

Proceedings of the Policy Dialogue

Shared Natural and Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Tourism in Kangchenjunga Transboundary Landscape

1–5 May 2017, Thimphu, Bhutan

Organised by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal
and

Nature Conservation Division, Department of Forests and Park Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan

ICIMOD

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE



About ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, ICIMOD, is a regional knowledge development and learning centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalaya – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Globalisation and climate change have an increasing influence on the stability of fragile mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of mountain people. ICIMOD aims to assist mountain people to understand these changes, adapt to them, and make the most of new opportunities, while addressing upstream-downstream issues. We support regional transboundary programmes through partnership with regional partner institutions, facilitate the exchange of experience, and serve as a regional knowledge hub. We strengthen networking among regional and global centres of excellence. Overall, we are working to develop an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem to improve the living standards of mountain populations and to sustain vital ecosystem services for the billions of people living downstream – now, and for the future.



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ICIMOD acknowledges the support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)/ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

ICIMOD gratefully acknowledges the support of its core donors: the Governments of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, and Switzerland.

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Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)

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This publication is available in electronic form at www.icimod.org/himaldoc

Citation: ICIMOD and NCD (2018) *Proceedings of the policy dialogue: Shared natural and cultural heritage for sustainable tourism in Kangchenjunga Transboundary Landscape*. ICIMOD Workshop Report. Kathmandu: ICIMOD.

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Background

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) advocates the use of landscape and ecosystem approaches for managing biodiversity, a position endorsed at the seventh Conference of the Parties' meeting in 2004.¹ The approach implies coordination and cooperation among all those responsible for an area, regardless of the jurisdiction defined by ecosystems rather than administrative boundaries. This has many benefits, as it enables integrated management, which enhances the efficiency of ecological functions and processes such as species dispersal, species migration, and hydrological regulation, as well as promoting cultural integrity and human wellbeing. In addition, social, cultural, and economic similarities tend to be seamless across the political boundaries in a landscape. This generates widespread interdependence among the local populations, as well as a flow of trade, employment, tourism, natural resources and commodities, social and cultural exchanges, and other activities, all of which have implications for biodiversity conservation and human wellbeing. A transboundary landscape approach can help countries that depend on common ecosystems and watersheds for various ecosystem services. Such interdependence could be strengthened by developing and agreeing to common management framework and principles.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and its partners have identified six transboundary landscapes representing different areas in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH). One of them is the Kangchenjunga Landscape (KL), which is shared by three of ICIMOD's member countries – Bhutan, India, and Nepal. The Landscape is situated between 26°21'40.49" and 28°7'51.25" E latitude and 87°30'30.67" and 90°24'31.18" N longitude (Figure 1). It encompasses part of eastern Nepal; Sikkim and part of West Bengal in India; and the western and southwestern parts of Bhutan. It has a total area of just under 25,086 km² – 5,834 km² in Bhutan; 14,127 km² in India; and 5,125 km² in Nepal. In August 2012, during a regional meeting in Gangtok, Sikkim, the three member countries initiated a three-year preparatory phase from 2012-2015, in which a Regional Conservation and Development Strategy (2016-2036), supported by a Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF), was prepared as part of the Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KLCDI) to institutionalize the fair, equitable, and sustainable use of biological and other natural resources².

Tourism is an important economic sector in the three South Asian countries that are included in the KL – Bhutan, India, and Nepal. It contributes to the GDP of all three countries (6.5% of India's total GDP and 4% in Nepal), while also supporting employment both directly and indirectly (almost one million total jobs in Nepal and more than 37 million jobs in India)^{3,4}. In Sikkim, KL-India, the contribution of tourism to the State GDP is 8%, with an annual growth rate of 16%⁵. The diversity of nature and cultural heritage sites occurring within the Kangchenjunga Landscape has immense value to the large number of tourists visiting from the region and elsewhere. The major tourism products include scenic views of the Kangchenjunga range; diverse wildlife in protected areas including Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve in Bhutan, Jaldapara National Park and Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in India, and Kangchenjunga Conservation Area in Nepal; UNESCO World Heritage Sites including the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and Khangchendzonga National Park in India; pilgrimage destinations; and tea gardens and rural tourism. At least half a million tourists, the majority of whom are regional tourists from India, Nepal, and Bhutan, visit the KL annually.

Tourism with a transboundary link in the Kangchenjunga Landscape is ingrained with the area's history, as it dates back to the 19th Century. It was initiated by a mountaineering expedition team under the leadership of explorer and mountaineer Douglas Freshfield in 1899.⁶ The team's route began in Darjeeling and passed through Sikkim, heading north to Zemu Glacier and Kangchenjunga massif, before returning to Sikkim via the Khang La Pass at 5,034m, and ended in Darjeeling. The region has also been highlighted as a priority area for promotion of a regional tourism hub in the South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Tourism development plan⁷,

¹ Secretariat of the CBD, (2004). *Decision adopted by the conference of the parties to the convention on biological diversity at its seventh meeting*. URL <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-07/cop-07-dec-11-en.pdf> (accessed 11 December 2016).

² ICIMOD, WCD, GBPNIHESD, RECAST (2017) *Regional conservation and development strategy and regional cooperation framework*. ICIMOD Working Paper 2017/2. Kathmandu: ICIMOD

³ World Travel & Tourism Council (2016) *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2016: India*.

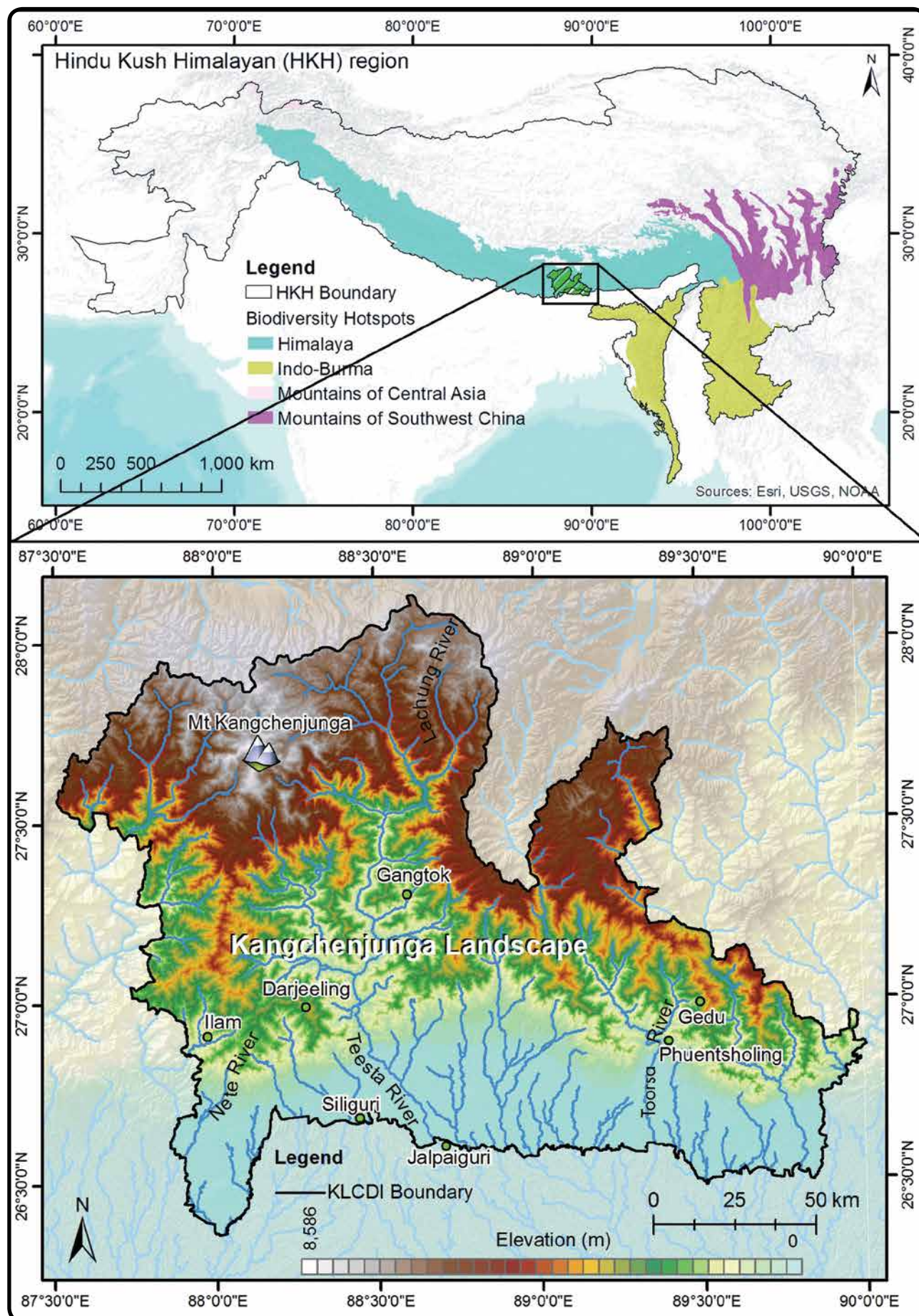
⁴ World Travel & Tourism Council (2016) *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2016: Nepal*.

⁵ Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation (2016) *State Tourism Policy*. Government of Sikkim.

⁶ Douglas Freshfield (1903) *Round Kangchenjunga*.

⁷ ADA and SASEC Tourism Working Group (2004) *South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Tourism Development Plan*. Tourism Resource Consultants Ltd. New Zealand and Metcon Consultants Pvt Ltd. Nepal.

Figure 1: The Kangchenjunga Landscape in the Hindu Kush Himalaya



but the progress made by the region is yet to be assessed. Today, the Great Himalaya Trail, conceptualized as a transboundary trekking route, spans the northern parts of the Kangchenjunga Landscape, continuing further west.⁸ There are also opportunities for transboundary tourism in the Singhalila region, which hosts more than 8,000 tourists annually.⁹ The Singhalila ridge geopolitically divides the countries of India and Nepal; one of the most popular transboundary trek routes starts at Mane Bhanjyang in India, climbs up to Sandakphu on the Nepal-India border, and finally descends to Phalut in India, ending in Rimbick, India.

While tourism plays a significant role in the economic development in the Landscape, the strength of sustainable tourism is yet to be fully harnessed in the region. SDG 8.9 encourages nations “by 2030 [to] devise and implement sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”. The limited infrastructure, lack of coordinated marketing, limitations in regional mobility, difficulty ensuring product quality, inadequate human resources capacity in the service sector, and the lack of regional policy and institutional mechanisms have prevented the tourism entrepreneurship from reaching the desired level in the Landscape.¹⁰ Considering sustainable tourism as a common and potential link for the transboundary landscape, the KLCDI has identified it as one of the major elements for strengthening regional cooperation. The KLCDI envisions contributing to sustainable development through conservation and preservation of the cultural heritage and natural heritage of the Landscape. The potential for building a case for sustainable tourism has been reflected in the Regional Conservation and Development Strategy, as well as the country-level Strategies for the KLCDI. While realising the tourism potential in a transboundary context in the Kanchenjunga landscape, there is a need to keep in mind the consequences of unplanned tourism that are already playing havoc in many countries of the HKH. SDG 12.b specifically requires countries in the region to “develop and implement tools to monitor development impacts for sustainable tourism that create jobs and promote local culture and products”. The daily policy dialogue coupled with opportunities to interact and learn from Bhutan has therefore been planned with the following objectives.

Objective

This focus of the Policy Dialogue is to understand the existing and potential benefits from regional tourism and to strengthen cooperation among the stakeholders at a Landscape level with the following objectives:

- Understand existing tourism practices at different levels and their impacts within the KL and identify the major bottlenecks and opportunities to strengthen sustainable tourism in the transboundary context.
- Identify key elements for a strategic action plan and necessary transboundary cooperation for conservation and improved local livelihoods.
- Strategic key elements of short-, medium-, and long-term actions, along with a suggested roadmap for strengthening transboundary cooperation.

Highlights

3.1 Field visit and interactive session

With the objective of facilitating interaction and the exchange of knowledge among the delegates from India and Nepal with Bhutan, and to highlight the Bhutanese Heritage as a sustainable means of tourism, an interaction and field visit to some of the most important tourism destinations of Bhutan was organized on 1-3 May 2017. The first day's visit was to the Tiger's Nest Monastery, also known as Paro Takstang. Constructed in 1692, it is blessed and sanctified as one of Bhutan's most sacred religious sites in Paro, Bhutan. The Monastery is a small collection of buildings precariously perched on a cliff, 900 meters off the ground where Guru Rinpoche first meditated, the event that introduced Buddhism into Bhutan. There is a legend that Guru Rinpoche was carried from Tibet to this location on the back of a tigress, thus giving it the name Tiger's Nest. The key message from the visit is the need to preserve the sanctity of sacredness with original architecture, tradition, and offering practices. It also highlighted good waste management along the natural trails and community engagement in providing horse riding services and a market for value chain products.

⁸ Please refer to www.greathimalayatrail.com

⁹ Pradhan, S, S Khaling, R Pradhan (2014) Tourism in the Singhalila and Neora Valley National Parks, Darjeeling Himalayas – An assessment for appropriate interventions. Unpublished report submitted to The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

¹⁰ ADA and SASEC Tourism Working Group (2004) South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Tourism Development Plan. Tourism Resource Consultants Ltd. New Zealand and Metcon Consultants Pvt Ltd. Nepal.



Interaction among the participants

On the second day, the delegates were taken to Punakha Dzong, also known as Pungtang Dechen Photrang Dzong (meaning the palace of great happiness or bliss). It is the administrative centre of Punakha District. Constructed by Ngawang Namgyal, 1st Zhabdrung Rinpoche, in 1637–38, it is the second oldest and second largest Dzong in Bhutan and one of its most majestic structures. The Dzong houses the sacred relics of the southern Drukpa Lineage of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, including the Rangjung Kasarpani and the sacred remains of Ngawang Namgyal and the terton Pema Lingpa. Punakha Dzong was the administrative centre and the seat of the Government of Bhutan until 1955, when the capital was moved to Thimphu. It is included in Bhutan's Tentative List for UNESCO world heritage sites. On the way to Punakha, the delegates also passed through Dochula Pass, where 108 Chorten, known as "Druk Wangyal Chortens", have been built by Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk, the eldest Queen Mother.

The field visit to Punakha served as an example of harnessing the cultural services of sacred monuments in the Landscape for livelihood co-benefits from tourism. Also, the delegations could appreciate the efforts to maintain the traditional architecture of buildings and bridges as a significant value for tourism. The visit to the Dzong and conducting of a short prayer session by 70 monks headed by a revered Lama demonstrated the significance of the rich intangible assets of spiritualism that are critical for achieving psychological wellbeing and guiding us in living in harmony with nature. In addition, the delegates also visited the habitat of the white-bellied heron, one of the most threatened birds, where a conservation programme is being undertaken. In the evening, the delegates attended a dinner hosted by the Governor of the Punakha district. The dinner also provided a platform to interact with local leaders for a better understanding of the landscape and forging future cooperation. For instance, the dinner meeting between the Directors of BSI and ZSI, and the Dean of the College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan, is leading toward formal establishment of cooperation in the areas of botany and zoology between these institutions.

On the third day of the visit, the delegates visited the Royal Botanical Garden at Lamperi. The Lamperi Park, against the backdrop of the Dochula Pass, is the first botanical park in Bhutan. It forms a biological corridor of 47 square miles (120 km²) between the Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park and the Jigme Dorji National Park. The garden is home to about 46 species of rhododendron, of which 18 species are native to the park, while the other 26 species have been brought from other regions of Bhutan and planted here. An important realisation for the team was the value of preserving such pristine environments at the outskirts of a booming urban capital. Community ownership of the annual rhododendron festival, showcasing of local cuisines and traditional products, and celebrating festivals, combined with protection of the sacred lake, provide significant livelihoods and environmental values. It is a case for blending conservation and development.



108 Stupas of Do-Chula, a national heritage of Bhutan

These field visits enabled the participants to interact with each other and the host country stakeholders engaged in promoting heritage tourism and understand tourism perspectives in Bhutan and see how they are linked to regional and global markets. Experiences were also shared on how Bhutan is capitalizing natural, cultural, and social values for promoting tourism so that the best practices could be instrumental for other countries such as Nepal and India. More importantly, the visit also provided opportunities for the three participating countries to learn from each other about both opportunities and challenges.

At the sidelines of the consultation meeting, two bilateral meetings were also arranged:

- Meeting between Dasho Chencho Norbu, Secretary, National Environmental Commission, Bhutan and additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), and Dr Eklabya Sharma, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD.
- Meeting between Dr. Sherub, Chief, Education and Research, Ugyen Wangchuk Institute of Forestry and Environmental Research, and Directors of ZSI and BSI. These side meetings resulted in a fruitful outcome with MoFE&CC for collaboration with the Royal government in the areas of capacity building and exchange visits for environmental impact assessment processes, botany, and zoology.

3.2 Inaugural Session

3.2.1 Welcome remarks: Mr Sangay, Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), Bhutan

Mr Sangay, Sr. Forest Specialist, DOF&PS, MoAF, gave a warm welcome to Indian and Nepali delegates, including the representatives from ICIMOD and Bhutan. Recalling Bhutan's commitments to biodiversity conservation, he expressed support for the Kangchenjunga Landscape and congratulated the team for making significant progress. He also expressed appreciation for the efforts made for the collective learning and sharing of experiences on tourism in a broader spectrum. He highlighted that the meeting could potentially play a crucial role in improving regional cooperation among the three member countries. He concluded by wishing all the participants a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Thimphu, Bhutan.

3.2.2 Overview on Hindu Kush Himalaya and Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative – Keynote: Dr Eklabya Sharma, ICIMOD

Dr Eklabya Sharma, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD, highlighted the significance of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) and Kangchenjunga Landscape in the conservation and development arena. He spoke about the importance



Interaction at White-bellied heron conservation site

of the mountain regions of the world and shared his concern regarding the insufficient global attention and investment in the HKH. Describing the importance of the mountain ecosystem, he explained that it is home to more than 915 million people and provides a wide range of goods and services to more than 50% of the world's population with water, food, energy, and a wide variety of other ecosystem services. The ecosystem contributes to the livelihoods of more than 210 million people in the HKH and approximately 1.3 billion people in the downstream river basins, in addition to benefitting three to four billion people by ensuring food security. He discussed major issues related to various drivers of change, including climate change, land use change, infrastructure development, urbanization, globalization, migration, and feminization in the region. Using the example of Oka, he illustrated that it will lose its habitats if there is only a one degree change in temperature. He also highlighted ICIMOD'S mandate and its transboundary landscape programme, as well as the Kangchenjunga Landscape process and status. He categorically mentioned that the Kangchenjunga Landscape went through an extensive consultative process at various levels and prepared feasibility assessment reports, conservation and development strategies, five-year operational plans, and Long Term Environmental and Socioecological Monitoring (LTESM) frameworks. Furthermore, he stated that the process has also identified pilot areas based on eco-regions, livelihood interventions based on common niche products, and the LTESM baseline based on disturbance, and he highlighted the opportunities for producing regional benefits from tourism and improved infrastructure.

3.2.3 Shared Natural and Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Tourism in Kangchenjunga Transboundary Landscape – Dr Nakul Chettri, ICIMOD

Dr Nakul Chettri highlighted the creation of Kangchenjunga Landscape (KL) in the HKH. He explained the concept of transboundary landscape, the preparatory phase and its outputs, and the progress made toward implementation. He focused on the different phases of the KLCDI. He also talked about the thematic focus of KLCDI, in which social and economic human wellbeing of beneficiaries are ensured. He discussed several publications of the Kangchenjunga Transboundary Landscape and explained the Feasibility Assessment report of KLCDI. He then identified the challenges and opportunities for transboundary tourism with short-, medium-, and long-term action plans. He raised common issues such as human wildlife conflict and said that related transboundary crime needs to be addressed in a similar manner. He also said that strategies and plans have not only been prepared but have also been implemented.



Opening session with Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan

3.2.4 Remarks from Nepal

Mr Bala Ram Kandel, Under Secretary, MoFSC, Nepal, in his remarks expressed his gratitude to the Government of Bhutan for being a wonderful host and to ICIMOD for organizing the event. Mr Kandel informed the delegates about the importance of tourism in socioeconomic development in Nepal and the progressive path taken by the country in the recent past. He also highlighted that the economic opportunity related to tourism in Nepal is not distributed equally and some regions, such as Eastern Nepal, need special attention. He also described the opportunity for regional cooperation in the tourism sector within the Kangchenjunga Landscape.

3.2.5 Remarks from Bhutan

Dr Sangay Wangchuk, Nature Conservation Specialist/Advisor, DoF&PS, MoAF, Bhutan, in his remarks highlighted the historical background of the Kangchenjunga Landscape process and expressed his gratitude for the support extended to Bhutan from the programme. He also highlighted the Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2) initiatives and explained how Kangchenjunga Landscape is being linked to it. He acknowledged the contribution of tourism as an economic tool for socioeconomic development and the potential for linking it at the regional level with the help of Kangchenjunga Landscape initiative. He wished the team a fruitful output from the meeting.

3.2.6 Remarks from India

Dr Amita Prasad, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC, India, in her remarks expressed her gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for its overwhelming hospitality and fruitful interaction during the pre-event journey to the natural heritage sites of Bhutan. Dr Prasad focused on the need for regional cooperation to protect and promote the shared natural heritage found in the Kangchenjunga Landscape. She highlighted the potential of tourism to address poverty and preserve cultural values. She was very happy with the Kangchenjunga Landscape initiative facilitated by ICIMOD and expressed her support and commitment. She also highlighted that human wildlife conflict and wildlife-related crime and trade are also major issues that need regional initiatives.

3.2.7 Address by Chief Guest

Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Royal Government of Bhutan, welcomed the delegates from India and Nepal and representatives from ICIMOD and Bhutan. In his inaugural remarks, his Excellency highlighted the Government's efforts on conservation and development, and the partnership developed with KLCDI member countries – Bhutan, India, and Nepal – and the expectations for successful implementation. His



Interactive session during the policy dialogue

Excellency also appreciated the efforts of ICIMOD and his Ministry, along with other stakeholders, to make KLCDI a great example of transboundary cooperation.

3.2.8 Vote of thanks

Mr Sonam Wangchuk, Chief, Nature Conservation Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Royal Government of Bhutan, extended the Vote of Thanks to Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, Dr Prasad, Mr Kandel, Dr Sharma, and other delegates from India and Nepal. He also expressed his gratitude to GIZ and ADA for their financial support and to the Kangchenjunga Landscape team for the fruitful journey to reach the present stage. He reiterated his determination to fulfill the expectations of stakeholders with strong implementation focused on the pilot areas.

3.3 Technical Session I – Sustainable Tourism in the Kangchenjunga Landscape: Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

Chair: Dr Amita Prasad, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC, India

Co-Chair: Dr Sangay Wangchuk, Advisor, MoAF, Bhutan

3.3.1 Policy and Governance Sustainable Tourism in Bhutan – Mr Phuntsho Gyeltshen

The technical session started with a presentation by Mr Phuntsho Gyeltshen, Sr Tourism Officer, Tourism Council of Bhutan. Presenting on “Policy and Governance Sustainable Tourism in Bhutan”, Mr Gyeltshen started with the background of tourism in Bhutan, followed by evolving policies and practices. He highlighted the existing regulatory framework for tourism and national tourism institutions. He said that Bhutan’s tourism policy is guided by “high value, low impact” principles. He discussed the tourism packages offered by Bhutan, the planning process and role of the private sector, and guiding principles for sustainable tourism. He also discussed tourism rules and regulations, licenses for tourism business, codes of conduct, trekking regulations, and accommodation classifications with regulations and a standardized system. Mr. Gyeltshen emphasized the need for facilitation and coordination, marketing and promotion, development of tourism products and services, and human resources development. Concluding his presentation, he suggested creating an enabling environment for a vibrant tourism industry and promotion for faster regional growth in the Kangchenjunga Landscape.



Exchange of friendship between Bhutan and Nepal

3.3.2 Status and Potential of Transboundary Sustainable Tourism in Nepal – Mani Raj Lamichhane

Mr Mani Raj Lamichhane, Officiating Director, Tourism Product and Resources Development, Nepal Tourism Board, Nepal, highlighted the different tourism products of Nepal in the context of its unique diversity, highest mountains, and rich culture. During his presentation, he explained the importance of tourism for Nepal and its recognition in the constitution of Nepal, the trends in tourist arrival and the proportion from India and China, and the products developed to cater to the tourism demand. He cited examples such as trekking, rafting, bungee jumping, bird watching, jungle safaris, spiritual journeys, and exploring heritage sites and museums. Touching on the historical trend, Mr Lamichhane pointed out that recent tourism enterprises have witnessed a change from the conventional forms of trekking and touring to agrotourism, traditional weddings, exploring knowledge and practices of the indigenous communities, and many more. However, Nepal has experienced several challenges from the Moist Movement, the 2015 Earthquake, and the Southern Border blockade bringing the flourishing tourism enterprises into a critical stage, he added. He also explained the status of tourism products, institutional arrangements, and existing policies, and the challenges and opportunities provided for foreign investment. Concluding his presentation, Mr Lamichhane expressed his optimistic view of promoting regional tourism in Kangchenjunga Landscape with the development of an immigration facility in Pashupati Phatak and direct flights from Kathmandu to Bagdogra, including infrastructure and human resources for eastern Nepal.

3.3.3 Status and Potential of Sustainable Transboundary Tourism, India – Kireet Kumar and C K Chhetri

Er Kireet Kumar, G B Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development (GBPNIHESD), Almora, in his presentation described the process the organization went through in developing KL and the role played by GBPNIHESD and its partners. Highlighting the significance of KL in India, he explained that the area, which covers 56% of the KL, is rich in biodiversity, ethnic diversity, many impressive mountains, and numerous protected areas, including the UNESCO World Heritage site. Out of 19 protected areas in KL, nine are transboundary in nature, with high potential for transboundary tourism, he added. Er Kumar also discussed tourism in Darjeeling and evolving wildlife tourism in doors and adventure and cultural tourism in Sikkim. As per his presentation, there is a high potential for regional tourism, but special attention needs to be given to the enterprises' negative impacts, such as cluttered settlements and urbanization, traffic congestion, challenges on waste management, land use conversion, and cultural departure. He emphasized focusing on participatory planning, sustainable tourism development, development of human resources, and making tourism business "sustainable"



Interaction between delegates of Bhutan and India

rather than conventional mass tourism. He ended his presentation by suggesting the need to develop a common platform for regional tourism, an institutional setup for frequent dialogue, and increased research and planning, all of which would contribute to comparable policies. He foresees, through KL, at least one sustainable tourism plan developed and implemented by local communities through other partners and the private sector.

Adding to Er Kumar's remarks, Mr C K Chhetri, Additional Secretary, Department of Tourism, Sikkim, introduced the state of Sikkim: its people, culture, tourism products, policies and practices. He described the progress made in diversifying tourism by focusing on rural tourism, linking with organic farming, adding value with animal husbandry, and Zero Waste Management initiatives. Mr Chhetri also highlighted the recognition received by Sikkim for being a) the best tourism performing state; b) the best ecotourism destination; c) the most progressive tourism state, among many more accolades. He also reiterated the role of the state as facilitator and promoter of sustainable tourism and initiatives for product diversification.

3.3.4 Sustainable Tourism in Kangchenjunja Transboundary Landscape of Bhutan – Sonam Wangchuk, Namgay Bidha, Ngawang Gyeltshen, Tshering Pem, Dechen Lham

Mr Sonam Wangchuk started his presentation with an introduction to KLCDI Landscape-Bhutan, which covers 23,877 sq km. He stressed the importance of Kangchenjunga Landscape in terms of flora and fauna, natural beauty, and cultural values. Introducing the tourism products, Mr Wangchuk explained the various products offered to visitors, including pleasure tourism, business tourism, nature tourism, cultural tourism, and health and medical tourism. He indicated that Bhutan caters to two major types of tourism, nature-based and culture-based. He observed that tourism in Bhutan has increased in recent years, with 100,000 visitors in 2012 and more than 200,000 in 2016, with most business held during the months of March to June and September to November. He emphasized the "high value, low impact" tourism policy based on nature protection and ensuring tangible benefits to communities with quality services and contributions towards the Gross National Happiness. He also discussed the potential of tourism to contribute to conservation. However, he also observed that there are only a few nature conservation tourism practices in Bhutan, with additional challenges of inequality in revenue among the districts and entrepreneurs and increasing human wildlife conflict. He concluded the presentation with an explanation of existing



Launching of books by high level delegates

policies, strategies and plans, and the products available within the Kangchenjunga Landscape and was optimistic about opportunity for collective growth among the member countries.

3.3.5 Tourism Ecosystem – Raj Basu and Renzino Lepcha

Mr Raj Basu from Help Tourism introduced his presentation with “Tourism Ecosystem” based on his experience in the region promoting rural tourism. He highlighted the rich biodiversity and culture in the region and its potential as tourism products for economic development. He shared information about regional initiatives such as Asian Rural Tourism festivals, biodiversity-based tourism enterprises (e.g., bird watching and primate tours), and culture-based products such as Baudha Mahatsava. Mr Basu also indicated that conventional tourism has been changing from urban destination to rural tourism. He talked about the increasing practices of “Home Stay” and “Community-Based Tourism”, explaining how visitors are engaged with different activities like bird watching, traditional hot baths, and interpretation of local flora and fauna. Mr Renzino Lepcha added to the presentation by describing the historical perspective of tourism development in Sikkim and the initiatives taken to develop rural tourism in transboundary areas bordering Nepal. Citing examples from Okharey-Ribdi, he emphasized promoting rural tourism and home stays in poverty-ridden remote areas as an opportunity for income. He also gave examples of initiatives taken at the local level through festivals (Rhododendron, culture, and sports) to promote rural tourism. Both Mr Basu and Mr Lepcha also highlighted the challenges and potentials of tourism development in KL with examples from SASEC, Great Himalayan Trail, Buddhist Circuit, and Heritage Trail, and advocated working at the regional scale to tap this potential.

3.3.6 Collaborative Research of Ecotourism – Jesse Montes, Royal Thimphu College

Mr Jesse Montes from Thimphu College presented a case study on a collaborative research initiative supported by ICIMOD through Himalayan University Consortium (HUC). The presentation highlighted the objective of the project titled “Building regional student and faculty collaboration for environmental awareness and conservation” and explained how the three institutions (Kathmandu University, Sikkim University, and Royal Thimphu College) initiated institutional collaboration. They developed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), conducted joint research on ecotourism sustainability in Haa, Phobjikha and Phajoding Eco Camp, generated knowledge products,



Sharing development partners perspective during the session

and strengthened capacity through joint research. The presentation also highlighted the methodological framework and indicators used for the study, along with some preliminary findings.

Remarks: Dr Johannes Binder, ADA

Dr Binder discussed the still-unexplored potential of domestic tourism and stressed the importance of a good balance within the triangle of cultural heritage conservation – natural conservation, socioeconomic patterns, and development. In this paradigm, no component remains static, not even culture. He used Phobjikha Valley as an example where electrification by ADC was provided under-earth in order to meet the demands of preservation and conservation for the protection of black crane breeding grounds and still allow the population to access alternative income sources, such as farm stays, due to improved infrastructure and services. He furthermore urged that tourism be packaged more inclusively and creatively: adventure and spiritual tourism for devotees and alienated businessmen/urban populations could be offered by (private) monasteries and by members of families living in farm houses. Coordination and planning of wellness, ecotourism, and spiritual tourism might be a good option. Since it is mostly elders living in the villages while the young people migrate to urban centres and study abroad, tourism – which now provides only limited income to a few individuals through initiatives such as farm stays – has the potential to be an incentive for the young population to stay in rural areas if significant value chains are created and efficient marketing connects domestic tourists to rural areas based on broader and integrated offers. It might also be important to open up the policy in terms of stay duration and flexible tourism packages in order to attract different types of high-end tourists, including those who would like to book (Buddhist) meditation classes and who seek treatment of their chronic diseases under Bhutanese traditional medicine.

Chair and Co-Chair's Remarks: Dr Amita Prasad and Dr Sangay Wangchuk

The technical session concluded with remarks from Dr Prasad and Dr Wangchuk. Both appreciated the rich content and insightful presentations by all the speakers and highlighted the need for collaboration to take advantage of the shared natural heritages by the three participating countries. They also promised to learn from each other and promote tourism to address economic, social, and environmental problems. They also recommended that a thorough policy analysis is necessary for understanding the opportunities and challenges for strengthening regional tourism potential.

3.4 Technical Session II – Sustainable Tourism in the Kangchenjunga Landscape: Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities (Group Discussions based on Themes)

Session Facilitator: Mr Renzino Samdrup Lepcha, Sikkim

The first session was dedicated to understanding tourism practices, challenges, and opportunities in the landscape. With an objective to develop short-, medium-, and long-term action points, this session was organized with four groups discussing tourism products, market opportunities, and policy implications to come up with these action points (Table 1). The group presentation focused on the need to map existing and potential destinations, infrastructure, and facilities, including capacity building in the short term; institutional building, infrastructure, regional product development, and connectivity in the medium term; and policy, regulatory mechanisms, and institutionalization as long-term action points (See Table 1 for more detail).

Table 1: Group-work output on KL Tourism

Challenges	Short term (1-2 years)	Medium term (2-5 years)	Long term (5-10 years)
Lack of coordinated initiative for marketing at the national and transboundary scale	Mapping of existing and potential tourism products and diversify tourism products	Regional institution for regional tourism package	Harmonized tourism development policies including for homestays
Lack of innovation and tailor-made tour packages	Mapping of the common facilities at existing tourist borders	Improve infrastructure at existing and new but potential border points with common procedure for SAARC tourist and other tourists	Common standard for product and services quality and branding
Sociopolitical instability	Mutual understanding on common products and regional strategy on product development, packaging, and promotion	Revival of heritage routes and trails	Regional institutions and task forces for promotion and quality control and institutions for coordinated marketing, including digital marketing, building on subregional/regional forum (SASEC, BIMSTEC)
Slow pace of product diversification	Capacity building and human resources development	Immigration facilities at Pashupati Fatak and Chewabhanjung (Nepal-India), Samchi, Gelephu and Samdrujonkhar (Bhutan-India),	Develop transboundary trekking trail (e.g., Hooker route covering Nepal, Sikkim, and Darjeeling)
Relatively low levels of private sector engagement	Regional promotional materials	Air connectivity – Kathmandu to Bagdogra	Strong research, monitoring, and data sharing mechanism and institutions in place
Lack of coordinated institutional mechanism within the country	Media tour for key destinations	Common reciprocal agreement on tourist vehicles	Tourism contributing to conservation of flora and fauna, especially the keystone, threatened, and endemic species
Limited trekking and accommodation infrastructure	Waste management strategies and campaign	Regional package and branding with joint itinerary of tourism products (regional circuits on pilgrimage and culture, adventure, wildlife, and transboundary trails)	Linked to Great Himalayan Trail
Inadequate funds for promotion		Common booking facilities	Harmonising with global commitments such as CBD and SDGs
Relatively low levels of private sector engagement		Link other livelihood opportunities to tourism (craft, vegetables, NTFPs)	
Limited accessibility among the countries		Promote PPP model	
		Regular organisation of regional tourism mart and festivals (Rhododendron, orange, yak, birds, traditional food, etc.)	

3.5 Technical Session III – Panel Discussion: Ensuring Wellbeing Through Sustainable Tourism in the Kangchenjunga Landscape: Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities

Moderator: Mr. Brij Rathore, Chief Policy Advisor, ICIMOD

After learning about the state of tourism practices, challenges, and opportunities through Session I, and the potential short-, medium-, and long-term action points discussion in Session II, this Session was organized to get the experts and policy makers' views on taking the opportunities and action points forward. Session III included experts and both government and private sector representatives. The Session was organized with following guiding questions:

- How does sustainable tourism built around shared natural and cultural heritage contribute to “wellbeing”?
- What are the key challenges and opportunities?
- What is the way forward?

3.5.1 Ensuring Wellbeing as a Tourism Product Resource in Kangchenjunga Landscape – Prof Ram P Chaudhary, RECAST, Nepal

As part of the panel, Prof. Chaudhary described the history of interdependence shared by local communities in the neighboring countries and the evolving tourism enterprises within the Kangchenjunga Landscape. He also highlighted the paradox of the overlapping situation in which higher poverty is prevalent in an area with rich natural resources and in which increasing human pressures have resulted in overexploitation, ecosystem degradation, and pollution. He expressed the need to reconcile “sustainable tourism” and “community-based tourism” and to plan for “sustainable community-based tourism”. Prof. Chaudhary also discussed the opportunities presented by having globally significant ecosystems (third highest mountain, Ramsar site-Mai Pokhari; World Heritage site (Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve) and the need to promote academic research and cultural, rural, and adventure tourism at both national and regional levels. He also recommended developing wider strategies focusing on win-more-lose-less policies that reconcile conservation and development beyond tourism to contribute to overall wellbeing.

3.5.2 Ensuring Wellbeing Through Sustainable Tourism in the Kangchenjunga Landscape – India – Mr Lalit Kapur, Advisor, MoEF&CC, India

Mr Kapur's discussion covered the importance of tourism in a global economy. He mentioned that tourism along is contributing to 10% of the global economy and supporting 227 million jobs. India is harnessing 6.6% of its GDP from this increasing enterprise, with a growth rate of foreign tourists of 10.6% supporting 7.7% of the total employment. However, he mentioned that India is only benefiting from 0.4% of the global share and is ranked

Representative from the Government of West Bengal sharing their perspective during the session



38th. He then presented the vision of making tourism a source of 8% of GDP by 2022. Owing to the geographical location and existing tourism products, the Kangchenjunga Landscape has the potential to become a regional tourism hub. He described the need to control unplanned and unregulated tourism, to look for transboundary potentials, and to raise awareness of the ecological sensitivity of the region. Mr Kapur concluded by suggesting that many opportunities exist for exploring rural tourism focused on local communities, ecological and cultural preservation, and economic benefits and national and regional policies.

3.5.3 Wellbeing Through Sustainable Tourism in the Kangchenjunga Landscape, Bhutan – Mr Sonam Dorji, Additional Director, Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators, Bhutan

Mr Dorji discussed Bhutan's tourism products, policies, and practices. He touched on existing policies and gaps and the need to diversify products and reach areas where tourism potentials are higher. He reiterated the high value and low impact practices in the tourism sector of Bhutan and described the need for better policies to maintain and improve tourism services.

Closing Remarks from the Chair – Mr Brij Rathore

Mr Rathore summarized the sessions' output by highlighting the nine domains of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and explaining how tourism could contribute to the GNH philosophy. He recalled the rich biodiversity, culture, and scenic landscapes of Bhutan, all of which are attractive tourism products. However, he cautioned attendees on the negative impacts that come with increased waste, traffic, rampant urbanization, and cultural departure, and the issue of equity from tourism, among others. He suggested that tourism in the HKH should be less focused on GDP, but rather should contribute to overall wellbeing. He also recommended greater focus on nature-based tourism both at the national and transboundary levels; providing high-value services with low impacts; checking rural/urban migration; and tapping the potential of nature/culture-based tourism as a Himalayan brand. He stated that quality tourism could be attractive even for regional markets to adequately cater to the demand. But there is a need for well-thought-out governance mechanisms with a platform for transboundary dialogue to discuss policies and guidelines related to products, standards, and regulatory instruments, along with transboundary immigration and institutions. Mr Rathore concluded by suggesting that there should be an emphasis on product diversification, transboundary value chains, green infrastructure, engaging youths, product development in human populated areas (not limited to high-altitude areas), financial incentives to local communities, and research and capacity building.

Remarks from the Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Royal Government of Bhutan



3.6 Concluding Session

During the concluding session, Dr Nakul Chettri, ICIMOD, summarised the five-day programme, process, and discussions, highlighting the rationale for the transboundary landscape initiative, the progress in Kangchenjunga Landscape, and the key achievements and major outputs from the week-long event. Dr Chettri reiterated the need for regional cooperation, tapping opportunities, creating synergy among the key players, and working for the short-, medium-, and long-term strategies that were discussed and recommended.

Mr Brij Rathore, ICIMOD, presented the outputs and way forward. Some of the key steps to take this forward that emerged during the discussion include:

- Placing efforts on collaboration with relevant stakeholders within countries and across the three participating countries will be the key to success. Therefore, there is a need to support the creation of a Transboundary Platform for Multistakeholders to allow for collaboration on policy-related issues.
- Development of a framework Policy Guideline on Sustainable Transboundary Nature /Heritage Tourism including transboundary circuits, home stays, certification, etc. ICIMOD, in collaboration with ownership of three participating country partners, may take this forward.
- One of the key next steps could be engagement with tour operators, travel agencies, guides, and other relevant stakeholders in the transboundary context. The venue for such a transboundary meeting with the stakeholders could be Jaldapara. ICIMOD, in collaboration with West Bengal Tourism Department and Forest and Wild Life Department, may work out the details.
- Addressing wildlife crime and illegal trade in wildlife in the transboundary context is the need of the hour to conserve the unique biodiversity of the landscape. We must build and strengthen the platform for such exchange of information and joint planning activities across borders. ICIMOD as the regional organization may facilitate this process by engaging the relevant agencies to support such a process.

Remarks from independent board member during the concluding session



The presentation was followed by series of remarks from Nepal, India, Bhutan, and ADA, represented by Mr Bala Ram Kandel, Dr Amita Prasad, Dr Sangay Wangchuk, and Mr Johannes Binder, respectively. The remarks acknowledged the timely start with the policy dialogue and the realistic outputs with short-, medium-, and long-term action points. The representatives also suggested the need to make tourism a vehicle for overall wellbeing and a means for cultural presentations benefiting unreached, disadvantaged, and poor populations, as well as the importance of working toward a policy and regulatory framework for transboundary tourism through a “multiple stakeholders forum” including the private sector. Cross-border accessibility through infrastructure, a decentralized model of tourism management, and capacity-building of service providers, country ownership with regional vision were suggested.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Binder addressed ICIMOD’s approach on transboundary landscapes and cooperation and explained that the concept needs to be more realistically shaped and coordinated, as Nepal, India, and Bhutan have very different definitions, approaches, and expectations on “regional tourism”. Also, a coordination and mapping at national levels on tourism potentials and infrastructure needs to be undertaken before going “cross-border” and developing tourism products on a (cross-border) community level. Broad coordination with other (international) stakeholders in Bhutan is recommended.

Elaborating on the “balance” discussed in the morning, he further stressed the need to develop a good relationship between cultural heritage infrastructure and traditional and modern socioeconomic approaches. It is important to maintain the agriculture infrastructure with the young work force in the countryside because that is partly the future of the rural tourism infrastructure to be sustained (pastureland, farm houses, water points, etc.).

Dr Binder encouraged national participants, experts, and ICIMOD to look into:

- Decentralised approaches for regional/tourism/national park development;
- Assessment of border regimes/cross-border infrastructure;
- Creating a pilot program among the three countries with respect to cultural-spiritual tourism (routes) and joined minimum standard setting;
- Facilitating integration of already existing (but standalone) tourism products and help in marketing a regional profile;
- Mapping of infrastructure, touristic products, and offers;
- Supporting actual cross-border value chains;
- Focusing on domestic tourism at first, which is largely neglected and underutilized, and building on this transboundary tourism.
- Even large hydropower projects could be partly merged with tourism infrastructure, as in the case of the Austrian Malta hydropower, which earns more revenues with tourism than with hydropower electricity production.

Appreciating the initiative taken by ICIMOD, Honorable Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang Dorji, former Prime Minister of Bhutan and present ICIMOD independent board member, expressed his pleasure and gratitude to the participating countries. Dasho Dorji was very optimistic about moving forward and making Kangchenjunga Landscape an example of regional cooperation for conservation and development. The Chief Guest, Dasho Rinzin Dorji, Honorable Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Thimphu, Bhutan, in his concluding remarks expressed sincere thanks to the delegates from India, Nepal, and his Ministry representatives, along with other stakeholders. Dasho Dorji expressed commitment from the Royal Government of Bhutan to the full implementation of Kangchenjunga Landscape and encouraged donors to come forward to support this transboundary initiative. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr Tashi Dorji from ICIMOD to all dignitaries, delegates, participants, and the organizing members and media persons.

Annex I: Programme

Interactive session

Day 1: Monday, 1st May 2017

Whole Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel to Paro, Bhutan Arrival at 10.25 AM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The delegation arrives at Paro Check-in hotel Early lunch Visit Taktsang Overnight at Paro
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Day 2: Tuesday, 2nd May 2017

Whole Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit to Punakha and interaction among the invited guests (Depart Paro by 7.30 AM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit to Tea break, view of Himalayan mountain range from Dorchula Chorten Offering of butter lamp at Punakha Dzong Lunch break Visit Bhutan White-bellied Heron habitat Official dinner with Governors and staff of Punakha District Overnight in Punakha
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Day 3: Wednesday, 3rd May 2017

Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive back to Thimphu (Depart from Punakha by 8 AM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visit: Tea break and Lamperi Botanical Garden Kuenselphodrang Nature Park (Buddha point) Check-in hotel and lunch break
Afternoon		Visit Crafts Market

3 May 2017: Inaugural Session

Venue: Hotel Termalinka, Thimphu, Bhutan

Time	Programme	Remarks
18.00-19.00	Marchang Ceremony	Master of ceremony and Marchang offering coordinated by NCD, MOAF
	Welcome remarks	Hon'ble Secretary, MoAF Bhutan
	Overview of ICIMOD and Kangchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative	Dr Eklabya Sharma, Deputy Director General, ICIMOD
	Objectives of the meeting and Book Launch	Dr Nakul Chettri, Coordinator, Kangchenjunga Landscape Initiative, ICIMOD
	Remarks by country head of delegation, Nepal	Mr Bala Ram Kandel, Under Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Kathmandu, Nepal
	Remarks by country head of delegation, Bhutan	Director, Department of Forests and Park Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan
	Remarks by country head of delegation, India	Dr Amita Prasad, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC, New Delhi
	Address by Chief Guest	Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, His Excellency, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Bhutan
19.00-21.00	Vote of Thanks	Mr. Sonam Wangchuk, Chief, NCD/Coordinator, Kangchenjunga Landscape Initiative, Bhutan
	Reception Dinner jointly organized by MoAF and ICIMOD	With group photo session

4 May 2017: Technical Session

Venue: Namgay Heritage Hotel, Thimphu, Bhutan

Time	Programme	Remarks
08.30-09.00	Registration	NCD, DoF&PS, MOAF
09.00-11.30	Technical Session I: Sustainable Tourism in the Kanchenjunga Landscape – Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities (20 minutes presentation and 10 minutes discussion) Chair: Dr Amita Prasad, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC, New Delhi Co-Chair: Dr Sangay Wangchuk, Advisor, MoAF, Thimphu	
09.00-09.30	Policy and Governance on Sustainable Tourism in Bhutan	Mr. Phuntsho Gyeltshen, Sr. Tourism Officer, Tourism Council of Bhutan
09.30-10.00	Status and potential of transboundary sustainable tourism: Nepal	Mr. Mani Raj Lamichhane, Officiating Director, Tourism Product and Resources Development, Nepal Tourism Board, Kathmandu, Nepal
10.00-10.30	Status and potential of transboundary sustainable tourism: India	Er. Kireet Kumar, Scientist-'G', G. B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Sustainable Development, Almora Uttarakhand, India and Mr C K Chhetri, Additional Secretary, Tourism Department, Sikkim, India
10.30-11.00	Status and potential of transboundary sustainable tourism: Bhutan	Representatives, Nature Conservation Division, Department of Forest and Park Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest
11.00-11.15	Tea Break	
11.15-11.45	Status and potential of transboundary sustainable tourism	Mr Renzino Lepcha and Mr Raj Basu, Private Sector, India
11.45-12.00	Measuring the Sustainability of Ecotourism Ventures in Bhutan	Representatives, Royal Thimphu College, Thimphu
12.00-12.15	Remarks and closing of session by the Chair and Co-Chair	
12.15-15.30	Technical Session II: Sustainable Tourism in the Kanchenjunga Landscape – Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities (Group Discussions based on themes)	
12.15-13.00	Group discussion based on guided questions on identified themes	Facilitated by Mr Renzino Samdup Lepcha, Sikkim, India
13.00-14.00	Lunch	
14.00-14.30	Group discussion continues	
14.30-15.30	Chair: Mr Bala Ram Kandel, MoFSC, Nepal Co-Chair: Mr Phento Tshering, Director, Department of Forests and Park Services	
14.30-15.30	Group presentations	
15.30-16.30	Technical Session III: Ensuring Wellbeing Through Sustainable Tourism in the Kanchenjunga Landscape – Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities (Panel Discussions with Working Tea) Moderator: Mr Brij Rathore, Chief Policy Advisor, ICIMOD Speaker: Professor Ram P Chaudhary, Emeritus – Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology (RECAST), Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal Speaker: Dr Lalit Kapur, Advisor, Mountain Division, CS-I, MoEF&CC, New Delhi Speaker: Mr Sonam Dorji, Additional Director, Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators, Thimphu, Bhutan Speaker: Mr Raj Basu, Managing Director, The Help Tourism, India, Private Sector	
16.30-17.30	Concluding Session Chief Guest – Dasho Rinzin Dorji, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Thimphu, Bhutan	
	Summary of the policy dialogue	Dr Nakul Chettri, ICIMOD
	Way forward	Mr Brij Rathore, ICIMOD
	Concluding Remarks	Mr Bala Ram Kandel
	Concluding Remarks	Dr Amita Prasad
	Concluding Remarks	Dr Sangay Wangchuk
	Concluding Remarks	Mr Johannes Binder, ADA
	Concluding Remarks	Lyonpo Dr Kinzang Dorji, ICIMOD's Independent Board Member from Bhutan
	Concluding Remarks	Chief Guest, Dasho Rinzin Dorji, Hon'ble Secretary, MoAF, Thimphu, Bhutan
	Vote of Thanks	Dr Tashi Dorji, Livelihood Specialist, ICIMOD

Free evening: Walk around Thimphu downtown

5th Day, 5th May: Departure

END OF PROGRAMME

Contact persons: Dr Nakul Chettri (ICIMOD) and Mr Sonam Wangchuk (NCD-Bhutan)

Annex 2: List of Participants

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Thimphu, Bhutan

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Ex-Minister of MoAF
ICIMOD Board Member - Independent
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