



ICIMOD

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE

Himalica Pilot Project

Ruma Upazila, Bandarban, Bangladesh

Building the resilience of highland communities
by improving livelihoods



Project funded by the
European Union



Overview

The Support to Rural Livelihoods and Climate Change Adaptation in the Himalayas (Himalica) initiative is a demand-driven programme financed by the European Union (EU) and managed by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The programme supports vulnerable mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) in mitigating and adapting to climate and socioeconomic changes.

Expected results

- The capacities of national and regional stakeholders in dealing with livelihood development are increased.
- More sustainable and efficient use of natural resources and the protection of the HKH.
- Poverty among mountain people is reduced through increased resilience.
- The unlocking of new livelihood opportunities through the promotion of more equitable approaches.

Pilot projects in vulnerable areas are a key component of Himalica. Community-specific interventions are designed in collaboration with local partners and communities to improve the resilience of mountain people.

Himalica Pilot Project on Tourism

ICIMOD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA), has initiated a pilot project on tourism in Ruma Upazila (subdistrict) of Bandarban district in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. The pilot focuses on promoting sustainable tourism development and management with a particular emphasis on benefitting or improving the livelihoods of local communities.

Bandarban is gaining popularity as a tourism destination, especially among Bangladeshis. The area's pleasant environment, its surrounding hills and easy access routes (via Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar) are critical pull factors which have led to a rapid increase in tourist arrivals in recent years. However, community preparedness for benefiting from tourism – both at the strategic and community levels – is not yet in place. This is where Himalica comes in.



What we are doing

Himalica's pilot interventions are being implemented on two levels:

Strategic level: Himalica is working on a Tourism Destination Management Plan and Strategy through multi-stakeholder consultations. Responsible tourism is being encouraged for sustainable tourism development.

Community level: Farm and non-farm activities are to be linked with tourism, value chain development, and institutional capacity building. The Bandarban Hill Development Council (BHDC) and MoCHTA hope such an engagement will increase the incomes of target groups.

Interventions are made with the motto "Bandarban | People and Nature in Harmony". Ways to extend visitors' stay in Bandarban are being explored, and capacity building activities to improve local products and tourism services are being organized. Investments are being made in tourism infrastructure development, marketing and promotion with the aim of spreading word on local culture and context.

What we have done

Scoping of the tourism pilot project

- Conducted baseline and situational assessments of the context and current status of tourism development and management in Bandarban.
- Conducted tourism value chain analysis for generating an overview of Bandarban's potential.
- Made quick interventions along several nodes of the tourism supply chain.
- Completed a feasibility study for clean drinking water.

Tourism product and service development

- Initiated a tourist counting and record keeping system in Ruma Upazila.
- Supported a community network to promote tourism and value chain development.
- Established 10 community toilets at strategic tourist points.
- Established four yarn banks in four paras in Ruma.
- Trained local tour guides.
- Developed and promoted new trekking trails (Ruma-Rizuk Waterfall Trail).
- Set up a view point in Rizuk, Resongsong Waterfall.
- Initiated the preparation, standardization and development of the local Ruma menu using locally sourced organic ingredients.



Community mobilization and capacity building

- Conducted exposure visits for communities on coffee production and processing, home stays and tourism market linkages.
- Organized training on waste management. Installed 200 waste baskets in 100 places in Ruma and the Boga Lake area.
- Offered financial management training to tourism entrepreneurs.
- Installed indication boards in 10 paras displaying information on respective village and community products.
- Assisted the development of community-led micro-planning in 10 paras and helped link these with local government programmes.

Promotion and marketing of a responsible tourism destination

- Initiated the promotion and marketing of Bandarban as a tourism destination through social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram).
- Developed and installed tourism display maps of Ruma Upazilla and the Bandarban district.
- Promoted local food through food festivals and by offering a 'Ruma Menu' at local restaurants.

Strategic and institutional support/coordination

- Supported the Project Management Unit (PMU) by participating in the Mountain Day Festival.
- Conducted multi stakeholder workshops on the Bandarban Tourism Vision and Action Plan.
- Established institutional relationships with government stakeholders (security and administrative bodies) to pro.mote responsible tourism.

Potential for outscaling/upscaling

Some of the good practices of sustainable tourism development implemented under the project are expected to be outscaled and upscaled by concerned stakeholders. These can be applied in similar agro-ecological zones elsewhere in Bangladesh and other countries of the HKH region by national and development agencies.



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