a new tourism product in Bhutan, all the stakeholders in the tourism industry got together and discussed their roles in the tourism development process and decided what they would like the end product to look like.

They allocated the following roles and responsibilities to stakeholders:

- Department of Tourism (DoT) – monitor the overall project activities
- Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO) – organise, monitor, and keep account of the budget and prepare an interim report
- Nature Conservation Division – assist Jigme Singye Wangchuk National Park in the project
- Jigme Singye Wangchuk National Park – monitor project activities during implementation
- Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) – technical assistance
- Communities (Nimshong, Nabji, Korphu, Kubdra/Phumzur, and Jangbi villages) – implement project and end user

Source: DoT 2006

To facilitate successful multi-stakeholder processes, a collaboration matrix can be used. More information about this tool can be found in the Toolkit (Volume 2, Tool 4)

Factors obstructing collaboration

Despite good intentions, not all partnerships are effective and too often collaboration does not bring the expected results. Many of the co-operative initiatives are short-term initiatives rather than longer-term strategies for competitive success. Many focus only on improving comparative advantages instead of contributing to create real competitive advantages. There are several factors explaining the failure of collaboration.

The complexity of engaging diverse stakeholders in any form of decision making and collaboration makes it difficult to involve them all equally. In general, problems arise when there is no optimal (internal) functioning as there is no or inadequate consideration of the different parts of the process. If there are no clear internal procedures or responsibilities, there may be fragmentation in decision making and reduced control over implementation. Institutional factors and the strategic choices of public and private actors are often the root cause of the inability to develop good working partnerships.

Perceptions of the stakeholders also play a role. Until recently, the travel and tourism industry has been hesitant to establish public or private partnerships, because of the very competitive market within which it operates. Stakeholders may not be willing to work together with previous opponents (or with unfamiliar partners); some may be uninterested or inactive in working with others.

Caalders, and Bramwell and Lane (2000, in De Lacy et al. 2002) have identified the following factors contributing to failure of collaboration:

- Framework unclear
- Power relations dominate
- Lack of motivation, resources, and trust
- Failure to stimulate creativity and activate knowledge
- Too many different actors involved or only a limited number of stakeholders

Also, the costs of cooperation can be seen as a factor responsible for failure of collaboration. Involving a range of stakeholders (in for example policy making) may be costly and time consuming. If there is no funding for these costs, this can hamper the functioning or even the existence of a multi-stakeholder process.

Multi-stakeholder process model

Within the reality of the globalised economy, there is much discussion on how market opportunities can be opened up for the poor. Current development debates revolve around ideas on pro-poor growth, public-private partnerships, and, for instance, issues such as good governance, market access, and civil society participation. At the same time, many believe there is a connection between greater participation in democratic processes and sustainability. Traditionally, participatory approaches have focused primarily on the communication process between stakeholders and less on the institutional dimensions. An institution, however, is not identical to an organisation. In the broad sociological sense an institution can be described as any established law, custom, social practice, or organisation that forms part of the social structure and influences the regular patterns of human behaviour.

Thus, the most obvious institutional need for stakeholder collaboration is the creation of some form of platform that enables different actors to come together and that gives legitimacy to a process of interactive learning. Multi-stakeholder processes and social learning are about setting up and facilitating long-term processes that bring different groups into constructive engagement, dialogue, and decision making.

Woodhill (2005) describes a core process model, outlining the most important elements of most MSPs. Of course, as he also states, every multi-stakeholder process should be adapted to the specific needs and context of the particular situation. There is no simple and universal step-by-step model to be followed. Yet, through experience it is also clear that there are some basic elements of most multi-stakeholder processes that need at least some consideration.

The model, based on a common-sense action learning cycle, gives the following four phases (overlapping in an ongoing process cycle, see Box 7.3): setting up; planning strategically; implementation and management; and process reflection and adaption.

Like all models, this model is an oversimplification of reality. Yet, the model can be seen as an instrument for investigating the workings of multi-stakeholder mechanisms. By providing issues to consider when designing and facilitating a multi-stakeholder process, the model can be used to assess how the collaboration functions and where it might go wrong.

Lessons Learned in Tourism Multi-Stakeholder Collaborations

General findings

This section provides the main findings of several SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analyses (see Tool 15 in Volume 2 for a detailed explanation of the SWOT analysis) of collaboration bodies in Lao PDR, Nepal, and Vietnam at different levels (village level, district or

Box 7.3: The Four Phases of the Core Process Model

Phase		
1.	Setting Up	Exploration of reasons, focus, and direction of the initiative (establishing the reasons, mobilising community interest, and deciding what organisational and institutional arrangements are needed)
2.	Planning Strategically	Motivations and visions for the future, how to get there (undertaking detailed planning and strategy development needed for an MSP to be successful)
3.	Implementation and Managing	Managing structures and action plans (providing ongoing resources for the initiative and ensuring continued community input and support)
4.	Process Reflection and Adaptation	Monitoring and evaluation (monitoring the impact, successes, and failures, learning from these, and continually improving what is being done)

provincial level, and national level). In all three countries, multi-stakeholder collaboration is important, given the complexity of the sustainable tourism industry. The involvement of different stakeholders is needed, as all countries realise they cannot develop sustainable mountain tourism on their own. By collaborating, participants expect benefits and visible results for time, energy, resources, and skills invested. They use collaboration to fulfil their own objectives. When members realise they are benefiting, they are willing to invest.

While the objectives and participants of the different collaboration mechanisms vary, they have all helped to create awareness of pro-poor sustainable mountain tourism and have brought different stakeholders together. In relation to the reduction of poverty, besides raising awareness about sustainable mountain tourism issues, collaboration contributes indirectly through positive changes that benefit the poor like access to health, education, and markets. Some economic benefits for the poor exist through activities executed by collaborating bodies. Local-level collaborations, such as tourism management boards in villages, are responsible for the equal distribution of tourism-related income. Provincial steering committees try to stimulate tourism activities in different areas within a region to spread benefits. Many collaborating bodies, however, do not have clear internal organisation (roles and responsibilities), sometimes resulting in weak functioning and below optimal results.

Box 7.4 presents a generalisation of the main strengths and weaknesses of multi-stakeholder bodies in Lao PDR, Nepal, and Vietnam.

The involvement of a wide diversity of stakeholders from different levels and sectors assures input and expertise from different angles. For pro-poor, sustainable mountain tourism, the involvement of the private sector, in particular, helps to make collaboration useful. Visible results, committed members, and access to resources are all factors leading to successful collaboration.

Collaboration is weak when the purpose of collaboration is unclear, when roles and responsibilities are vague, and when there are no rules or operational procedures. Malfunctioning of collaboration occurs when internal monitoring and evaluation is weak and follow-up by a supporting organisation limited. Lack of experience in tourism (and management) makes it difficult to focus the collaboration on relevant objectives. A lack of visible activities influences the motivation of participants. Limited language skills (either local or English) can make communication difficult between different stakeholders.

Box 7.4: SWOT Findings of Multi-Stakeholder Bodies in Lao PDR, Nepal, and Vietnam

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involvement of diverse stakeholders ● Organisational structure: clear, transparent ● Achievements: profile raised, implementation of activities, reputation ● Members/participants: expertise in tourism; commitment, active participation ● Access: to resources and to influential persons ● Contact with private sector/ involvement ● Partnerships: creation of linkages, new relations ● Linkages levels: working at or involving different levels (micro, meso, macro) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal organisation: lack of organisational structure, operational procedures ● Lack of ownership ● Involvement of private sector weak: not involved in product development ● (Internal) monitoring and evaluation: limited ● Follow-up: by support organisations lacking or not regular ● Lack of visible results ● Experience in (pro-poor sustainable) tourism low: especially in implementation and management ● Linkage levels: between national and lower levels still weak ● Language: communication difficult between national and international participants/stakeholders (no English)

The examples given in the study from Lao PDR, Nepal, and Vietnam show that multi-stakeholder collaboration exists at different levels (micro, meso, and macro level). The purpose of collaboration varies at these different levels. At the local and district level, tourism management boards and village cooperatives exist. People work together to implement and manage specific tourism activities. At the national level, collaboration is more strategic. Organisations meet to learn from each other; to put strategies together; and to explore possibilities to work together.

Within collaborating bodies, a variety of stakeholders are involved ranging from government departments, educational institutions, local communities, INGOs, NGOs, and private sector representatives. The latter, however, were under-represented in the bodies studied, especially at micro and meso levels.

The main findings of the study in Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Nepal make it clear that the organisational structure of a collaborating process is very important. This holds for all three (micro, meso, macro) levels in all three countries. Having a clear purpose and transparent decision making contributes to the effective functioning of collaboration.

Micro level

At the village level, understanding of (community-based) tourism principles and management are important for the functioning of tourism management boards and cooperatives. Other important factors at the micro level are the relations between the community and the business sector. The results of the collaboration process must be visible to maintain the motivation of the members. Following-up and monitoring activities of the collaborating process are important as well.

Meso level

Currently, provincial or district-level tourism authorities sometimes lack the capacity to fulfil their responsibility of managing sustainable mountain tourism products in districts and villages. Staff

do not always know and understand the objectives of the collaboration and are not very committed. Within provincial steering committees the motivation of members is low, resulting in lack of regularity of meetings and poor continuity on the part of people attending meetings.

Macro level

The case of the Sustainable Tourism Network (STN) in Nepal shows the potential of sustainable tourism networks in general. The advancement of STN to a more professional, organised level (own secretariat, selection criteria, membership fees) with a minimal budget is due to outside INGO support. Now, the network works towards self-sustainability and financial benefits. The rapid growth of active and committed members (even with a newly-introduced annual contribution fee) shows that the network is needed and appreciated. STN receives much international attention and is regarded as an example for other countries for collaboration at the national level.

The example of STN in Nepal shows that a multi-stakeholder process requires a flexible system to adapt to new situations, like the needs and skills of its participants, and outside factors that determine the environment in which it functions. Coordination and proactive members are crucial factors for a successful network at the national level. Actions and small successes are more important than a fully-structured and organised scheme.

Recommendations from the multi-stakeholder collaboration studies

As sustainable mountain tourism and stakeholder collaboration is relatively new in South Asia, support for multi-stakeholder collaboration at the local, provincial, and national level is necessary. To make collaboration work and to get more pro-poor growth results, activities should be focused on the pro-poor aspects of collaboration, as well as on the creation of a win-win situation for different stakeholders.

The following should receive focus to ensure successful collaboration.

- **Enhancing expertise on collaboration:** Understanding of and expertise on how to collaborate and manage a committee should be improved. Stakeholders should have an understanding and appreciation of the purpose and benefits of collaboration. A coordinator or one or two members should have some basic knowledge of how to run a network (how to prepare agendas and write minutes; how to organise meetings, familiarisation trips, and workshops; how to communicate with members; how to update a website; how to develop a newsletter). Stakeholders should also have a notion of general tourism development (tourism planning and how to develop a destination).
- **Strengthening the internal organisation and functioning:** Support is needed to professionalise committees and management boards. Especially at the lower (provincial, district, or village) levels, board members or coordinators should be strengthened in their capacity to 'run' a network (basic day-to-day activities). A multi-stakeholder process needs a clear mission and vision to work effectively according to a work plan based on these. Operational guidelines need to be in place, with agreements and engagements about, for example, the regularity of meetings (fixed days, sending agendas before meetings and providing minutes afterwards) and annual reporting.
- **Increasing the involvement of the private sector:** To have more pro-poor impact, the increased involvement of the private sector in sustainable mountain tourism and expansion of private-sector presence in collaborating bodies are needed at all levels. The awareness of the private sector of new sustainable mountain tourism products needs to be increased. The involvement of the private sector is needed to develop commercially feasible, sustainable mountain tourism products and to ensure promotion and marketing.
- **Providing support and follow-up:** Regular support and follow-up of multi-stakeholder processes are necessary, especially in the initial phase of collaboration, and should continue throughout the process.

- **Diversify financial resources:** For any multi-stakeholder process it is important to diversify financial resources, so that they are not completely dependent on an external organisation like a national tourism organisation. At the provincial and national levels, membership fees can help generate funds.
- **Political support:** Political support of national ministries, as well as the support of local, district, and provincial authorities, is essential to make collaboration work. Collaboration needs support or should be led by a government authority to give it credibility. When tourism is already a government priority (through a tourism strategy at the national, provincial, or district level) it makes implementation of activities easier.

Based on the findings of the multi-stakeholder collaboration studies specific recommendations can be made for each level:

- **Micro level:** Collaboration needs to be followed through by local capacity builders, with advisory support from INGOs.
- **Meso level:** Support should be provided to local capacity builders and more linkages should be created with the private sector (less focus on provincial tourism department or offices).
- **Macro level:** Support for initiatives like sustainable tourism networks or public-private partnerships should be continued with clear targets for support.

To ensure full participation by all, attention should also be given to the following: gender and social inclusion; the creation of linkages with other sectors (like education); and language of training (e.g., training participants in the local language or English).

Roles of NTOs and STOs

NTOs and STOs can support multi-stakeholder approaches in sustainable mountain tourism using the following approaches:

- Enhancing expertise on collaboration;
- Providing access to information and documentation on the sustainable development of tourism;
- Spreading key publications on the sustainable development of tourism and poverty alleviation to different stakeholders like provincial or district tourism organisations (providing examples of tourism development and management and of specific pro-poor issues like empowerment of groups and partnerships, which are adapted to local situations);
- Increasing the involvement of the private sector;
- Lobbying to make the private sector aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding poverty alleviation and tourism;
- Lobbying with local organisations (governments, non-government organisations, private sector) to raise awareness on the importance of collaboration within the tourism sector, between public and private sectors;
- Promoting integration between public and private sectors. Public-private partnerships can be stimulated, as well as online marketing of sustainable mountain tourism products;
- Providing support and follow-up;
- Making documentation available to local organisations on how to develop indicators and systems to measure impacts of tourism on poverty;
- Giving political support;
- Lobbying with local governments on the importance of tourism in relation to poverty alleviation;
- Formulating sustainable mountain tourism policies and legislation for poverty reduction; and
- Providing frameworks for development strategies for tourism at national and provincial levels.

Tailor-made solutions

More attention should be paid to solutions that are tailor-made for the operating context of each collaborating process. Contextual factors should be taken into account when setting up, supporting, or facilitating collaboration. The setting up of collaboration should follow an organisational structure that matches its objectives, participants, and context, instead of using a model with pre-fixed organisational criteria.

Stakeholder analysis can be useful to identify the right representatives to take part in a management board, especially at the micro level. In villages and districts, existing social structures can be used to make sure all social groups are represented (women, the elderly, and youth). Village mobilisers can be brought into action to ensure people understand the ideas behind collaboration and are indeed taking part in the board. Providing incentives can help too. Selection criteria for members of village management boards should include experience in tourism and the ability to communicate.