

## **INTERNALISING THE PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS IN MOUNTAIN TOURISM**

There are many stakeholders with varied interests in mountain tourism. These were identified during a participatory workshop held in Pokhara (March 1996) which was attended by participants from India, Pakistan, and Nepal. As many as five stakeholders, as well as their interests in MTD, were identified. These were: the government, both national and local; local and national entrepreneurs; NGOs and INGOs; local people and communities; and visitors. Each of these five major stakeholders has different interests in mountain tourism development, and their perceptions need to be internalised in the tourism policy-programme-action continuum. The major interests of each stakeholder were identified and factors that influence their interests were discussed.

### **Government**

The interests of the government (national as well as local) were identified as maximisation of real tourism benefits for sustainable mountain development. It should be emphasised here that the word **real** is being used to capture a wide range of issues that falls within the purview of any government, e.g., security, law enforcement, conservation, and protection<sup>1</sup>. In order to maximise real tourism benefits for sustainable mountain development, the following development aspects become important for the government:

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1 The provision of these and similar services by the state is assumed in order to bring better focus to the study

- revenue generation,
- conservation and protection of (tangible and intangible) natural and cultural assets,
- poverty alleviation (employment generation, equitable distribution, economic growth),
- infrastructural development,
- decentralised decision-making, and
- human resource development.

## **Entrepreneurs**

Some of the main interests of entrepreneurs, whether at the national or local levels, however, were the same, i.e., profit maximisation. Thus, in this context, mountain tourism development was not a spontaneous phenomenon but depended on a host of factors, in the absence of which entrepreneurs would not be willing to invest. In the context of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, the following factors were identified as important to the stakeholders in the interests of profit maximisation.

- Investment opportunities, awareness of and development of new tourism products and diversification
- Conservation and/or protection of tourism assets
- Infrastructural development
- Increased visitor numbers or visitor nights
- Marketing and promotion of tourism destinations and products
- Support services
- Training and skill development
- Conducive investment opportunities
- Policy facilitation

## **NGOs/INGOs**

NGOs and INGOs have played an important role in organizing poor people, building capabilities, mobilising local resources, conservation, and in poverty alleviation. As a result, the interest of NGOs and INGOs was identified as maximisation of tourism benefits at local level. In order to achieve this the issues listed here are necessary.

- Social mobilisation or organizational empowerment
- Generate awareness and capability (skill) to be self reliant
- Local resource mobilisation
- Community services
- Availability of credit

## **Local People**

Local people become the centre of mountain tourism development. Unless the living conditions of the local people improve, the achievement of sustainable mountain tourism

development is unlikely. The interest of the local people is to **maximise tourism benefits locally** which requires that the following issues will also be addressed:

- conservation/protection of assets,
- employment and income generation,
- community development, and
- empowerment of local communities.

### **Visitors**

All four of the above-mentioned stakeholders are on the supply side of tourism. Visitors complete the tourism picture by being on the demand side. The interest of the visitors is **to maximise satisfaction**, which becomes possible only if there are adequate facilities and the services are of good standard. There also has to be adequate infrastructural development and the cost should be reasonable.

The five stakeholders were further grouped into three in view of the training modules that had to be developed in the context of mountain community and mountain tourism development. The three groups are:

- i. **policy planners:** government, NGOs/INGOs, entrepreneurs;
- ii. **programme designers and implementors:** government, GOs/INGOs, entrepreneurs, CBOs; and
- iii. **CBOs:** local government, organized communities, and entrepreneurs.

No separate training module is required for the visitors, but their interest must be understood by the other stakeholders so that visitors are able to maximise satisfaction. Hence, three sets of training modules for the first three groups of stakeholders will be developed.