

# UPDATE

TOURISM

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## Creating a meaningful participation by the poor in tourism

The growth of tourism sector in Nepal has been under substantial pressure. Expenditure per tourists has been in decline, product development limited and the growth in the Asian and active markets, only partly capitalized upon. Successes in tourism development have been achieved at individual enterprise and local government level. But for meaningful participation of the poor in the tourism system of Nepal, issues such as access to resources, user-rights and land tenure still need to be addressed and the key factor for a successful tourism system remains the ability of private sector tourism enterprises to enter the market, grow and sustain their operations.

The Samarth-NMDP Tourism Programme has therefore, identified three key intervention areas for support: product development, marketing and the regulatory environment. Priority during the first two years of the programme will be placed on product development. This intervention is aimed at supporting



new products and/or new destination areas with emphasis on public domain infrastructure that adds value to the entrepreneurial activities in tourism by poor rural residents.

### First steps

Samarth-NMDP has partnered with the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN), the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC). Under these partnerships, activities such as trail maintenance, capacity building and awareness trainings, construction of trail bridges and porter shelters, and installation of information boards and directional signage will be carried out. Ownership of infrastructure facilities will rest with the relevant District Development Committees (DDCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs).

“TAAN had already taken the initiative to develop the concept of tourism at the community level by providing training on responsible and sustainable tourism. However, the expectations raised by the training could not be followed-up with physical developments. Now, after partnering with Samarth-NMDP, the process is gathering momentum. So far, we have established sub-committees in seven VDCs of the Ganesh Himal area. The VDC level sub-committee will coordinate implementation of infrastructure development with local NGOs and youth clubs. Initially, when we sent the proposal to the DDC, we didn't get much support, but this time the DDC is positive and willing to support us.”

**Kul Bahadur Gurung**  
Second Vice President, Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN)

The agreement with TAAN focuses on the development of the Ruby Valley Trekking Route in the Ganesh Himal area; the NTNC agreement targets developments in the GauriShankar and Manaslu Conservation Areas and the KCAMC agreement supports development in the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area by constructing six trail bridges which were damaged and collapsed during the last major earthquake.

## The Ruby Valley trek

Recently, a 10-day Ruby Valley familiarity trip was initiated by TAAN, in cooperation with Samarth-NMDP, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MOCTCA) and the Ganesh Himal Tourism Development Committee (GHTDC), to document in detail the required developments for a new trekking product in the Dhading district. The trek started from Gatlang in Rasuwa and ended at Dhading Besi in Dhading, covering more than ten VDCs.

The Ruby Valley trek has been identified by TAAN and Samarth-NMDP as an alternate destination to the more popular trekking destinations like Everest, Langtang and Annapurna. This will ensure a spread of tourism benefits outside the classic destination areas, whilst easy access to the trail-head at Dhading, Rasuwa or Gorkha allows for use by Asian markets that prefer shorter itineraries.



"We are targeting the Manaslu and GauriShankar area for infrastructure development so that tourism flow increases in these areas. We will invest the revenue generated from tourism back into the conservation of the area. The partnership with Samarth-NMDP will play a big role in the development of the infrastructure in the area. We will specifically be focusing on the capacity development of the communities for tourism promotion as well as to bring in innovative projects such as waste management and safe drinking water service.

The biggest achievement of the partnership would be, apart from the development of infrastructure, the creation of an improved enabling environment for the promotion and management of tourism in the conservation areas."

**Binod Basnet**

**Senior Conservation Officer, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)**

## Way forward

Samarth-NMDP has commissioned three studies that provide much needed market intelligence in support of product development and a structural shift in the tourism system of Nepal.

The first study assesses trends in the global active tourism market, the Asian source markets and the domestic tourism market that impact the tourism sector of Nepal. This will inform Samarth-NMDP of the products best supported to attract a feasible market share. The second study assesses the impact and the effectiveness of Nepal's destination marketing efforts, which will form the basis of a new marketing campaign that feature the products currently developed through Samarth-NMDP's support. The final market intelligence study documents the available funding sources for the tourism enterprise development in Nepal to ensure that the entrepreneurial activities complements the infrastructure development in the public domain.

## About Samarth-NMDP

Samarth-NMDP is a five year DFID-funded program that aims to reduce poverty in Nepal. The programme follows a market systems development approach, addressing underlying causes in the performance of the market systems, to bring about more competitive and sustainable markets that work better for the poor.

## Samarth- NMDP in Tourism sector

Samarth-NMDP is working to facilitate a structural shift in the tourism system of Nepal to enable a meaningful participation by the poor as entrepreneurs, employees and decision makers.