

tal, and safety and security of tourists (Upadhyaya and Upreti 2009). Neglecting such issues could trigger renewed conflict and jeopardise the whole industry. Such a code of conduct should be spread more widely, agreed at a national level, and promoted throughout the country. NCCR North-South has been promoting this issue with concerned stakeholders at both local and national levels.

Education, research, and linkages with practice

Tourism is a business, so it attracts those interested in its commercial value. But this brings with it a risk of over-exploitation, deterring those possible visitors whom Nepal wishes to attract. So, tourism is too important to be left to commercial interests alone.

Given the importance of tourism to Nepal, greater emphasis is needed on both research and education. A sufficient number of qualified researchers are essential to plan tourism enterprises at local and national levels and to develop information to guide policymakers. Tourism education must be strengthened and interlinked with the tourism industry to ensure that the industry is sustainable. Tourism education covers aspects such as culture, history, environment, and conservation that are intrinsically related to tourism. Shortcomings in such areas could disappoint tourists and damage local tour operators, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. Such harmful impacts are already visible in some areas which have neglected the conservation of Nepal's cultural heritage and local development. Improved tourism education would help avoid such problems.



Local people perform a cultural dance for tourists on the Machhapuchhre Model Trek route. Photo: Bishnu Raj Upreti

Definitions

Peace-sensitive code of conduct: A peace-sensitive code of conduct includes policies, strategic actions, and adaptations related to the tourism sector that minimise the negative effects of conflict and promote peace. Such a code benefits the local people by promoting, protecting, and sustaining the value of peace and harmony in a responsible approach.

Community-based rural tourism: Community-based rural tourism is a tourism industry that is managed and owned by the community with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life (Pandey 2008). It does not simply aim at maximising profits for investors; it emerges from a community development strategy that uses tourism to strengthen rural community organisations that manage tourism resources with the participation of local people. It empowers local people to make decisions on tourism development that benefit the wider community.



Handover of Machhapuchhre Model Trek infrastructure to Machhapuchhre Tourism Development Committee, joined by the State Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation (Hon. Shatrudhn Prasad Sinha) and the Swiss Ambassador to Nepal (H.E. Thomas Gass), during a mega programme on 10 December 2010 in Kharpani, Kaski. Photo: Siddhi Manandhar



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Policy implications of NCCR North-South research

Community-based rural tourism

Local communities and regional policymakers have realised the importance of community-based rural tourism from the experience of the Machhapuchhre Model Trek route, a newly opened community-based tourism route linked with the ongoing NCCR North-South research on tourism, conflict, and peace. Such consultations should be continued at a national level to enhance the local ownership of community-based rural tourism and to make tourism sustainable.

Building reliable infrastructure

New trekking routes should be developed to increase the reach of tourism to less-explored areas, and surface access should be improved to connect tourists to remote areas. The national airline should be restructured, and more human resources should be trained for the tourism sector.

Code of conduct to promote peace in tourism

A code of conduct composed of voluntary and self-regulatory rules, commitments, and core values of tourism has helped build awareness and realise its essence for the sustainability of rural tourism. Lessons from the Machhapuchhre Model Trek route can be used to formulate a manual for such a code of conduct for local areas as well as at the national level. This would promote a positive environment to prevent and mitigate unwarranted conflicts resulting from irresponsible tourism conducts.

Further reading

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The National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South is a worldwide research network including seven partner institutions in Switzerland and some 160 universities, research institutions, and development organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Approximately 350 researchers worldwide contribute to the activities of the NCCR North-South.

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