



Ecotourism & Conservation
Society of Sikkim



Rural Homestead- Mangalbarey

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Dear Readers,

This is a humble approach to update all our members regarding the activities of ECOSS.

You can make this e-newsletter interesting by contributing your articles concerning ecotourism and conservation issues. Please let us know on ways to improve our information dissemination process. Any comments or ideas are most welcome.

*Renzino Lepcha
Executive Secretary*

ECOSS ACTIVITIES REPORT

Community Based Tourism Feasibility Study in Bhimtal Lake Catchment Area, Uttaranchal

ECOSS received an offer from the headquarters of G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development Kosi Almora to conduct a feasibility study in the Bhimtal Lake catchment area in the Nainital district of Uttaranchal. This feasibility study was undertaken from 10th to 20th October 2006.

Site visit was made to the project area and community consultation meetings were held with stakeholders. After fact finding and understanding the community processes, a detailed report and presentation was submitted to the GB Pant team in their headquarters. Under the World Bank supported project, tourism initiatives are also being planned as part of the Bhimtal Lake Catchment area conservation strategy and a roadmap is being suggested by G.B. Pant for the appropriate stakeholders to take the project forward.



Ecotourism Training for IFS Officers Corbett National Park



A week long compulsory training on Ecotourism for IFS officers was organized in the Corbett National Park by the Field Director Mr. Rajiv Bhartari from 5th to 11th November 2006.

ECOSS was invited as a key resource personnel. The training schedule was designed by ECOSS and the training was imparted by Mr. Renzino Lepcha and Mr. Rajiv Bhartari and the two main trainers.

More than 20 senior IFS officers from different parts of the country had signed up for the course. It was interesting to observe the different perspectives of senior officers from the IFS cadre and how they see the perceive the trends in development and conservation strategies.

The course was designed in a manner that exposed participants to the concepts of ecotourism and also provided ample opportunities for them to visit the sites and interact with communities who are involved in ecotourism activities. Corbett National Park, one of the finest managed parks of India was also one of the highlights of the training program. Similarly in contrast to ecotourism a visit to Nainital was also organized which was a perfect example of mass tourism.



Planning with Village Stakeholders and NABARD for VTC Project

A planning and consultation meeting was organized by Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim on 5th December 2006 with NABARD and village stakeholder representatives. This meeting was held to discuss the come out with a working plan for the implementation of the telecommunication project being funded by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, NABARD, Gangtok Regional Office.

There were 10 participants from Dzongu (North Sikkim) Pastanga (East Sikkim), Kewzing (South Sikkim) and Yuksam (West Sikkim) including NABARD and ECOSS team.



A brief background on the genesis of the innovative VTC project was highlighted. It was explained that each of the ECOSS supported Sikkim Himalayan Homestay project sites would have Village Telecommunication Center where communication facilities and computer with internet facilities would be set up. The community based organizations would have to take a lead in mobilizing the right human resources to make the project a success. Mr. K. Vaiphie, Assistant Manager from NABARD underlined the way in which NABARD works and operates many of its schemes. He stressed on the importance of accountability and transparency in organizational functioning and requested all NGO partners involved in the project to sincerely execute the project and be a role model for development Mr. Renzino Lepcha thereafter facilitated to develop a work plan with project partners. Having received commitments from partners the planning and consultation meeting was closed with a positive note.

Sikkim Himalayan Homestay Exhibition

One of the planned activities of the homestay project was an exhibition of the Sikkim Himalayan Homestay project. In order to give local publicity and also some direct marketing to the project partners, an exhibition of the Sikkim Himalayan Homestay was organized at Gangtok Winter Fest 2007 from 10th to 11th January 2007 at Gangtok.



The four project partners from Yuksam, Kewzing, Pastanga and Dzongu took part in this program. They attended the exhibition wearing traditional dresses and costume. Visitors who attended the stall were provided the information, fact sheets of the Homestays and brochures were distributed. The various colorful posters highlighting the attractions and activities that visitors could enjoy were displayed. Some handicraft and cardamom products were also displayed for sale to visitors.

Many local people were very delighted to know about such an initiative and were keen to visit the sites with their family members. Many domestic tourists also visited the stalls for information including a few foreign tourists. During the two days program more than five hundred guests visited the stall for information. The Tourism Secretary, Government of Sikkim appreciated the effort and hoped that in future similar cooperation would be received to make the winter festival a success.





Two NGO capacity building training programs were conducted in the last week of January and first week of February 2007 for KCC - Yuksam, KTDC Kewzing, DEC Dzongu and KEEP Pastanga.

The above training was attended by a total of 19 participants which included 5 female and 14 male participants from Sikkim Himalayan Homestay project sites. ECOSS team members were the resource person for the event.

During the training the participants were given introduction to basic course on computer application and the day today operations of managing the telecommunication facilities that would be set up in the villages. Much of the time was concentrated on practical exercises which include working on MS Word, MS Excel and making Power Point presentation. Writing Minutes of the Meeting, writing simple report, proposals, preparing program and agenda's of meeting and also recording minutes of meetings. Other practical classes on regular maintenance of computer system, daily operations of the communication centre, maintaining separate accounts register, fees charges for internet, printing and other related facilities was also explained in detail. Tips on using internet and browsing internet was provided for participants. During these training programs the NABARD representative also took time to visit the capacity building and training programs and monitor the progress. ECOSS was appreciated for the commendable work that it executed in time.



Pro- Poor Sustainable Tourism, Institutional- Feasibility Report

Pro-poor tourism is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor. In this context the Netherlands development agency termed as SNV in collaboration ICIMOD and Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC) wanted to explore how socio-economic development through tourism could take place in rural parts of Sikkim. In this context the services of ECOSS was hired to develop a feasibility document on possibilities to start a poverty reduction in Sikkim through sustainable tourism development project. The goal of the pro-poor sustainable tourism project in Sikkim would be to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources for communities in Sikkim through tourism development.

To identify potential areas and start the stakeholder consultation processes meetings were held with the major stakeholders in all the parts of Sikkim. A steering committee comprising of members of the Forest Department, Tourism Department and Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation was constituted. The progress of the feasibility study was reported to the steering committee who thereafter made its recommendation to the Government of Sikkim.

Based on the various field consultations and interviews, recommendations have been forwarded towards developing an institutional framework which would create an enabling environment conducive to Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism development in Sikkim. The next step is for the Government of Sikkim to make a plan of action, get the funds to develop a concrete proposal and execute thereafter execute it in collaboration with partners.



Village Telecommunication Center Projects Inauguration

ECOSS developed a proposal for establishing Village Telecommunication Center and submitted to NABARD for funding under the Rural Innovative Fund. This initiative would further strengthen the Sikkim Himalayan Homestays and the village based CBOs direct access to the market. Similarly the visitors once in the remote villages can also be in touch with their world through the internet and communication facilities and greatly benefit from such services in the rural areas.

NABARD accepted the proposal and released a total amount of Rs 330000/ Rupees (Three Lakhs Thirty Thousand) only. This cost included the hardware and the software for the project activities. This was one of the first projects in India under the rural innovation fund of NABARD. All the projects were completed as per the work plan timeline and they were inaugurated with much fanfare and publicity on the following dates:



Pastanga Village Telecommunication Centre 25th March 2007
Kewzing Village Telecommunication Centre 30th March 2007
Dzongu Village Telecommunication Centre 14th April 2007
Yuksam Village Telecommunication Centre 27th April 2007

Under this project each Homestay site received a branded HP computer set with all accessories, a laser printer cum scanner and copier, one UPS, web camera, 1 GB pen drive and a computer table. The implementation of the project was well appreciated by NABARD and the tourism management committee of the villages are thankful to ECOSS and the donor agency for the support which is first of its kind in India.

Regional Ecotourism (CBT) Hands-on Training for ICIMOD Partners



The Regional Ecotourism (Community Based Tourism) Hands-on training was jointly organized by the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) Kathmandu, Nepal and Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim, Gangtok, Sikkim. The training was held at Yuksam (East Sikkim) and Mangmaya (Darjeeling) from 22nd to 28th February 2007.

The training was conducted for ICIMOD project partners from Bhutan, Nepal and North Bengal and Sikkim. Altogether 18 participants attended the week long course which was designed and executed by ECOSS. The training was designed to help participants understand the concepts of ecotourism, community based tourism (CBT), homestay operations and get insights on the various potentialities and challenges for developing such projects in their sites.

The training touched upon various components of CBT, its characteristics, potentials and challenges including the issues of community mobilization, product development and marketing. Additional sessions on the use of participatory planning tool such as Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) was also covered in the course. Participatory methodologies were adopted to make the training interactive. Field visits were included to discuss onsite with stakeholder groups and understand the different contexts and perspectives.



Community Based Ecotourism Training - SIRD

Community Based Ecotourism training for the community based organization from West Sikkim was held from 22nd to 24th March 2007 organized by State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Karfector, South Sikkim and conducted by ECOSS. The main objective of the training program was to introduce and train the CBO's on the potential and opportunities on community based ecotourism. There were 32 participants from west Sikkim representing various CBO's which included Ecotourism Service Provider Association of Yuksam (ESPAY), Hee-Berموik Environmental Organization, Chakung Nature Society, Himalayan Environment Tourism Development Organization and Women Self Help Group from Ribdi.

Small action plans were formulated by the participants in order for them to return and execute the plans and make some difference in the communities where they are living. Some institutions and individuals also registered with ECOSS as members after the completion of the program. The SIRD course facilitator, Ms. Yangchen Lepcha co-ordinated the local logistics and ensured the training went smoothly. The collaboration with SIRD Karfector will hopefully yield positive results in the days to come.



NORTH EAST CONSULTANCY VISIT

IFAD Community based Ecotourism Training for IFAD Partners Shillong



A three days training program on ecotourism for better livelihood options was conducted by ECOSS at the NERCRMP office from 16th to 18th April 2007 in Shillong. This training was organized in order to equip the IFAD field based project partners with the right knowledge, information and tools for community based ecotourism development. The course was designed and executed in a manner that fostered learning and sharing among the project staff.



Altogether 30 participants including IFAD project officials participated in the three days program. The entire module was developed and executed in a participatory manner which allowed participants to think in their own context and articulate the potential for ecotourism in their project sites. The three days course was an overwhelming success. The second part of the training is a field visit to Sikkim, which will allow participants to interact with communities in ECOSS project sites and learn from the exchange.

Kukurmara Dolphin Project, Training on Ecotourism Concepts and Community Processes for Community Based Ecotourism Program

A day long ecotourism awareness program was organized by C-NES in Kukurmara village in collaboration with ECOSS. This project is initiated by C-NES which is trying to work with local people to save the fresh water dolphins of the Brahmaputra river. Executive member of ECOSS Mr. P. D. Rai and Ex. Secretary Mr. Renzino Lepcha designed and facilitated the training workshop. More than 25 participants from different areas had gathered for this training program.





Audio visual clips were presented and guided discussions were conducted in plenary to generate a common understanding of ecotourism and its features.

By the end of the day, the outputs were an action plan and way forward for communities to strengthen their ecotourism initiative. Personnel commitments were also solicited from individual participants. In order to ensure that ownership is developed and participants become more involved in the project to save the dolphins. The linkage between dolphins and local incomes was amply highlighted so that the resources do not get depleted from the project sites.

Arunachal Pradesh - Community Based Ecotourism Feasibility Study

ECOSS was assigned for a community based tourism feasibility study at the WWF India project sites in Arunachal Pradesh from 20th to 27th April 2007.

Under the WWF program, the community has designated large tracts of forests as community conserved area (CCA) in the two districts of Kameng and Tawang. The villages of Thembang and Zimethang have agreed with WWF to strengthen their community forest conservation practices and in turn take the technical support of WWF India program to explore livelihood opportunities for the village stakeholders. Community based ecotourism is one of the prime focus of the area as the sites are already being visited by many adventure tourists. Many trekking companies have been operating treks from the village, but till date the local people are only marginally involved.



Community consultation meetings were held in two of the project villages to understand the preparedness of the community and to examine the possibility of starting the initiatives for community based ecotourism. Meetings were also held with stakeholders to understand the various community dynamics and find out the mechanisms by which the participation of the local people in the tourism activities can be strengthened the incentives from tourism can lead to community action for conservation. Resource mapping of the sites and joint



visioning exercised with the community was conducted in the villages of Thembang and Zimethang. A feasibility report will be prepared by ECOSS and submitted to WWF India by the end of may 2007.

Yuksam Solid Waste Management

Under the UNESCO project to support Yuksam Solid Waste Management 10 waste drums was provided by ECOSS to the Solid Waste Management Committee of Yuksam (SWMCY) on 27th April 2007. The drums were painted and a message was written on the drums with the help of KCC and their volunteer. Same day a meeting was held with the SWMCY to discuss the



distribution of 10 nos. of Waste bin and their placement at Yuksam bazaar. There were 9 participants represented by SWMCY, KCC and ECOSS members. The IEC campaign is to begin from the end of the tourist season when the local people have more time to discuss about solid waste management issues.



The output of the discussions are as follows:

- ✍ The committee have decided to replace the former garbage collector and look for new one as the committee was unsatisfactory at the work of former garbage collector.
- ✍ Due to the non collection of garbage by the garbage collector, the management committee are facing difficult in collecting garbage fees.
- ✍ Some of the people from the bazaar had failed to pay the garbage collection fees and the committee will take necessary action.
- ✍ KCC would supply essentials garbage collection equipments once the committee submit the list to KCC.
- ✍ It was also decided to hold next meeting with larger participation of local people to address and take major decisions on the solid waste management issues.

Ecotourism service providers Training- Hee-Bermiok



Ecotourism Service Providers Training where basic training for Guides and porters was provided. The training was held at Hee-Bermiok, West Sikkim from 28th to 30th April 2007 organized by Hee-Bermeiok Ecotourism and Heritage Conservation and conducted by KCC and ECOSS.



There were 65 participants who attend the three days training program. A basic training was provided to Guides and Porters

which included both class room session and outdoor practical exercises. During the training the Guides and Porters were introduced to campsite management, roles and responsibilities of Guides and porter, safety and security, Permit formalities, garbage management, tourist expectation, Conservation and ecotourism practices. To make the training more effective power point presentation was given and practical exercises on camping equipments and pitching tents was also conducted. A presentation on homestay concept was also introduced to the participants.



The participants actively participated in the training and they have expressed more training for Guides and Porters separately so that the training could be more focused and effective. On the closing day of the training the area Panchayat President distributed the certificate to the participants in presence of other dignitaries from area. The training program concluded successfully with cultural program.

Global Warming Statistics

- Global emissions of CO₂ reached a new high of nearly 23,900 million tones in 1996 - nearly four times the 1950 total.
 - Without the Montreal Protocol, levels of ozone-depleting substances would have been five times higher by 2050 than they are today.

- In 1996, 25 per cent of the world's approximately 4,630 mammal species and 11 percent of the 9675 bird species were at significant risk of total extinction.
 - If present consumption patterns continue, two out of every three persons on Earth will live in water-stressed conditions by the year 2025.

- More than half the world's coral reefs are potentially threatened by human activities, with up to 80 per cent at risk in the most populated areas.
 - Exposure to hazardous chemicals has been implicated in numerous adverse effects on humans from birth defects to cancer. Global pesticide use results in 3.5-5 million

acute poisonings a year.
 - Some 20 per cent of the world's susceptible dry lands are affected by human-induced soil degradation, putting the livelihoods of more than 1 000 million people at risk.

Source: UNEP GEO-2000

Global Warming — The Heat is On

Planet Earth's current warming trend is based largely on natural warming and cooling cycles that have been happening for eons; as well as human-caused additions to greenhouse gases, which are boosting the atmosphere's ability to trap heat in the biosphere. Minor factors like an overall increase in the sun's solar intensity play a smaller role.

While greenhouse gases are an essential component of a livable planet—they're what keep Earth from being a lifeless ball of ice—humans are causing greenhouse gas levels to increase so quickly that it's causing the average global temperature to rise much faster than it would naturally. This warming is predicted to lead to a variety of negative effects, including:

- ✍ Melting (and possible disappearance) of glaciers and mountain snow caps that feed the world's rivers and supply a large portion of the fresh water used for drinking and irrigation.
- ✍ A rise in sea levels due to the melting of the land-based ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica, with many islands and coastal areas ending up more exposed to storm damage or even underwater.
- ✍ Increasingly costly "bad weather" events such as heat waves, droughts, floods, and severe storms.
- ✍ Lowered agricultural productivity due to less favorable weather conditions, less available irrigation water, increased heat stress to plants, and an increase in pest activity due to warmer temperatures.
- ✍ Increases in vector-borne infectious diseases like malaria and Lyme Disease.
- ✍ Large numbers of extinctions of higher-level species due to their inability to adapt to rapidly changing climate and habitat conditions.

The first two of these effects are mostly related to increasing average temperatures. Items 3-6 are related to heat too, but also playing a role are non-temperature factors—i.e. "climate-change factors."

Select the Environmentally correct Statement about the Earth's Atmosphere !

- a) greenhouse gases from automobiles are causing global warming
- b) airborne dust from volcanic explosion is causing global cooling.
- c) the contradiction of "a" and "b" is causing global confusion.



The Himalayas will not live long if Global Warming is not significantly reduced

When the world celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first successful ascent of Mount Everest in 2003, it beckoned many adventurers to conquer the might of Mount Everest. But at the same time, research alarmed about the disasters of Global Warming to the Himalayan range, including the Mount Everest. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) warned that climate change could bring worst possible adversity to the one world's oldest mountain range.

Adding to the validity, the recently concluded Brussels meet by the International Panel on Climate change drafted a technical summary on the hazards of Global warming, it clearly stated that if current warming rates are maintained, Himalayan glaciers could decay at very rapid rates, shrinking from the present 500,000 square kilometers to 100,000 square kilometers by 2030s. Among the ominous forecasts, the report also predicted that the melting of glaciers in the Himalayas would affect hundreds of millions of people.

There have already been reports about melting of glacial ice in the Himalayas. The Mount Everest, the world's third largest icecap, which is more than five thousand metres above sea level, is melting. As the glaciers in the area melt and contract, lakes are forming in their place. One of them is at the base of the melting Imja Glacier, which apparently did not exist 30 years ago, but now is one kilometre long and a hundred metres deep. Other findings have shown that in the Garhwal Himalayas there has been a glacial retreat at a record pace. The Dokriani Barnak Glacier in the region retreated 66 ft (20.1 m) in 1998 despite a severe winter. The Gangotri Glacier is retreating 98 ft (30 m) per year. The findings show that the glaciers in the Himalayas are retreating at an average rate of 50 feet (15 m) per year. Overall, the Himalayan region has warmed by about 1 C (1.8 F) since the 1970s.

The Himalayan Range has ushered and protected the subcontinent from harsh climates. The melting of this range will only worsen the dilemma of the people and annihilate its varied biodiversity. The Himalayan range is one, on the long list of disasters by global warming. It is for the local governments and people to decide of the future of the region and of them.