

Sustainable Community Development Alternative: Unlocking the Lock

(Case Study of Northeast Region of India)

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Abstract

The concept of sustainability minimally impact public policy discourse while the propounded strategies in the journal literature with varying goals often produce elusive outcomes. The case study attempts to address these inadequacies to give clarity of goal and purpose and to identify problems and need areas for policy support. The paper evaluates the viability of ecotourism for sustainable community development by using an impact study methodology. The paper emphasises on multidiscipline integration and community participation to ensure continuity of community development. The recommended strategy is to put in place public policies to facilitate local community participation for the responses on the changes experienced, so that public policy can respond effectively to the changes and needs as to ensure sustainability of development.

Keywords: Community participation, Integrated planning management, Impact, Public policy, Continuity

1. Introduction

1.1 The Assets: The northeast region of India comprising the seven sister states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya and including Sikkim is the country's hotspot of rich biodiversity; sufficient to provide livelihood to the 35 million people in the region. The region flanked by five countries is a gateway of India to South East Asian region. The emergence of the 'Look East' policy evidenced the economic and geo-political importance of the region. The pristine beauty of the eastern Himalayan region charmed India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru who attributed the hills of Meghalaya as 'Switzerland of the East' and Manipur as "Jewel in the East". The 'Incredible India Campaign' describes Arunachal Pradesh as the 'Virgin Land', Mizoram as 'Songbird of the East, and Sikkim as the most exquisitely beautiful land. Pristine environment and off-the-beaten path destinations, peripheral and isolated region located near national borders or in areas of difficult climate and topography has attracted intellectual discourse seeking an alternative development route to such borderlands (Hall & Boyd, 2005). Such regions are characterised by physical isolation having great distance from the core, high cost of access, sparse population, low GDP per capita, dependence on tertiary sector in the economic structure, limited local economic control, relative neglect by the central government and borderland locations (Wanhill, 1997). These characteristics are aptly found in the northeast region of India.

1.2 The Constraints: This natural asset has prompted the government to flag 'the paradise unexplored campaign' but lack of vision planning and management in the development policy of the region has not produced the desired outcome. The region continues to be characterized by low per capita income, low investment, acute unemployment problems, poor communication and infrastructure. The undeveloped condition is attributed to the phenomenon of isolation (physically- administratively in pre-independent India before 1947) and lack of planning and development policy in post independent India. The importance of the region was never more than a military strategic border (Samantha, 1994, Thomas, 2006, NERC, 2005). The alienation led to undeveloped condition and this produced acute unemployment problem that increasingly frustrated the youth. The decline in law and order weakened administrative discipline and depleted human capacity. The needs of the people are not met and the low level of motivation manifested in the mushrooming of insurgent outfits operating as extortionists (Maslow, 1943, Alderfer, 1972). The problem of unemployment and economic underdevelopment sustained and encouraged militant activities, disrupted law and order leading to further deterioration of economy

and administration. The region stands remote and undeveloped. The paper seeks to find an approach strategy to bail the region from crisis

1.3 The Solution: The paper evaluates the region, identifies the problem and tests the viability of ecotourism development in the region. The viability test validates the social benefits in the form of strengthening local identities from local ownership of enterprises. Ecotourism can imbibe a sense of ownership and boost confidence to improve social cohesion (Fleischer & Pizam, 1997, Wheeler, 1993). Local ownership can reduce conflict among ethnic groups in the region and narrow the psychological gap with the mainland and ultimately contribute to national integration on longer term. The economic benefits derived from alternative source of income through motivated conservation of resources will help to 'empower and enable' the community (Wood, 1991) and will help environment laws to become effective. Ecotourism will help the region as gateway of India to Southeast Asia. Thus, ecotourism as a viable route of development to bail the region from insecurity, instability and underdevelopment stands uncontested (de Kadt, 1992, Hall, 2000). The paper identifies the criticality of public policy for integrating the multidiscipline under a common goal and approach. The paper attempts to address the need areas, mitigate the risks and formulate a policy strategy to attain the goal of sustainability. The paper reveals that without effective integration of the multidisciplinary, need areas cannot be addressed (e.g., transit accommodation is a need area but allotment of land is with another department and without integrated approach, the land allotment department may delay the process of construction). Inadequate policy support to integrate the multidiscipline would not mitigate the risks (e.g. unless safe drinking water supply is monitored by the health department, the water supply department may not enforce the health guidelines. Similarly, the local habit of forest hunting restricted by the forest department is meaningless unless the defaulters are not punished by the district administration). These examples evidenced that without integrated policy, there will be no coordination and collaboration and it would lead to inadequate vision planning and management. This will make risks mitigation difficult and eventually will affect sustainability. Integrated approach will link the micro level implementing agencies with the macro level policy decision. This would mean constant review of policy at the macro level to meet the needs arising from the changes. Hence, the critical role of public policy is to respond to the needs and changes to ensure the continuity ((Edward, 2007). The paper recommends a policy strategy that will facilitate community response on the changes experienced so that public policy can adequately respond to these changes.

2. Literary Review

2.1 Dilemma of Concept: Alternative tourism termed as ecotourism, nature-based tourism or community tourism emerged from negative effects of tourism in the third world (Cater, 1994, Wall, 1997, Mowforth & Munt, 1998). The dilemma of sustainability generates the debate that not to choose tourism amounts to eventual death according to economists, but to choose tourism is also death according to anthropologists' (Lanfunt and Graburn, 1992 in de Hass, 2002). It is a dilemma when small can become big, complex and unmanageable (Clark, 1997). The dilemma of achieving two inherently contradictory goals of exploitation and conservation (Pearce, 1992, Butler, 1993) as also in meeting the present needs without compromising the future needs (WCED, 1987) led to a convergence of understanding that tourism must be humane and adaptive to the needs of tourists, responsive to local communities, socio-economically and environmentally viable (Ryan, C, 2002, de kadt, 1992, Wall, 1997).

2.2 Dilemma of Strategic Approaches: Notwithstanding the negative impacts, tourism is a strategic tool of development (Wanhill, 1997, Doan, 2000, Hall, C. M. & Boyd, S, 2005, Edward, 2007) that led to formulation of various approaches in the strategic planning and management (Hall, 2000b, Crispin & Wickham, 2010). Some strategy looks at the process and outcome (Walzer, N, Hamm, G.F, 2010) while others focus at the macro or micro management (Crispin, S & Wickham, M, 2010, Buckley, 2009), but all with varying goals ranging from environment conservation to local community development. Community participation as a key strategy to achieve sustainability assumes increased interest in the literature (Walzer, N, Hamm, G.F, 2010, Shin, Y, 2009, Hall, Timothy and White, 1999, Stone & Wall, 2010). The strategy using community participation to achieve sustainable community development in ecotourism involves motivating the local community and eliciting their responses on the changes, but it also involves motivating visitors and the tour operators. The stakeholders with varying interests may be motivated to have different goals. For example, an entrepreneur's interest in profit may motivate him to displace the larger goal of conservation for future sustainability and his limited vision may not see beyond the present needs. The varying interests leading to different goals of the stakeholders can be fused together in the interest of the community under a public policy to enable the vision planning expand from the present needs to future survival.

2.1.1 Public Policy Perspective: The focus of the literature discourse has been more concerned with clarifying the concept of sustainability, while the recommended strategies endorsed the various stakeholders' interest and

presents varying goals that tend to deflect the outcome and diffused the effort to achieve the goal of sustainability. The literature has inadequately illustrated the integration of the multidiscipline. It does not show how planning and management in an integrated multidiscipline approach can achieve the objective of development or how the risks are to be mitigated to attain the goal of sustainable development. The concept of sustainability is neither an adequate discourse in public policy (Edward, 2007). The purpose of the paper is to address the inadequacies through public policy for integrated approach. The paper illustrates how the integration of the sectors horizontally and vertically will help formulate a macro policy that can guide the implementation at the micro level. It shows finally that sustainability depends on how the changes experienced are responded appropriately through policy evaluation. During the research tour, local enthusiasm was sadly dimmed by governance condition and bureaucratic apathy. The condition evidenced the disconnection between the macro policies and the micro management. It is to address these weaknesses and gaps that the paper emphasized on the criticality of public policy to integrate all the sectors under a common goal of community development and visioning the plan to sustained the community development.

3. Tool to Assess the Preconditions.

The SWOT analyses comprehensively assess the external and internal conditions to identify the problem, the causes of the problem and traces the genesis of the problem to inadequate public policy and planning. The tool identifies need areas for policy support such as village road construction, provision for transit facilities and communications, review of policy to restrict entry into the region or revamp the internal security condition with favourable public policy.

3.1 The Strengths

3.1.1 Human Development Index: The hill tracts of Northeast India accounts for 7.8 % of the total land space of India. The colourful diversity of 209 unique ethnic tribes represents 70% of the region's population (Samanta, 1994). The low density population at 38.5 million accounts for only 4.04 % of the nation's people (1981 census). The low economic load factor on dependency ratio due to active participation of females in economic activities, lower aging ratio than in the country, more male sex ratio and high overall literacy rate above the national level are indicators of high social indices (Samanta, 1994, Nayak, 2005). In terms of UNDP, Human Development Report, 2003, based on the three components of longevity, education and standard of living; the highest value at 0.944 in Norway corresponds to India's figure of 0.59. North East highest figure at 0.55 is very close to the national figure (Nayak, 2005).

3.1.2 Institutional Support: The North Eastern Council (NEC) is the regional advisory agency set up in 1972 and it was given an advisory and planning role for the region in 2005 to promote economic development. The establishment of Ministry for Development of North-eastern region at the centre in 2004 is a very significant institutional support to help the region in policy formulation and implementation.

3.1.3 Financial Support: The numerous financial support and concessions to the regions include (1) earmarking 10 percent allocation from central ministries budget to support the region (2) Prime Minister's economic packages (3) Special category treatment of the northeast states provisioning the additional central plan allocation with grant and loan ratio as 90:10 in place of the general scheme of 70:30 ratio (4) Tax exemption of tribal areas (5) Subsidies in financing for setting investment project in the region from Ministry of Commerce (6) Subsidy in equity support for tourism infrastructure from Ministry of Tourism. The creation of resource base for the region will help prioritization of spending on tourism sector, which previously had been low budgeted.

3.1.4 Policy Support: With the government's engagement on the 'Look East' policy, the region is gaining importance not only as military strategy but in tapping the economic potential. The government has now included Tourism Development in the region in the 11th Plan period (2007- 2012).

3.1.5 Improved Security: The states of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya are traditionally peaceful. Mizoram has become peaceful consequent upon its attainment of statehood and the signing of the peace accord, 1986. The Tripuri tribal insurgents (Tripura state) unsatisfied with their impoverished condition also became peaceful after receiving 20 seats reservation in the Assembly representation (Samanta, 1994). The tripartite accord with the Government was signed in 1988. These states are one of the most peaceful states in the country with evidently low crime rates.

3.2 The Weaknesses

3.2.1 Physical Condition: The single most adverse physical condition is the landlocked nature of the region. The eastern boundary comprising 98% of its border is with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Only 2% of the border by a narrow strip at Siliguri in the state of West Bengal links the remote region to the Indian heartland.

The physical disadvantage has been aggravated by partition of India that fractured connectivity causing serious market disruption leading to geo-political and emotional isolation that had already suffered administrative exclusion under the British Raj (Thomas, 2006).

3.2.2 Absence of Planning and Strategy: The backwardness of the region is mainly attributed to geographical isolation, while some even attribute the alienation to provincial bigotry. But the administrative exclusion by historical circumstances in pre-independence and lack of developmental concern and appreciation of the uniqueness of the region in post independence reflect lack of economic interest in the region (ICSSR-NERC, Report, 2005). Underdevelopment is accompanied with commercial exploitation in forest resources, tea and crude oil. Monopolistic trade practices by investors from outside the region drained the economy, giving rise to market distortion due to inflow of goods and outflow of savings, which in turn led to low credit –deposit ratio, thus hampering investment in the region

3.2.3 Poor Governance: With no adequate exposure to basic discipline of administration, the abundant money injected into the economy without due accountability creates a regime of corruption, encourages nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and militant groups that begets mushrooming of more militant outfits attracting unemployed youth who assumed the exploitation as an industry. The interference in the form of strikes paralyzes administration hampers economic activities that led to economic deceleration, acute unemployment problem, and fosters growth of insurgency. The distorted market-economy, poor infrastructure and weak governance, lack of accountability mechanism, insurgent problems has left the region undeveloped and insecure.

3.2.4 Weak Capacity: Weak capacity is well evidenced from the inability of state governments to make land available in time, lack of expertise to prepare project proposals and delay in implementation of projects (NEC Report, 2007)..

3.2.5 Poor Infrastructure: With no resource to invest in physical infrastructure such as power, communication, transport, irrigation and market, frustration by unemployed youths increased.

3.2.6. Restricted Policy: The current impediment is the policy of restrictive entry into some states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, which clearly are peaceful now.

3.2.7 Ineffective Environment Laws: Another weakness is the ineffective enforcement of the environment laws reducing drastically the country's good forest area to only 10% (Mitra, 1998). The region's forest area comprising 65% of the total area in the region is reduced by 2% in the last three decades because of weak enforcement of environment laws resulting in indiscriminate commercial exploitation, inability of the local people to give up the practice of 'slash and burn' (Jhum) cultivation when alternative form by way of terrace cultivation requiring heavy capital input is unaffordable. Another reason of forest degradation has been the mindless clearing of Jungles to clear militant's hideouts.

3.2.8 Low Economic Profile: The region is predominantly an agrarian economy with traditional low investment method. The primary sector in agriculture and mining /quarrying constitutes 35% of the total domestic product higher than the national figure of 28.78 percent during 1991-2001. The secondary sector comprising manufacturing, construction and gas/ electricity supply which provide the capital base of the economy hinges around 18% compared to the national average of 28%. The tertiary sector contributes 47% of the region's net domestic product, which is again higher than the all India figure of 43 %. The predominance of primary and tertiary sectors over secondary sector, low urbanization, low real per capita income below the national average and the high percentage of people below poverty line characterized the low economic profile of the region (Samanta, 1994, ICSSR-NERC, 2005).

3.3 The Opportunities

3.3.1 Rich Biodiversity: The region lies between 21.57 N and 29.30 N Latitudes and between 89.46 and 97.30 E longitudes, and enjoys a pleasant and moderate subtropical climate. Being an eastern part of the Himalayas, it is considered a cradle of flowering plants harbouring about 8000 species (Sundriyal et al, 1998). Economic value and importance of biological diversity is enormous even if it is considered only in relation to the production of medicinal drugs. There are two World Heritage sites namely, Kaziranga and Manas (Assam), and the government is looking for more such sites. Exotic and rare species like the Siroy Lilies, Antlered deer and birds of the region have attracted attention of wild life conservation. UNESCO's research programme from January 2001 to December 2005 identified Namdapha and Kameng area of Arunachal Pradesh as hotspot of global diversity with over 100 culturally distinct ethnic societies hosting a wide range of forest types as well as National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries (UNESCO, 2005).

3.3.2 Abundant Natural Resources: The forest cover of 65.19 percent of the total area in the region representing 25.97 percent of India's forest based on satellite imagery is a tremendous opportunity for earning income from ecotourism. Tea cultivation accounts for 55% of the region's area and 53% of the total nation's production, rubber plantation in Tripura and Assam covers only 13% against the potential of 4.5 lacs hectares. The region has potential for coffee plantation and cultivation of spices. The hydropower potential is estimated at 57,000 Mega Watts (MW) or 60% of the country's 84000 MW at 60% load factor (ICSSR- NERC, 2005), out of which only 2% has been harnessed. The region has abundant resource in coal, oil and gas for thermal power generation.

3.3.3 Improved Connectivity: The Special Accelerated Road Programme (SARDP) is expected to improve Road connectivity in the region. The National Highway Development Programme (NHDP) linking Gujarat with Tripura through the East-West Corridor will link Porbandar in Gujarat (West) to Silchar (East) which will serve connectivity of the region with the mainland effectively. The construction of 5 airports in addition to the existing 11 Airports, declaration of Guwahati as International Airport and plans for national waterways in Brahmaputra and Barak River will boost infrastructure support for tourism development. The Ministry of External Affairs has been conducting a feasibility study to connect Mizoram with Myanmar and Kolkota port by waterways.

3.3.4 Favourable foreign policy: India's 'Look East Policy' towards strengthening political- economic cooperation with South East Asia has brought the focus of attention in the region (Singh,2008), leading to gradual emergence of requisite space for development of the region. The launching of regional economic cooperation with Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand (BIMST) is for promotion of infrastructure, trade, investment, energy and tourism. The proposal for Asian Railway network through Imphal-Tamu Highways and a Gas Pipeline Grid also look promising. Quadrangle regional project led cooperation with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) prioritized among other things tourism. Another cross-country sub-regional cooperation having long-term implication is the Mekong-Ganga Initiative (MGI) with Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam to strengthen friendship, solidarity and cooperation with the Asian region. In this initiative, tourism has been identified as an immediate priority area for joint research in which the region is the gateway to the Mekong Basin Region. To facilitate trade in agriculture and food processing projects with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar, Export Development Fund has been created to extend financial support to entrepreneurs in the region. India and Myanmar signed a border trade agreement in April 1995 that opened the border town of Moreh (Manipur, India) and Tamu (Burma). Kolodyne multi-modal transport link between Mizoram and Sittewe Port in Myanmar will open up new opportunities for tourism between North East India and Myanmar (Thomas, 2006, NEC Report, 2007). Sikkim is expected to become a hub linking Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet through Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. Nathula in Arunachal Pradesh has become a tourist destination after reopening of trade with china in 2006. The state of Arunachal Pradesh is keen to reopen its border trade with China via Tibet at Tawang border town. In an effort to enhance trade in the region, both China and India are attempting to repair the Stillwell road of the Second World War era, connecting China (Kunming, Hunan province) and North East India (Ledo, Assam) through Kachin hills of Burma. The government of India has already declared the road as National Highway-153. On April 4, 2006, the Guwahati-Bangkok flight was inaugurated and the weekly air flights between Yangoon and Calcutta were restored from December 7, 1995 after a gap of more than two decades.

3.4 The Threats

3.4.1 Insurgency: The mushrooming of insurgent outfits in the North East Region impedes growth and development. It is estimated that a one day strike causes loss of more than 50 crores of Indian Rupees due to disruption of economic activities (ICCSR-NERC Report, 2005). The Jungles of these states have become hideouts for militants. The militants virtually run a parallel government in these states. The violent secessionist movement since 1953 has posed a serious security threat to both domestic and foreign tourists. Though there had not been a single instance of harassment, not to speak of threat to life to any tourists, the general impression about the deteriorating law and order is enough to ward off tourists (Thomas, 2006). Image and reputation has an extensive role in hospitality sector as evidenced in the drastic drop in tourist arrivals on account of moral reputation of Indonesian Deputy Prime Minister and Severe Acute Respiratory System (SARS) crisis in Malaysia(Kongtogeopoulos,1999).

3.4.2 Illicit Drug/HIV Problem: According to UNDP Report, 2006, out of 3.5 million HIV infected in India, over 15000 are in Northeast India mostly in Manipur and Nagaland, constituting 8% of India's total (Thomas, 2006). The transmission is reported to be mainly through injection. The high incidence of drugs use reflects the vulnerability of the frustrated unemployed youth to the proliferation of arms and drugs trade from across the border. The proximity of the region to the Golden Pentagon Area (formerly Golden Triangle linking, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam) and the region being used as international route to smuggle opium from Burma

which accounts for 80% of South East Asia and 60% of the World's supply; many youth were attracted to the trade profit for purchase of arms. The illicit drugs and arms trade sustained insurgency and the drug addiction had caused rapid spread of HIV/ AIDS in the region. The health negative impact could deter tourist arrivals. Conversely, tourist arrivals may promote the illicit trade causing more social and health hazards as happened in Philippines and Thailand.

4. Methodology of Viability Test through Impact Assessment

Viability assessment through impact study testifies how best the potentials of the region can be harnessed and how effectively the weaknesses are to be addressed. Impact study forms the basis of long term vision planning and management. It helps to visualise how overuse of tourist trails, non compliance to international code and cultural erosion impacts the community. It gives an idea on how to plan for long-term policy at the macro level and formulate a strategy to integrate the macro policy framework with the micro management for execution of the ideas into practice. The simple point is; impact study is for understanding the ground reality. Impact study is a critical evaluation methodology for bridging the gap between the needs and the policy to fulfil those needs so that it is possible to ensure growth with limit and attained sustainability of today without compromising the future needs.

4.1 Economic Viability

4.1.1 Positive Impact: Tribal kinship structure in the Northeast India based on common ownership and collective work is simply suitable for community development. Local ownership will ensure profit for local people with limited leakage. The controlled and limited tourists adaptive to local standards will minimally disturb the social environment and the limited demand on ecotourism infrastructure will not strain the resource. The resource mobilised will have far reaching effects on sectors ranging from communication industry to agriculture. Local tour operators can assist local schools and clinic. Majority of eco-tourists are normally above average income profiles and are willing to pay higher park entrance fees as well as make donation efforts (Weaver, 1998). Costa Rica's case study reveals that foreign visitors are willing to pay an average of \$118 to ensure that the park is adequately protected (Fennel, 1999). The earning potential is I billion from I million visitors annually (Dasenbrock, 2002). One of the benefits of tourism is transferring income from wealthy nations and persons to poorer sectors of society. Ecotourism is especially effective in this transfer since travellers often venture in remote, economically –disadvantaged regions. Besides, tourism is a relatively barrier free trade commodity and can be a more effective means of transferring income from the modernized world than other forms of foreign investment, such as export-processing zones, in which profits are largely repatriated.

4.1.2 Negative Impact: Ecotourism as a lucrative sector has serious pitfalls, leakages and exploitation if not monitored and planned carefully. Local people may lack the knowledge due to which they may be compelled to approach foreign investors for funding. This may caused outflow of profits through excessive imports. It is also widely evidenced that local population is often excluded from the development process and often relegated to minimum wage support jobs or informal street vendor economy while managerial positions go to foreigners or urban –educated elites (Garen, 2000). Ecotourism is typically suited to remote areas lacking infrastructure and the handicaps are causing the necessity to generate income. There are various costs for the local population while the benefits may go to the local elites (Weaver, 1998). The paradox of success of ecotourism may lead to its demise when the success may draw more tourists which will bring corresponding increase in the negative impacts such as solid waste generation, habitat disturbance and forest degradation caused by trail erosion. Such an impact could seriously threatened the resources upon which ecotourism depends (Butler, 1993, Carter, 1994).

4.2 Social Viability

4.2.1 Positive Impact: Traditional communal life of north-eastern tribal people is compatible to community-based ecotourism. The decade long insurgency in some states like Manipur and Nagaland assumed unpleasant ethnic clashes and the search for identity aggravates the conflict to regional problem. Ecotourism can be a panacea for the region's social crisis expressed in the search for identity (Hall, 2000). Ecotourism can empower the local community through promotion of use of indigenous knowledge, material and labour and provides the opportunity for the local population to generate economic benefits, promote local ownership, perpetuate local identity and strengthen economic equity in the community economic benefits from tourism (Khan, 1997). Pride in the community will grow as they acquire a sense of ownership and become economically better off (Timothy and White, 1999). Ecotourism will develop the community by involving the local community in the running and ownership of tourism ventures that ensures well being of the local people. Community participation will exploit less from within and will promote communal harmony under a common goal of sustaining livelihood (Wall, 1997). Another positive aspect is that tourism could create an appreciation of

cultural relativity and international understanding of different cultures (de Haas, 2002). Ecotourism will help expose the unknown culture of the region in international forum and will open the region for investment in high potential areas like hydro power and roads construction. Utilizing community in tourism planning is more than just maintaining good public relations. Individuals in the communities are endowed with certain specialized knowledge and awareness of attitudes because of their occupational position in the community. The use of knowledgeable local people will enable tourism planners to obtain views that provide them with insight for that specific area that they would not otherwise have been able to access.

4.2.2 Negative Impact: Ecotourism's contribution to local development is being questioned (Lindberg, K.1996); it is often asserted that little or no ecotourism revenue reaches the local people, creates relatively few jobs as evidenced in the survey on residents Nepal Royal Chitwan National Park which indicated direct earning of only 6% household. The literature holds the most serious impact as the 'commodification' of culture, wherein people and their culture become marketable commodities (Stem et al, 2003). It may make families and ethnic groups compete for perceived benefits. The impact may have social fallout on equity issue concerning the socially disadvantage group like women and children who may not equitably share the benefits (Scheyvens, 1996). With the opening up of remote isolated region, the changes expected from tourism is dissatisfaction from over crowding, increased cultural awareness, increased foreign control of tourism operations and loss of authenticity of tourism products as experienced by Niue in the pacific island (de Haas, 2002). In a study-conducted in Costa Rica, the negative social impacts include increased solid waste generation, cultural loss, community and familial disintegration and increased access to alcohol and drugs and many feel frustrated as they feel that have lost their independence due to the change from subsistence economy to monetized economy where individuals depend on the market for all his needs (Dasenbrock, 2002, Stem et al, 2003). The frustration is greater in case government prolonged or caused indefinite delays in the compensation of land loss. The negative impact needs a detail analysis for reducing the negative effects through public policy planning under good governance in the region.

4.3 Environmental Viability

4.3.1 Positive Impact: For tourism to have viability, it must produce profits filtered back into local community, with proportions spent on conserving, maintaining and enhancing the natural environment utilized for tourism (Lindberg, 1996). It is a debatable issue if tourism motivates conservation or is it the enforced law that compels the conservation. Secondly, it may not always be possible to re-circulate the profit for conservation when the profits may be necessary for other necessities such as living expenses and paying off debt. The crucial aspect is to maintain the productivity of the resource; therefore, it is mutually beneficial for both the tourist ventures and the local population to maintain the natural environment (de Kadt, 1992; Weaver, 1998; Garen, 2000).

4.3.2 Negative Impact: Although ecotourism is started with a good intention, there are far reaching unintended ill effects on the environment due to pressures on land from overcrowding and construction of facilities. The activities have led to habitat deterioration of butterflies in Mexico and squirrels in Costa Rica, garbage disposal problem in East Africa, erosion caused by marked trails in the Anna Purna Circuit in Nepal, disruption of the Cheetah habitats in Kenyan Wild Life reserve, killing of animals in protest against displacement by the Masais nomads in Kenya and illegal poaching for souvenirs in Asia. The evidences are lessons that if ecotourism is not planned, managed and regulated by legal framework under public policy, it has the potential of further degrading the forest resources and bringing irreversible disastrous consequences: economically, socially and environmentally.

5. Recommended Strategy to Facilitate Community Participation

The viability test validates the implementation of ecotourism development in northeast region of India and affirms the need areas for policy support. The impact study plans for mitigating the risks and pave the way for vision planning and management. The visualized goal is then set to be achieved through a strategy under integrated approach of public policy. The research tour evidenced absence of goal of sustainability and inadequate vision planning and management. The request of a local entrepreneur to protect the depleted overused tourist trails was not responded by the state government which instead favoured the external operators. Individual profiteers and external operators will not restrict the growth unless it is rationalized in the larger interest of the community under public policy by the central government and the state government. It is also unlikely that the community will be motivated to conserve from donations of visitors alone unless public policy ensures conservation through legislation. It is often evidenced that lack of enforcement of forest laws is a major cause of concern than the local habit of hunting. All of these evidenced the criticality of public policy intervention for vision planning and management and for translating the vision into action. Long term planning and management depends on impact study which in turn depends on the policy responses on the changes

experienced by the community. It is solely through public policy response to the changes that continuity can be ensured and only by involving the community that the response on the changes can be addressed. Community participation is crucial in eliciting responses on the changes. The recommendation is to have a strategy of public policy for facilitating local community participation, listed as below.

5.1 Resource Management: The first discipline is to prioritize the spending to include ecotourism as a priority sector. The second discipline is to hold accountability for the misuse of the fund. The third discipline is to evaluate if the spending brings the desired impact in the creation of basic assets for the locals because mere production of utilization certificate is inadequate to explain the outcome (Schick, 1998).

5.2 Fiscal Decentralization: Ecotourism does not require heavy superstructures like five star hotels, but even the basic needs may be beyond the resource capacity of local community groups requiring local government intervention. Unless the resources are effectively transferred to the local government; local communities cannot be assisted efficiently and effectively in ecotourism (Rubin, 2002).

5.3 Public Private Partnership (PPP): Private tourism operation often leads to leakage of profit and the high paying jobs go to outsiders. However, it may be prudent to involve private sector participation when local entrepreneurs lack the resources and knowledge of ecotourism. To avoid pilferages, private sector involvement must be confined to locals only (Timothy, 1999, Rubin, 2002).

5.4 Human Resource Development: The common knowledge in 'English', the aptitude, education and well-regarded reputation of the youth in the hospitality sector in the country are well acknowledged. The potential can be harnessed for wide ranging service support including top managerial functions to motivate and contribute to local development. (Kanungo, & Mendeco, 1994, Rao, 1996).

5.5 Integrated Network Approach: Integrated approach is a new paradigm in public policy and has become an intellectual source for managing resources and environmental planning to achieve sustainable development in tourism (Hall, 2000b). Ecotourism being small entrepreneurship, the impact is small but can be successful if integrated with other rural sectors horizontally creating supportive linkages and reducing financial leakages. It can be coordinated with agriculture and horticulture in providing market for local produces (Hall, 2000b, Ryan, 2002, Shin, 2009, Stone & Wall, 2010).

5.6 Governance: To remove distortion in the accountability framework, leadership under a vigilant reformed police force must motivate people to 'have expectations' and be able to 'express their expectations'. Conversely, the Principal-Agent (policy makers and implementers) must be *ready to listen* to what people say and adopt an approach of 'going closer to them' (Rao, 1996)

5.7 Environment Laws: Lack of enforcement of Legislative environmental measures depletes the forest resources in the region by 2% in the last three decades. It is a debatable issue if ecotourism through profits accrued to local people are filtered back into conservation and if ecotourism motivates conservation without legal back up. The inadequate role of the state government in enforcing the laws is more of a concern than on the local habits of *jhuming* (shifting cultivation) and hunting. It would not be completely right to heap blame on citizens when the law enforcing agencies are negligent, lack the discipline and conduct no audit of environment to assess the carrying capacity of tourist sites, do not monitor the impact of tourism and do not restrict the limit of visitors. The international code of conduct mandates respecting the visitor. Therefore the tour operators must project the host community to the visitors with proper information and also teach the hosts to be respectable to the guests (Garen, 2000). The management must involve all the main stakeholders through integrated policy approach to achieve sustainability on the environment and the community

6. Conclusion

Ecotourism's appeal as conservation and development tool rests in its potential to provide local economic benefits while also maintaining ecological resource through low impact, non-consumptive use of local resources. Ecotourism, potentially can damage the resource base, may not even benefit the local community through leakages and monopoly of the operation by outsiders, can become unattractive overtime as it gets big, complex and unmanageable; and though small scale costs less, it is with lesser return. Ecotourism may not be the panacea (Stem, et al, 2003) but adjudging the potentials and favourable conditions of the landlocked and far-flung region (Wanhill, 1997), what better sustainable alternative is available than ecotourism? (Hall, & Boyd, 2005, McLennan, Char-lee and Ruhanen, 2008). Community development is the cornerstone of ecotourism (Stone, & Wall, 2010) the purpose is to 'enable' people to achieve sustainable livelihood, the result measured by the impact (WCED, 1987) and the continuity ensured by effective public policy responses (Edward, 2007).

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