

Summing Up

The above framework helps to conceptualise mountain and tourism development in the context of mountain environmental resources. The next stage is

to operationalise the concept which is currently operating at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies (CREST). A summary of these operationalisation aspects follows.

First, it is essential to clearly identify the HER, the critical resources within HER, where they occur, and their current status. This will help to establish certain limits (assessment of HER as well as subset 13).

The second step involves identifying the community's existing conditions and needs as well as their status, opportunities, and constraints. The HER used by the community to fulfill consumptive and non-consumptive uses and the HER status need to be assessed and existing pressures identified (assessment MCD and subsets 3 and 5) .

The third step involves assessing MTD in relation to HER and the existing relationship between MCD and MTD. It is essential to assess mountain activities that are geared towards MTD, the number of people involved in MTD, and so on. Additionally, an assessment of the HER used by tourists (both direct and derived demand) and the status of these resources is necessary. (This will involve assessment of MTD, subsets 2 and 4.) At this stage, a picture of the linkages between MCD and MTD in the context of HER should evolve, i.e., assessment of subset 1. Analysis will also enable the assessment of subsets 12 and 9 to integrate the possibility of enhancing carrying capacity through internal and external policy actions.

Finally, the role of the partnership of different subsets to plan, manage, and monitor the development and conservation programmes needs to be well defined. As a result, a comprehensive picture of the HER, MCD, and MTD will evolve, and the necessary steps to evaluate carrying capacity and the basis to prepare a mountain tourism development plan will be possible.

Operationalising the above concept of sustainable mountain and tourism development requires that attention be focussed on physical, biological, social, and economic aspects of the environment to maximise the opportunities and mitigate the problems. This requires substantive shifts in policy and priorities at national level. The Government and its line agencies, NGOs, tourists, private agencies, and local people have definite roles to play as partners. The success or otherwise depends on how these partners are organised and coordinated through shared responsibilities and on how far local people from grass root institutions are involved in all development and conservation processes. Environmental considerations should be integrated with economic decision-making from the very beginning at all levels and proper assessment of environmental resources through economic accounting should receive immediate attention at both local and national levels.

It is useful to operationalise the concept of carrying capacity and sustainability using a critical factor approach. Identification of the internal characteristics of a defined geographical area and its interaction with other regions, assessment of potential of or constraints to a regions's development may provide the basis for identifying critical factors. These critical factors can be further viewed in terms of resources, specific areas or niches, behaviour, infrastructure, and institutions. Such critical factors may serve as focal points for both developmental and policy interventions as well as for monitoring. Preserving all resources would lead to foregoing many opportunities, making development an extremely expensive process. Intertemporal depletion may take place depending on the substitution possibilities between natural resource stock and man-made capital. Nevertheless, conservation of HER should receive primary importance in such an exercise.