

# **Institutional Framework for Environmental Monitoring**

## **General**

The tourism industry has received a good deal of attention in Nepal. The past few years have shown signs of change in attitude and perception towards the interrelationship between tourism and environment. Environment being the basic resource for mountain tourism, there is a growing concern about the conservation of nature, including pollution control. The natural linkages between tourism development, environmental management, and community development are not, however, reflected in existing institutional structures. Power and control over environmental issues are spread thinly over a number of government ministries but none of these have created an effective institutional set up for assessment, analysis, and action over environmental issues. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) guidelines for industry, forestry, and roads are being prepared by the IUCN under the aegis of the National Planning Commission. The need for EIA procedures in the tourism sector is greatly felt.

## **Existing Institutions**

The existing institutional set up for tourism development is not geared to monitoring and regulating the environmental impacts of tourism. There is a problem of overlapping jurisdictions among various agencies as regards the revenue raised from tourism. For example, trekking permits are issued by the Immigration Department, mountaineering permits are issued by two agencies, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation (for peaks of over 6,000m) and Nepal Mountaineering Association (for peaks up to 6,000m), permits for the protected areas are issued by the wardens under the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, and the permits for Annapurna Conservation Area are issued by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation. Entry visas are of course granted by the Royal Nepalese Embassies/Consulates around the world and by the Immigration authorities on arrival. For want of a "one window" arrangement, tourists and their travel agencies easily run into confusion and various hassles. The Nepal Environmental Policy and Action Plan (NEPAP 1993) has proposed the establishment of a task force to assess ways of improving the current system of issuing permits and revenue sharing. In theory, His Majesty's

Government of Nepal is committed to establishing environmental units in all relevant agencies. However, at present, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, with its Department of Tourism; the Home Ministry; with its Department of Immigration; and the Ministry of Education and Culture, with its Department of Archaeology do not have any institutional arrangements to monitor the impacts of tourism. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation has not yet developed a monitoring system for its protected areas, although mitigative actions are launched now and then.

His Majesty's Government set up an Environmental Protection Council in 1992. It is chaired by the Prime Minister and most of the ministries are represented at minister level. Coordination is therefore limited to the highest policy formulation level without any functional linkages among operational agencies. As a result, the HMG line agencies and NGOs converge into tourism activities, but there are no lateral linkages (Figure 9).

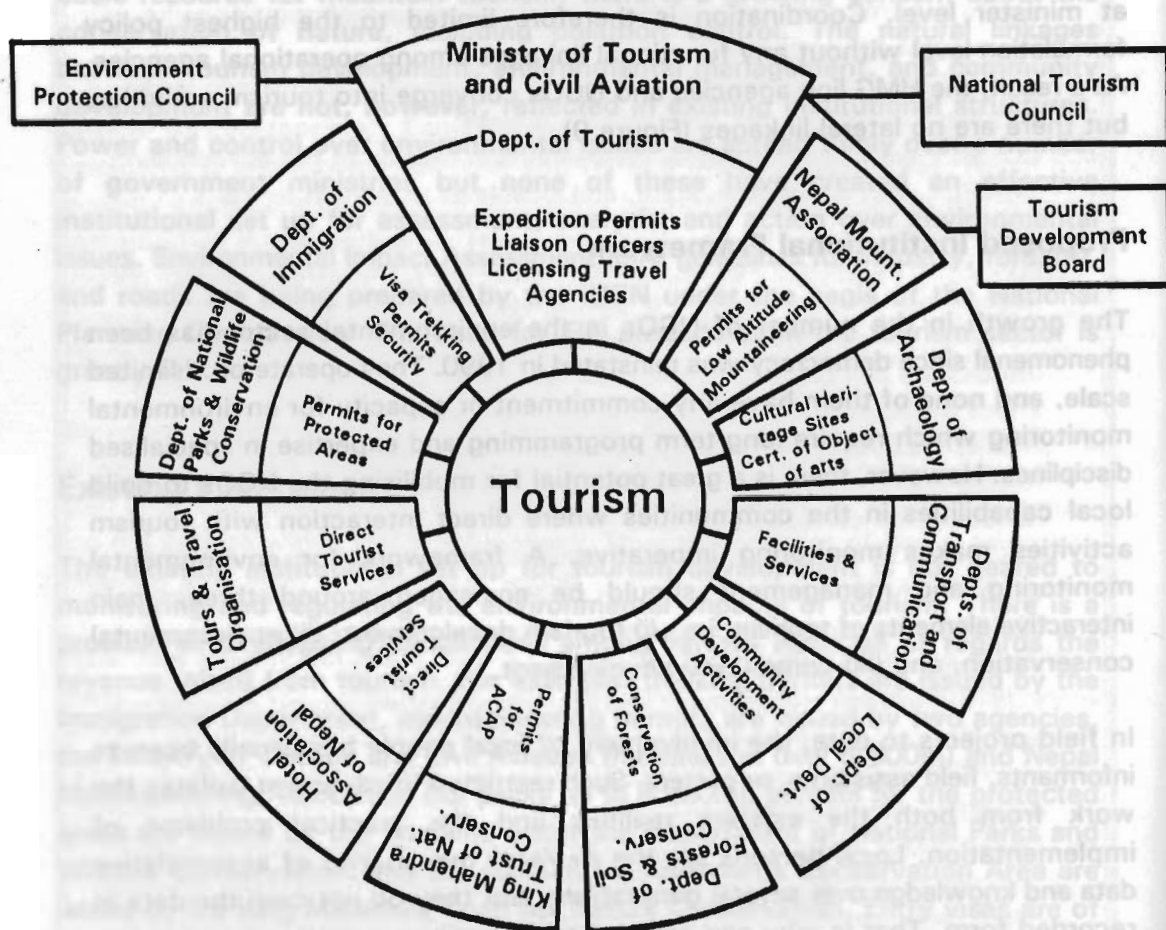
## Proposed Institutional Framework

The growth in the number of NGOs in the environmental sector has been phenomenal since democracy was reinstated in 1990. They operate on a limited scale, and none of them have any commitment or capacity for environmental monitoring which require long-term programming and expertise in specialised disciplines. However, there is a great potential for mobilising the NGOs to build local capabilities in the communities where direct interaction with tourism activities makes monitoring imperative. A framework for environmental monitoring and management should be envisaged around three, main interactive elements of tourism, i.e., (i) tourism development, (ii) environmental conservation, and (iii) community development.

In field projects to date, the involvement of local people has usually been as informants, field assistants, or porters. Such restricted involvement isolates the work from both the existing realities and the practical problems of implementation. Local persons are the *de facto* repositories of accumulative data and knowledge over several generations, but they do not own the data in recorded form. That is why any attempt to make them participate in tourism development should ensure that the community owns the data in a more organised form. Community involvement in the analytical process sometimes appears beyond the capacity of local villagers and is too time consuming for officials and professionals. Conceptually, an appropriate approach is participatory discussion as outlined in the previous section under the minimum



**Figure 9: Existing Institutional Structure in Tourism in Nepal**



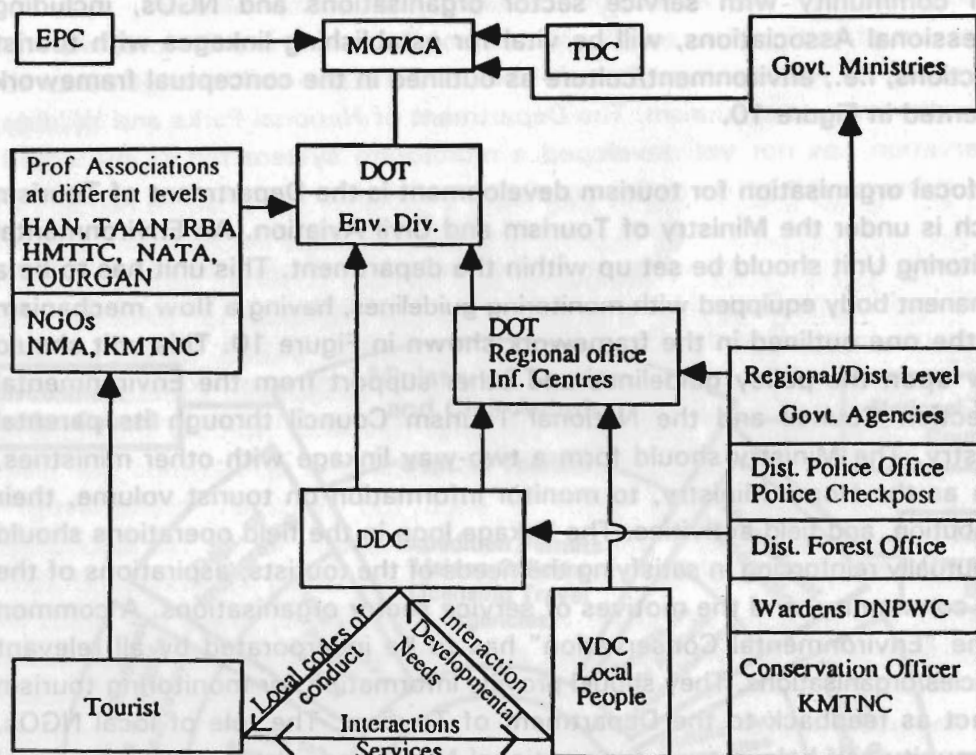
data set. Community participation in environmental monitoring should be the responsibility of the District Development Committee (DDC). The linkages of the local community with service sector organisations and NGOs, including Professional Associations, will be vital for establishing linkages with tourist attractions, i.e., environment/culture as outlined in the conceptual framework presented in Figure 10.

The focal organisation for tourism development is the Department of Tourism which is under the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. An Environmental Monitoring Unit should be set up within the department. This unit has to be a permanent body equipped with monitoring guidelines, having a flow mechanism like the one outlined in the framework shown in Figure 10. This unit should draw upon the policy guidelines and other support from the Environmental Protection Council and the National Tourism Council through its parental ministry. The Ministry should form a two-way linkage with other ministries, such as the Home Ministry, to monitor information on tourist volume, their distribution, and field activities. The linkage loop in the field operations should be mutually reinforcing in satisfying the needs of the tourists, aspirations of the local community, and the motives of service sector organisations. A common theme "Environmental Conservation" has to be incorporated by all relevant agencies/organisations. They should provide information for monitoring tourism impact as feedback to the Department of Tourism. The role of local NGOs, community self-help groups, international NGOs and, above all, professional associations/organisations in the Travel/Tour trade should play an effective role in providing monitoring information.

The District Development Act of 2048 B.S. (1991) has provided for the District Development Council (DDC) to formulate district-level programmes of different government and semi-government agencies in the district with the approval of the District Council. It is also mandated to coordinate the district programmes of different NGOs and to supervise and give directives to the Village Development Committees (VDCs). The DDC has four Plan Formulation Committees (PFC) which are supposed to facilitate the coordination and integration of plans prepared by different agencies. The committees are chaired by a DDC Member and each one has a member-secretary from a government line agency. The four committees may be described as below.

- i) Agriculture; Agricultural District Officer as member-secretary
- ii) Public works; Member-secretary from the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning

**Figure 10: Institutional Framework for Environmental Monitoring**



HAN	Hotel Association of Nepal
TAAN	Trekking Agents Association of Nepal
HMTTC	Hotel Management and Tourism Training Centre
TOURGAN	Tourist Guide Association of Nepal
NATA	Nepal Association of Travel Agents
RBA	Restaurant and Bar Association
NMA	Nepal Mountaineering Association
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
EPC	Environmental Protection Council
MOT/CA	Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation
DOT	Department of Tourism
TDC	Tourism Development Council
DDC	District Development Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee
DNPWC	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
KMTNC	King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation



- iii) Industry, Forestry and Environment; District Forest Officer as Member-Secretary
- iv) Health and Social Welfare; Public Health Chief as Member-Secretary

District-level tourism development activities should largely include environmental protection, safeguarding cultural heritage, expansion of tourist facilities, protection and promotion of community forestry, and local participation in central level activities. The DDC is required to develop a District Development Plan. Monitoring the environmental impacts of tourism should be one of the important activities for the districts that serve as tourist destinations or fall en route. As outlined in Figure 10, the DDC should act as a key store in the monitoring process and it would pass information on to the Regional Offices/Information Centre of the Department of Tourism. The DDC should also have a direct linkage with the Department in case regional offices are not established.

The Department of Tourism should also draw upon the monitoring information from professional associates having direct linkage with tourism activities. Some of the prominent ones are the Nepal Association of Travel Agents (NATA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN), Hotel Management and Tourism Training Centre (HMTTC), Nepal Mountaineering Association, Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA), Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TOURGAN), Restaurant and Bar Association (RBA), and the Tara Gaon Development Board.

Regional/District Level Government agencies, such as the District Police Office, Police Check Posts, District Forest Office, National Parks' Office, and the Conservation Area Office could input to the DDC and Tourism Regional Office at field level or the respective ministries at central level. Various government ministries should pass on to the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation matters related to tourism development and environmental impacts. The Ministry of Tourism would derive policy guidelines from the Environmental Protection Council (EPC) and the Tourism Development Council (TDC) for developing and implementing tourism development plans.