

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**



## Toolkit Objectives

- To enhance understanding of participatory planning for sustainable mountain tourism and development at regional, national, and state levels
- To develop a foundation for informed active support for the development, formulation, implementation, management, and monitoring of sustainable mountain tourism development projects at state and national levels
- To improve a variety of skills in project formulation, implementation, management, and monitoring of sustainable mountain tourism development projects

## Background to the Toolkit

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. It is inhabited by over 150 million people with an unmatched rich cultural diversity, but 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 2000; East et al. 1988; Kruk and Banskota forthcoming). With its unique natural and cultural resources, the Himalayan region has indisputable tourist potential, and the demand for mountain tourism is growing rapidly (ibid). 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 (Sri Lanka joined 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 builds upon and adds value to the national mountain tourism agendas of the SASEC countries. One part 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 Kathmandu, 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 to attend in order to extend 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 NTB and other partners like the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) and the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), ICIMOD and SNV have reworked the initial course materials into a Resource Book (Volume 1) and Toolkit (Volume 2).

Based on the course evaluation results, as well as on wider assessments of information needs, some of the original course contents have been adapted to make them more suitable to the needs of the tourism industry. 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 aim was to produce a market-compatible and more complete knowledge database that transcends the original purpose as a 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.

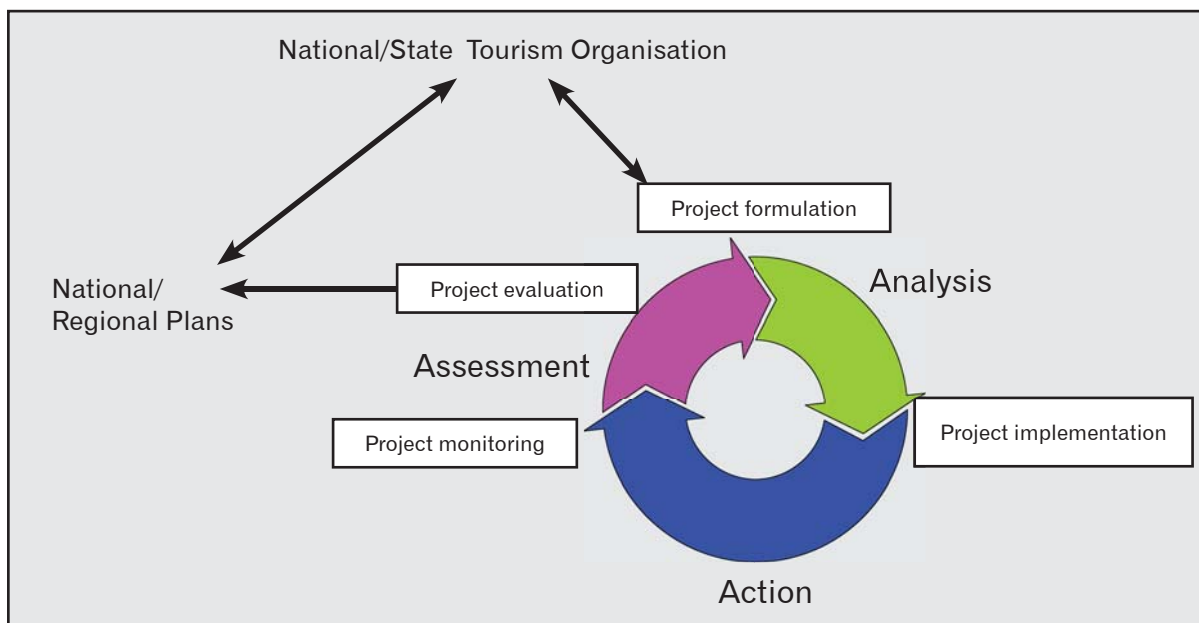
## **Guiding Principle of the Toolkit**

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 Toolkit will strengthen 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 Toolkit 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.

In this Toolkit, 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.



**Figure 1.1: Facilitation of the project cycle**

## Regional and Mountain Perspective

Throughout this Toolkit, 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 Toolkit

The book as a whole consists of two separate but interlinked volumes. Volume 1 (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. It helps readers to understand sustainable mountain tourism planning and the role of

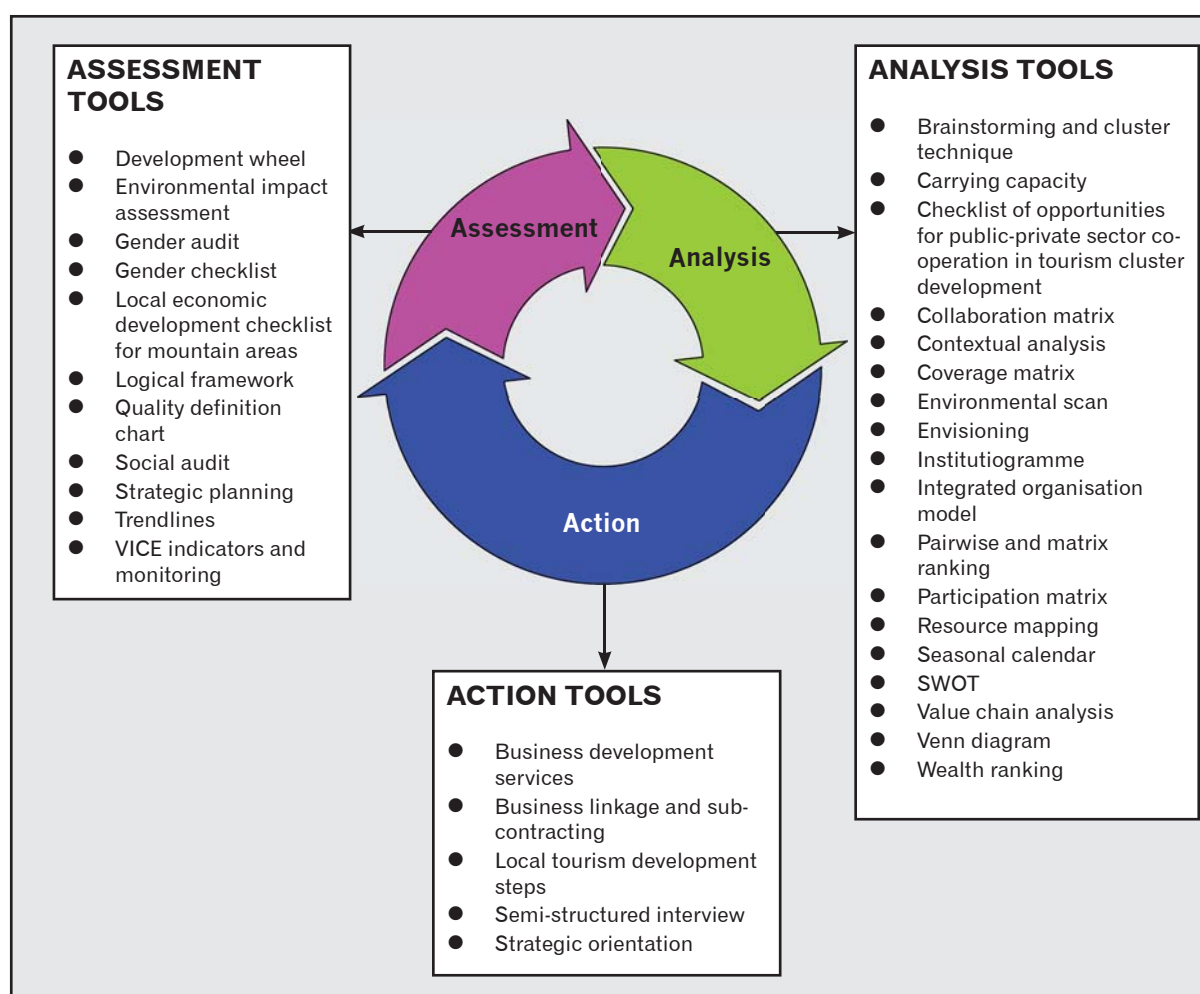
different stakeholders in the implementation of these plans through projects. It highlights the role of NTOs and STOs in this process and provides some background information about tools that can be used to support the process and how they are linked to other concepts, approaches, and issues.

The present book (Volume 2) is the Toolkit itself. It provides an overview of tools that can be used within the different stages of the project cycle and describes and explains them in more detail with a special focus on how they can be applied to the modern-day mountain tourism industry.

There are 34 tools, each with information given under three main headings.

- What is it?
- When is it used?
- How to apply it?

The tools are grouped according to the different stages of the project cycle: Analysis Tools (18 tools; Chapter 2), Action Tools (5 tools; Chapter 3), and Assessment Tools (11 tools; Chapter 4). Some tools are by nature only relevant at a particular stage of the project cycle (e.g., Tool 15: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats [SWOT] analysis at the beginning or Tool 25: environmental impact assessment [EIA] at the end). Several tools can be applied with success at more than one stage of the project cycle. The logical framework (Tool 29), for instance, can be used as a planning and evaluation tool, as well as a guideline for implementation, making it equally useful in the analysis, action, and assessment phases of the project cycle. In these cases, the tools are categorised according to their most commonly-defined purpose. Within each chapter the tools are ordered alphabetically. Figure 1.2 provides an overview of the organising mechanism and the classification system.



**Figure 1.2: Triple-A tools in the tourism project cycle**

## **Intended Use of the Toolkit**

This Toolkit is designed as a reference book. Although the training programme on which it is based was initially designed for state and national tourism organisations, the book 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 Toolkit 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.

