TOURISM DESTINATION AREA PLAN (TDAP)
FOR
EASTERN NEPAL
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PART 2 – ANNEX

October, 2016

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BCN	Bird Conservation Nepal
CA	Conservation Area
CAAN	Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CDO	Chief District Officer
CHAL	Chitwan-Annapurna Landscape
CSIDB	Cottage and Small Industries Development Board
DADO	District Agriculture Development Office
DDC	District Development Committee
DfID	Department for International Development
DNPWC	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
DoA	Department of Archaeology
DoI	Department of Immigration
DoR	Department of Roads
DoT	Department of Tourism
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ENTDP	Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme
EU	European Union
FNCCI	Federation of Nepal Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FNCSI	Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHT	Great Himalaya Trail
GHTDP	Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoN	Government of Nepal
HAN	Hotel Association of Nepal
HEP	Hydro Electric Power
HRT	Head Race Tunnel
IAP	Implementation Action Plan
IBN	Investment Board of Nepal
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IDA	International development agency
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	International Financing Institution
IRP	Investment-ready project
IT	Information technology
KTA	Key Task Area
KTWR	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
LDO	Local Development Officer
MAN	Mountain Academy Nepal
MBNP	Makalu Barun National Park
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions/Events
MoCTCA	Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MoFSC	Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation
MoPIT	Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NARC	Nepal Agricultural Research Council
NATHM	Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management
NATO	Nepal Association of Tour Operators
NATTA	Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents
NBC	National Building Code

NCA	Nepal Cycling Association
NGO	Non-government organisation
NMA	Nepal Mountaineering Association
NP	National Park
NTB	Nepal Tourism Board
NTF	National Tourism Foundation
NTNC	National Trust for Nature Conservation
NTSP	National Tourism Strategic Plan
NMNP	Nepal Wireless Networking Project
PA	Protected area
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
QR	'Quick response' codes
REBAN	Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
Samarth/NMDP	Samarth/Nepal Market Development Project
SAPDC	SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Private Ltd
SATIDP	South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SME	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SOTTO	Society of Travel and Tour Operators
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
TAAN	Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal
TAL	Terai Arc Landscape
T&C	Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice
TDA	Tourism Destination Area
TDAP	Tourism Destination Area Plan
TIDP	Tourism Infrastructure Development Project
TMJ	Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale trail
TRC	Trekking Registration Certificate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URL	Uniform Resource Identifier
UKAID	see DfID above
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USP	Unique selling point
VDC	Village Development Committee
WB	World Bank Group
WNTDP	Western Nepal Tourism Development Programme
WR	Wildlife Reserve
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
WWW	World Wide Web

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Introduction to Annex 1

This annex contains a more detailed description of each of the activities listed in the Implementation Action Plan (IAP) presented in *Table 1* of *Section 3.9.2* (Part 1). These details have been relegated to an annex to avoid unnecessarily interrupting the flow of the main sections of text in Part 1 that deal with the introduction and background to this Tourism Destination Area Plan (TDAP), the situational analysis, the overall description of the TDAP and the suggested mechanism and structure for implementing the TDAP over a five-year period.

There are 97 activities in total. These are grouped under the most appropriate Key Task Area (KTA) with each one being individually numbered and titled. Each activity is then described in identically-structured tables containing the following headings:

- Rationale
- Brief description
- Principal output/s
- Targeted zone/s
- Focal level of activity
- Strategic Objectives addressed
- Priority rating
- Timing and target dates
- Implementation Driver/s
- Implementation Partners
- Estimated budget (rupees)
- Possible funding sources
- Other related activities.

In reading this annex, the following should be borne in mind:

- The activities are meant to be read largely as stand-alone sections.
- There is consequently some repetition with regard to "*Rationale*", "*Brief Description*" and some other sections, especially for similar or related activities.
- The activities are in an outline and provisional form, subject to the Implementation Drivers expanding on them in more detail and according to their interpretation and capacity to implement.
- Some activities would need to be broken down into two or more sub-activities to make them easier to implement. Whether or not to do this has been left up to the individual Implementation Drivers and/or the proposed 'Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme' ('ENTDP') coordinating body to decide on.
- The Strategic Objectives listed under "*Strategic Objectives addressed*" are numbered and in short form. They are given in full under *Section 3.4* (Part 1).
- The "*Timing and target dates*" are indicative and approximate and assume that implementation of the TDAP would begin in January 2017 and continue for five years until December 2021.
- The "*Implementation Driver/s*" listed are the recommended ones. The actual ones, however, will be dependent on the proposed programme coordinating body that is chosen and the capacity of the institutions and other bodies to implement the activities.
- The "*Implementation Partners*" listed are also the recommended ones and indicative. Their involvement in the implementation of activities will again depend on their interest and capacity to assist.
- "*Estimated budgets*" are broad and indicative, presented in rounded figures (rupees) and weighted on the heavier side.
- The lists of "*Possible funding sources*" are indicative of potential sources of funding and do not presuppose that named sources have agreed to fund the activities. Activities could be funded by only one body, or be funded from several sources.
- "*Other related activities*" refer to those activities within the IAP which: 1) depend on other activities being completed first; 2) need to take into consideration other activities when being done; 3) influence how other activities are carried out; or 4) are precursors to other activities.
- Some activities refer to several Investment-Ready Projects (IRPs) listed in *Table 2* in *Section 3.10* (Part 1).

Important note:

It should again be noted that this TDAP is a regional tourism development plan which covers three administrative districts in Eastern Nepal. It therefore includes a wide range and number of activities that are considered to be of regional rather than local importance. Because of this, many of the sites of touristic interest which have either been listed within the district- and locally-focused tourism development plans that exist or which have been mentioned during consultations for this plan may not be referred to directly in this TDAP. This is not to say that this TDAP disagrees with or is ignoring sites which are clearly of local significance. However, as part of the overall tourism development planning framework, most sites of local interest should be addressed appropriately within the plans that focus on district and local destinations.

Key Task Area 1 – Policy and Planning

Policies

ACTIVITY 1.1	KTA 1 – Policy and Planning

Assist DNPWC in developing a progressive policy for piloting private sector concessions within protected areas

Rationale

Nature preservation and conservation efforts across the world are very frequently hampered by the lack of sufficient funding. This is especially the case with many state ministries, departments and other bodies responsible for nature conservation. These invariably have to compete with numerous other and arguably more important government bodies for limited state funding. This then usually results in the state conservation bodies being unable to fully undertake their mandates. Other sources of funding invariably need to be sought and secured. These usually include *inter alia* self-generated revenue through entrance and use fees, conservation foundations and societies, NGOs, donor agencies and the private sector.

With MBNP and KTWR, as with many other PAs in Nepal, an opportunity exists to engage with the tourism private sector in piloting the establishment of one or more high-value/low-volume tourism concessions within the PAs that would generate significant revenues for the DNPWC as well as profits for the private sector concessionaire/s.

This opportunity could also be easily moulded to include local communities as real participants, so helping establish a three-way 'partnership in conservation' that benefits the state (DNPWC), the tourism private sector and the community. In this win-win-win situation, the private sector is the key generator of non-state revenue, with a significant portion being paid to the state for it to then spend on conservation activities. Some of the income generated is also directed at local communities through jobs and business opportunities that have been created through the concession, so ensuring that these previously-marginalised communities have a real incentive in seeing that the PA is looked after by the state, to the extent that they will assist the state in doing this. This clearly provides a good basis for improved relationships between the communities living in and adjacent to a PA and the state body responsible for conserving it.

Although past experience of concessions in PAs in Nepal has been mixed, significant progress has been made over the years within this country and around the world in the development of concessions that prove to have very little impact on the environment and wildlife, enhance the PA they are located in, improve relations with affected communities, significantly boost local and national economies, improve livelihoods and, importantly, allow state conservation agencies to carry out their mandates to a far greater extent than they were able to do in the past.

The adoption of such a policy for piloting concessions in MBNP and KTWR will be absolutely fundamental to a number of key activities to be undertaken under this TDAP. It will also be essential to the development of the two PAs as key tourist destinations in the TDA and eastern Nepal in general. Without significant progress being made with the development of tourism in the TDA's two PAs, the chances of establishing the TDA as a significant tourist destination in eastern Nepal will be significantly reduced.

Progress has recently been made by the DNPWC with respect to the concessioning framework that was developed for the Department by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group. This can clearly be applied to and incorporated where relevant to concessions in MBNP and KTWR under this TDAP.

Brief description

This activity will firstly review the current policy or policy standpoint of the DNPWC toward allowing (or not) private sector tourism businesses to operate within national parks and wildlife reserves on a concessionary basis (viz. the concessioning framework that was developed by the IFC/WB). The review will also examine and highlight national and international experience and best practice with private sector concessions in PAs, emphasising both the pros and cons. The review will be carried out in close consultation with the DNPWC at head office in Kathmandu and will also involve consultations with the management of both MBNP and KTWR, as well as with the management of other relevant PAs in Nepal. Other players may also be consulted. A review report with recommendations would then be produced and submitted to DNPWC.

The review and recommendations would be perused by the DNPWC and MoFSC and comments made. Assuming at this stage that these comments would be positive towards approving a policy for piloting concessions in the TDA, the policy will then be finalised and produced as an official document. It is envisaged that this document would then need to receive approval from the Secretary of Forest.

It is envisaged that an independent expert on PA-based PPPs and concessions, possibly through a donor-funded intervention, would lead the policy review and make the appropriate recommendations in close collaboration with the relevant senior members of staff from DNPWC. Once a policy document has been finalised, it would then be up to DNPWC to ensure that it is adopted and that subsequent actions can then be taken. As stated above, a number of key activities under the TDAP are reliant on this policy for piloting concessions being adopted and implemented.

Principal output/s

Policy document governing the piloting of concessions in selected PAs in Nepal.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National level.	
Strategic Objectives addressed	
S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA. **S-5**: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations. **S-6**: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. **S-9**: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.	
Priority rating	
High priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Policy developed **during first half of Year 1**; policy document produced and adopted by **end of June 2017**.	
Implementation Driver/s	
Primarily **DNPWC** under the auspices of **MoFSC**.	
Implementation Partners	
Advice and technical assistance provided through an IDA-supported intervention; perhaps also advised by representatives from the private sector, especially current concessionaires elsewhere in Nepal.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 1,000,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Internally funded through DNPWC; supported by IDA-funded intervention.	
Other related activities	
Formulation of tourism development plans (***Activities 1.3*** and ***1.4***); establishment of community campsites and lodges in PAs and buffer zones (***Activity 3.4***); development of private sector-owned and -run tented camp and lodge in KTWR and MBNP (***Activities 3.6*** and ***3.7***); building standards and environmental guidelines for PA-based tourism-related infrastructures and operations (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***); development of investment portfolios for PAs (***Activity 9.1***); public tendering for PA-based concessions (***Activities 9.2*** to ***9.4***); drawing up of concession agreements (***Activities 9.5*** to ***9.7***).	

ACTIVITY 1.2	**KTA 1 – Policy and Planning**
Coordinate with Arun-3 HEP developer to allow visitors to use water body that is created on Arun River for recreational purposes	
Rationale	
Once the Arun-3 dam is built, the present intention of the SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Pvt. Ltd (SAPDC) will allow the dam wall itself and the associated infrastructure to be visited by visitors and tourists. There is no intention, however, of allowing any activity to take place on the water body created on the Arun River behind the dam wall. This is presumably to ensure that the quality of the water is not harmed and that visitors do not interfere with the intake of water into the sluice gates and the 11.74-kilometre-long Head Race Tunnel (HRT) that leads to the power house.	
Even though it will lie in a narrow and steep-sided valley, the water body that is created by the dam will have good potential for tourism, especially in the form of water-based activities. Bearing in mind the nature of the environment within which the dam is located (ie. within the buffer zone of a national park in a remote and mountainous wilderness area), it is envisaged that these activities would be restricted to low impact ones, such as canoeing, kayaking, rowing boats, rubber dinghies, rafts and possibly limited swimming. The use of 5-horsepower motors on some craft may be allowed, but primarily for safety reasons. No powerboating would be permitted.	
These water-based activities could be run by local communities living alongside the new water body, on either bank of the Arun River, or by local entrepreneurs from Num or elsewhere nearby. Although the numbers of visitors taking advantage of these facilities may not be very large initially, there is certainly potential for larger numbers in later years, especially after the new road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south is completed. It is important, though, to have a policy in place as early as possible which allows for such exploitation of the waterbody as a potentially important source of income for local communities. If the policy is in place early, then planning for future developments and activities in the area can proceed with some confidence.	
The possibility of incorporating the water body into the Makalu Barun conservation area (as part of the national park or buffer zone) should be discussed. In this way the management of visitors to and users of the water body would become the responsibility of the DNPWC, so removing the need for SAPDC to involve itself unnecessarily in tourism and visitor management.	
Brief description	
This activity would involve reviewing SAPDC's present plans on the recreational use of the water body behind the Arun-3 dam in light of international experience and best practice with similar dams and water bodies around the world. A review report with recommendations would be produced and submitted to SAPDC. The intention would be to assist SAPDC in enhancing its plans so that there is maximum benefit to those communities affected by the dam while at the same time is environmentally-appropriate and addresses the legitimate health and safety concerns of the company. Ideally, an amended policy would be produced and documented.	

It is envisaged that IBN, possibly in association with an independent expert on dam-based recreational activities, would lead the discussions with SAPDC and other stakeholders and players. These would likely include MoFSC, in its role as being responsible for water affairs as well as being the parent body for DNPWC/MBNP, as well as local affected communities.

Principal output/s

Review and recommendations report; **new policy document** featuring relevant policy amendments.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

National level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.

L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

L-5: Establish Num as a tourism centre or hub in the northern TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Discussions on policy take place **during Year 1**; policy decision made by the **end of June 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

IBN in close collaboration with **SAPDC** and possibly in collaboration with an **independent expert**.

Implementation partners

MoFSC; DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 250,000.

Possible funding sources

SAPDC; possibly with some funding from IBN; possibly some funding from MoFSC.

Other related activities

Tourism development plan for MBNP and buffer zone (*Activity 1.4*); future tourism development plans for Sankhuwasabha District (*Activity 1.5*); possible establishment of community campsites on eastern bank of Arun River (*Activity 3.4*); establishment of day-visitor facility near Arun-3 dam wall (*Activity 3.16*); establishment of new trekking trail along eastern bank of Arun River (*Activity 3.20*).

Tourism development plans

ACTIVITY 1.3	KTA 1 – Policy and Planning

Formulate a 'tourism development plan' for Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Rationale

Although KTWR undoubtedly has a great deal of potential with respect to nature tourism and despite being in existence for 40 years, the reserve is still without any real facilities to cater for visitors and their expectations. Located as it is in a well-populated area of south-eastern Nepal adjacent to the East West or Mahendra Highway (AH2) and close to the border with India and a domestic airport in Biratnagar that could be upgraded to international standard, the reserve effectively has easy access to three major tourist markets: Nepali, Indian and third-country. The reserve has an international reputation with respect to bird conservation and with the international bird-watching fraternity and is popular with bird-watching groups who by-and-large stay in what limited accommodation is available in the buffer zone adjacent to the reserve.

Currently, the reserve receives between 5,000 and 6,000 visitors a year, 90% of whom are Nepali visitors with the other 10% coming from India and third countries. The majority of these visitors travel by vehicle up or down the Chatara Road (located on top of a large dyke that was built in 1961) and view the Koshi River from viewing points at the end of several of the artificial barriers or groynes that have been built. Elephant-back rides can also be taken through the reserve. Other than this, some fishing and for largely unformalised picnicking along the river bank, visitors can do very little else in the reserve. Even the basic provision of adequate toilet facilities and waste control is not really met.

Although it is already popular with visitors keen on birds and wildlife or just wanting to visit a nature area, the reserve doesn't really cater for the recreational needs of local residents either, or adequately address the environmental impact of such visitors. The reserve tends to be looked at by local communities as being both a source of grazing and browsing for livestock and of firewood and building materials and being the home to wild animals that frequently move into community lands to eat and to do damage to crops. Some of these animals, in particular elephant, pose a real danger to local people and property. With the poor state of the boundary fence, it is perhaps not surprising that relations between the reserve and the adjacent communities are strained.

If tourism infrastructures, services and activities were to be developed within the reserve, significantly more fee-paying visitors would be attracted and the tourism potential of the reserve realised much more than at present. If these tourism-related developments were also combined with the provision of outdoor recreational facilities for local residents, such as a day-visitor facility (*Activity 4.16*), then the reserve could be looked at by adjacent communities in a much better light.

Furthermore, if these tourism and recreational developments were linked to increased job and business opportunities for both the private sector and for local communities, then the local economy would benefit significantly and the relationship between the reserve and adjacent communities would improve markedly. This in turn would make the job of the reserve management in conserving the reserve and its wildlife much easier.

Importantly, the development of tourism in the reserve offers a real opportunity for the reserve to generate its own revenue and to be able to allocate funds to specific management objectives, such as resource protection and patrolling, boundary fence maintenance, staffing, infrastructural developments, operational expenses, conservation education, community engagement, etc.

What is clearly required is for some form of 'tourism development plan' to be put together for KTWR that helps to address the genuine tourism potential and expectations of tourists and the recreational needs of local communities, while at the same time ensuring that the conservation of the reserve is not unduly compromised. Ideally, the plan should also address the need for the reserve to generate revenue in order to plough back into the reserve to help pay for management- and conservation-related activities and projects. Revenue can be generated, as in the past, through park entrance fees, elephant-back rides and fines, but there is also real opportunity to obtain income through reserve-based private sector tourism concessions in the form of tented camps (*Activities 3.6* and *9.6*) or similar.

In essence, the tourism development plan for KTWR would be a local or destination-focused plan that would sit comfortably under the TDAP and the NTSP. In this way, the plan for the reserve would contribute toward developing an integrated tourism planning framework that covers national, regional, district and local levels.

Brief description

If the decision is taken by DNPWC to put together a tourism development plan for KTWR, the plan could be formulated in-house, or by an independent planning expert working in close collaboration with relevant DNPWC staff members. To begin with, the *Koshi Tappu WR and Buffer Zone Management Plan 2009-2013* or its successor would need to be studied in order for any tourism development ideas to conform with the conservation management objectives of the reserve, and, if necessary, for some of the latter to be modified to allow appropriate and environmentally-aware tourism developments and activities to take place. Nepalese and international experience and best practice with respect to PA-based tourism would be applied where possible.

Extensive consultations would be held with the DNPWC and other stakeholders and players, such as the affected DDCs and VDCs, local communities, various committees and the private sector, as well as interested international NGOs and other bodies.

A draft plan would be produced that perhaps follows much the same format as in this TDAP. In other words the document should deal with the various tourism resources available in the reserve, constraints to development, strategic objectives, spatial/structure plan, actions to be taken, specific results, timeline and target dates, implementing agents and positions, sources of revenue and finance, concessions, development budget, implementation action plan, etc. Ideally, the plan should be for five years with perhaps a 10-year vision implying a follow-on 5-year plan. Importantly, the plan must be action-oriented and must ensure that there is a mechanism in place to oversee, coordinate, manage and monitor implementation of the plan.

The draft plan should be submitted to DNPWC and the MoFSC and other key stakeholders for comment. Once comments have been satisfactorily addressed, probably through additional consultations and some realignment, the final tourism development plan for the reserve would be produced and submitted for approval, most likely by the Secretary of Forest.

Once the plan has been approved, it would then be up to DNPWC and the management of KTWR to ensure that it is implemented. It is important to stress that a number of key activities under this TDAP are reliant on this plan being formulated and put into action. It is also important to point out that KTWR is looked at in this TDAP as being a 'unique selling point', or USP, of the TDA and one of its principal 'gateways'. Establishing a good tourism product in the reserve, therefore, is crucial to the overall success of the TDAP and of tourism development in the region as a whole.

There may be merit in considering the tourism development plan being combined with a new management plan for the reserve and buffer zone, one that covers the years 2018-2022.

Principal output/s

Draft and Final **Tourism Development Plan for Koshi Tappu WR document** produced.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.
S-5: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.
S-6: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Plan formulated **during first half of Year 1**; plan completed and approved by **end of 2017**.

Implementation driver/s

Independent consultant, possibly through **IDA-supported intervention**, in close collaboration with **DNPWC**.

Implementation partners
Sunsari DDC; Udayapur District; Saptari DDC; local VDCs; local committees; communities; existing buffer zone tourism product owners; other interest groups.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.
Possible funding sources
Internally funded through DNPWC; supported by IDA-supported intervention.
Other related activities
Development of DNPWC policy on private sector concessions in PAs (*Activity 1.1*); establishment of community lodge and/or campsites in the buffer zone (*Activities 3.1* and *3.2*); establishment of an upmarket tented camp concession in the reserve (*Activity 3.6*); establishment of day-visitor centre in the reserve (*Activity 3.15*); encouragement of bird-watching opportunities (*Activity 3.23*); establishment of a visitor centre in the reserve (*Activity 4.5*); improving reserve entrance facilities (*Activity 4.6*); installation of solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.11*); building standards and environmental guidelines (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*); provision of visitor information and interpretation (*Activity 6.5*); possible amended agreement between DNPWC and buffer zone communities (*Activity 8.6*); tourism concession agreement for upmarket tented camp (*Activity 9.6*); tourism-related training (*Activities 10.4*, *10.6* and *10.8*).

ACTIVITY 1.4	**KTA 1 – Policy and Planning**
Formulate a 'tourism development plan' for Makalu Barun National Park	
Rationale	

Depending on the source used and the interpretation of figures available, MBNP currently receives anything between 1,000 and 1,500 visitors a year. Most of these are Nepalese and Indian visitors taking part in mountain treks. Approximately 150 of the total number of visitors come from third countries, mostly in the West. This is very much less that the 100,000+ and approximate 35,000 visitors that, respectively, Annapurna CA and Sagarmatha NP (Everest) usually receive each year. Kanchenjunga CA to the east receives around 730 visitors a year.

It can be seen therefore, that although MBNP lies on the High Route of the GHT, not many visitors to the park enter from either the Kanchenjunga or Everest direction – most visitors enter the park from the south. They do this by travelling either by road and then by foot via Khandbari and Num, or arriving by air at Tumlingtar Airport from Kathmandu or Biratnagar and then moving on by foot or helicopter to Murmindada. There is clearly, therefore, a noticeable 'gap' in the usage of the GHT High Route along the stretch that passes through eastern Makalu Barun.

Part of the reason for this is that the GHT High Route trekking trail between Kanchenjunga CA and Makalu Barun is not well-developed at all and, in the absence of any facilities along the trail, is considered a difficult route for trekkers to traverse. Contributing to this is the fact that there are also relatively few major tourist attractions, in the form of high peaks, in the eastern part of the park and few hotels and campsites along the way. Also, the trekking trail winds through the hilly areas and low mountains quite considerably and it takes a good deal of time for trekkers to pass along and to reach the Makalu Base Camp Trek trail, Makalu Base Camp beyond and then Mt Makalu (8,485 m) itself.

With the arrival in several years' time of a major road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south, access to the eastern part of Makalu Barun will be improved considerably. This is likely to result in a significant increase in the number of visitors, mostly trekkers and pilgrims, using that section of the GHT High Route. These visitors are likely to include many from China. There is also likely to be a significantly greater influx of visitors from the south via Tumlingtar and Num.

The limited tourist facilities that exist at present in the eastern and northern part of the park and buffer zone will not be enough to cater for this large influx of visitors. If plans to address this expected demand are not drawn up in advance, then it is probable that tourism development in the area will explode uncontrollably once the road has been opened and much of the true wilderness and untouched nature of the park and buffer zone will be changed or damaged irreversibly. To illustrate this, for example, the negative effects of having too many trekkers have already manifested themselves in much of Annapurna CA.

What is clearly required is for some form of 'tourism development plan' to be put together for MBNP that helps to address the genuine tourism potential and demand from and expectations of trekkers, pilgrims and other tourists (eg. business tourists) in the future, while at the same time ensuring that the conservation of the area and the area's untouched and wilderness nature are not unduly compromised.

At present, and with current low levels of visitor demand and park/buffer zone usage, it could be argued that a tourism development plan is not really required. However, with the impending arrival of a nearby major road, the whole dynamics with respect to visitor demand and supply will change significantly. The need for a plan to be able to address this becomes much clearer and more urgent.

Ideally, the plan should also address the need for the park to generate revenue in order to plough back into the park to help pay for management- and conservation-related activities and projects, such as resource protection and patrolling, staffing, infrastructural developments, operational expenses, conservation education, community engagement, etc. Revenue can be generated, as in the past, through park entrance fees, but there is also real opportunity to obtain income through setting up one or more park-based private sector tourism concessions in the form of high-end tourist facilities (*Activities 4.7* and *9.7*) that focus

on high value/low volume forms of tourism. This would be very different to the overall low value/high volume type of tourism that is being experienced in Annapurna CA and, to a large extent, also in Sagarmatha NP.

If these high-end tourism developments were also linked to providing increased job and business opportunities for local communities living in the park and buffer zone, then the local economy would benefit significantly and the relationship between the park and its communities would improve markedly. This in turn would make the job of conserving the park and its wildlife resources much easier for the park management.

The tourism development plan for Makalu Barun NP and buffer zone would be a local or destination-focused plan that would sit comfortably under the TDAP and the NTSP. In this way, the plan for the park and buffer zone would contribute toward developing an integrated tourism planning framework that covers national, regional, district and local levels.

Brief description
If the decision is taken by DNPWC to put together a tourism development plan for MBNP, the plan could be formulated in-house, or by an independent planning expert working in close collaboration with relevant DNPWC staff members. To begin with, the *Makalu Barun National Park and Conservation Area Management Plan 1990* and the *Buffer Zone Management Regulation 2052 (1996)* or their successors would need to be studied in order for any tourism development ideas to conform with the conservation management objectives of the park and buffer zone. If necessary, part of these may need to be modified slightly to allow appropriate and environmentally-aware modern-day tourism developments and activities to take place. Nepalese and international experience and best practice with respect to PA-based tourism would be applied where possible.
Extensive consultations would be held with the DNPWC and other stakeholders and players, such as the affected DDCs and VDCs, local communities, various committees and the private sector, as well as interested international NGOs and other bodies.
A draft plan would be produced that perhaps follows much the same format as in this TDAP. In other words the document should deal with the various tourism resources available in the reserve, constraints to development, strategic objectives, spatial/structure plan, actions to be taken, specific results, timeline and target dates, implementing agents and positions, sources of revenue and finance, concessions, development budget, implementation action plan, etc. Ideally, the plan should be for five years with perhaps a 10-year vision implying a follow-on 5-year plan. Importantly, the plan must be action-oriented and must ensure that there is a mechanism in place to oversee, coordinate, manage and monitor implementation of the plan.
The draft plan should be submitted to DNPWC and the MoFSC and other key stakeholders for comment. Once comments have been satisfactorily addressed, probably through additional consultations and some realignment, the final tourism development plan for the park and buffer zone would be produced and submitted for approval, most likely by the Secretary of Forest.
Once the plan has been approved, it would then be up to DNPWC and the management of MBNP to ensure that it is implemented. It is important to stress that a number of key activities under this TDAP are reliant on this plan being formulated and put into action. It is also important to point out that MBNP is looked at in this TDAP as being a 'unique selling point', or USP, of the TDA and one of its principal attractions. Establishing a good tourism product in the area, therefore, is crucial to the overall success of the TDAP and of tourism development in the region as a whole.
There may be merit in considering the tourism development plan being combined with a new management plan for the reserve and buffer zone, one that covers the years 2018-2022.
Principal output/s
Draft and Final **Tourism Development Plan for Makalu Barun document** produced.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA. **S-5**: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations. **S-6**: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
Plan formulated **during first half of Year 1**; plan completed and approved by **end of 2017**.
Implementation driver/s
Independent consultant, possibly through **IDA-supported intervention**, in close collaboration with **DNPWC**.
Implementation partners
Proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee'; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Solukhumbu DDC; local VDCs; local committees; communities; existing national park and buffer zone tourism product owners; other interest groups.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.
Possible funding sources

Internally funded through DNPWC; supported by IDA-supported intervention.

Other related activities
Development of DNPWC policy on private sector concessions in PAs (*Activity 1.1*); amendment to policy on recreational use of Arun-3 water body (*Activity 1.2*); upgrading of trekking trails (*Activities 2.2 to 2.4*); establishment of community campsites and lodges and homestays (*Activities 3.4 and 3.5*); establishment of a high-end tourist lodge concession in the park (*Activity 3.7*); establishment of new trekking trail in the park (*Activity 3.19*); development of rafting tours and water-based activities on the Arun River (*Activities 3.26* and *3.27*); establishment of tourism service centre and tourism information kiosks (*Activities 4.2* and *4.4*); erection of park entrance structures (*Activity 4.7*); installation of solid waste disposal facilities, safe drinking water stations and Internet capability (*Activities 4.12 to 4.14*); establishment of mountain huts/shelters and helipads (*Activities 4.15* and *4.16*); building standards and environmental guidelines (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*); development of GHT signage (*Activity 6.3*); provision of visitor information and interpretation (*Activities 6.4 to 6.6*); establishment of proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (*Activity 8.4*); tourism concession agreement for high-end tourist lodge (*Activity 9.7*).

ACTIVITY 1.5   KTA 1 – Policy and Planning

Encourage the formulation of activity- and action plan-oriented tourism development plans and associated budgets for Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts

Rationale
Several district-level tourism-related development plans already exist within the TDA in one form or another. These plans have either been put together by the DDC itself (eg. *Dhankuta District Tourism Master Plan 2014*), or by a group acting on its behalf (eg. the *Sankhuwasabha District Master Plan* developed by the Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center).
Sunsari DDC presently doesn't have a tourism development plan of its own, although it does intend to produce a periodic plan for tourism in the near future. It seems likely that this will take the form of an annual work plan for tourism rather than a strategic plan *per se*. Sunsari District, however, does have the *Barahachhetra Master Plan* which was put together by the Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee.
A more regionally-focused plan, *The Tourism Product of the East: "Green East"*, has also been put together by an interest group/NGO. This plan focuses on establishing the Dharan, Illam and Taplejung area within Nepal as an alternative tourism destination to the "Golden Triangle".
Overall, the existing tourism plans are generally structural plans which are fairly strong on background information, objectives and strategies and what infrastructures and developments are seen to be needed, but are weak on describing actual activities and lack detailed action plans with assigned responsibilities, timelines and budgets. Unfortunately, the plans rely almost exclusively on sufficient government funding (eg. MoCTCA, DoT, NTB, DDC, VDC, etc.) being made available to implement them. With the seemingly never-ending shortage of state funds and the extreme competition for funding that exists between sectors, this tends to render the plans as being largely non-implementable. Furthermore, the plans do not describe how implementation will be coordinated, managed and monitored and by whom.
With the existence of the national-level NTSP and the recent arrival of this regional-level TDAP, DDCs and local-level tourism planners now have models that can be used in the future if they wish to help formulate activity- and action plan-oriented tourism development plans for each district. In order for better continuity and consistency, these plans should follow much the same format as given in this TDAP. They should, for instance, cover the various tourism resources available in the district, do a market analysis, undertake a SWOT analysis, identify the constraints to development, set achievable objectives and targets, present a spatial/structure plan, detail the actions to be taken, set timelines and target dates, identify responsible implementing agents, identify sources of revenue and finance, estimate budgets, draw up an easy-to-follow implementation action plan (IAP), etc. Activities should focus not only on infrastructural requirements, but also services, equipment, materials, systems, capacity-building, partnerships, etc.
Ideally, the tourism development plans should be for no more than five years with perhaps a 10-year vision that requires another follow-on 5-year plan. Importantly, the plans must be action-oriented and must ensure that there is a mechanism in place to oversee, coordinate, manage and monitor implementation of the plans.
With such plans in place at district level and with these plans taking into consideration and sitting comfortably under the umbrella of the regional-level TDAP and the national-level NTSP, there is much more chance that they can be supported by national stakeholders, get off the ground (or off the shelf) and be successfully implemented. Together, the district plans would contribute toward developing an integrated tourism planning framework that covers national, regional, district and local/destination levels.

Brief description
The formulation of each district plan would probably need to be tackled under three separate sub-activities, one for each district. Ideally, however, there is a need to ensure that the plans have been tackled in the same way and complement one another as much as impossible. It is envisaged that the regional branch of the DoT (currently based in Kakarbhitta) working with all three district plans should be able to ensure this happens.
Should the targeted DDCs decide to formulate further tourism development plans in the near future (in fact they should be encouraged to do so), this activity would likely be undertaken by those DDC officials responsible for tourism development in their districts, possibly assisted by one or more locally-contracted tourism planners.

He/she/they would consult with all the relevant stakeholders and players in their district and, where necessary, at Federal Province level (Province 1 primarily, but in the case of Sunsari District also with Province 2). These would include state and non-state players, such as VDCs, municipalities, local communities, various committees and interest groups, the private sector and any interested or involved international NGOs and other bodies working in the district.

For each DDC, the responsible individuals would be required to follow the standardised format that has been adopted in this TDAP and which has been briefly outlined above in drafting the plan. Once produced, the draft plan would be submitted to the Chief District Officer (CDO) and Local Development Officer (LDO) and other key district and local stakeholders and players for comment. Once comments have been satisfactorily addressed, most likely through additional consultations and some realignment, the final tourism development plan for the district would be produced and submitted for approval, most likely by the CDO.

Once the plan has been approved, it would then be up to each DDC, in particular the LDO and being answerable to the CDO, to ensure that it is implemented using the implementation mechanism that was included in the plan and which was agreed upon by all stakeholders and players. It would then likely be the responsibility of the MoFALD to monitor the overall implementation of the plan as part of the DDC's day-to-day mandate. The regional branch of the DoT would probably be able to assist in this.

It is recognised that those DDC officials tasked with putting together tourism development plans may not be sufficiently skilled or have the capacity or confidence to do so. This need for capacity-building is addressed under **Activity 10.10**. It is envisaged that all those individuals within the DDCs or districts involved in the planning exercise should receive such training. This includes individuals working for non-government bodies, such as the Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center, the Comprehensive Barahachhetra Development Committee and others.

Principal output/s
Three (3) draft and final **District Tourism Development Plan documents** produced.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
District level.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.   **S-2**: Establish a strong link between tourism-related plans at national, regional, district and local levels.   **S-5**: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.   **S-6**: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
Plans formulated **during Years 2** and **3**; all plans completed and approved by **end of 2019**.
Implementation driver/s
Sunsari, **Dhankuta** and **Sankhuwasabha DDCs** possibly with **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
MoFALD; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center; Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee; "Green East"; all VDCs; regional branch of DoT; MoFSC; DNPWC; communities; hospitality/tourism training institutions; tourism private sector; etc.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.
Possible funding sources
Internally funded through DDCs; possible funding from MoCTCA; possibly supported by IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Tourism planning capacity-building for district and local authorities and others (**Activity 10.10**).

Key Task Area 2 – Tourism Product Improvement

Existing tourist attractions

ACTIVITY 2.1	KTA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement

Improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions in the TDA by building required infrastructures

Rationale

One of the main issues, even complaints, regarding the current tourism product in the TDA is the quality of the experience of visitors to many of the region's tourist attractions (eg. religious pilgrimage sites, major viewing points, historical sites, urban and rural public recreational parks, etc.), especially with respect to comfort and infrastructural facilities at the tourist sites. Although the sites themselves are clearly of interest and importance to visitors, the support infrastructure that is in place is not wholly conducive to ensuring that the visitor is well-served in terms of comfort and other basic facilities and services, information, health and sanitation and environmental management.

What is required is a concerted effort across the TDA to improve the overall quality of the tourist attraction. This would include providing *inter alia* adequate parking, better access on-site, directional and informational signage, information points, toilets, lockers, rest areas, benches, picnic tables, shelters, children's playground, viewing points, safety railings, waste disposal facilities, drinking water, recharging power points, etc. What could also be provided at certain sites are Internet connections and Wi-Fi facilities, so allowing visitors to obtain information through QR codes and apps.

Linked to the provision of infrastructure would also be ensuring that the overall site is adequately managed and maintained, especially regarding keeping the site environmentally 'clean' through the regular and effective collection and removal of litter, clearing of drains and ponds, etc. Each tourist attraction should have, at the very least, a 'package' of basic facilities and services in place to improve visitor experience, with each individual site then having additional facilities and services as appropriate.

Although local authorities would be expected to fund many of these improvements, this is likely to be very *ad hoc* and piecemeal and subject very much to the availability of state funds which are always in short supply and in demand from other arguably more needy sectors. What is needed is for one or more dedicated funds to be set up that can be tapped into by the custodians of public tourist attractions. It is envisaged that this would be done through the drawing up of proposals and submitting applications to the fund managers. Funds could be made available through a IDA-supported project/programme (possibly an IRP – see **Section 3.10**), or through the proposed Grants Fund (**Activity 7.2**).

Brief description

This activity would firstly set out to decide exactly what standard and universally-applicable 'package' of basic infrastructural and service facilities should be put in place at all sites, setting standards of design and construction to be achieved (viz. **Activities 5.1**, **5.2** and **5.3**). A brief concept document should be produced. The selection of sites for improvement could be done in two ways: either through direct consultation with appropriate local bodies (eg. DDCs, tourism development committees, communities, etc.) and their inclusion into an IRP, or through the assessment of applications received from interested individual sites by the managers of the proposed Grants Fund (**Activity 7.2**). Overall and ideally, a range of popular tourist attractions (ie. temples, historical sites, viewing points, public parks, etc.), especially in rural areas, should be chosen for improvement.

Taking each site in turn, a site plan should be drawn up that features the basic package of improvements plus any additional ones that are appropriate. The infrastructural improvements should then be undertaken, primarily by the custodians of the site using funds that have been sourced. The improvements, however, should be closely monitored to ensure they comply with the standards that have been set and that all expenses are accounted for.

It will probably be necessary to split this activity into several sub-activities, perhaps each focusing on a specific tourist attraction or type of tourist attraction.

Principal output/s

Concept document; upwards of 20 significantly improved tourist attractions across the TDA, at least 5 in each targeted DDC.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates
Commencing in **Year 1 and continued through to Year 5**; new individual improvement projects would come online as they are approved; all 20 improvement projects to be completed by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
DoT regional office would be the principal driver, in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**; possible **IDA-funded intervention**.
Implementation partners
Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; involved VDCs; tourist attraction custodians; tourism development committees; district chambers of commerce and industry; benefitting communities; various interest groups; etc.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 130,000,000.
Possible funding sources
Primarily through a proposed IRP; also through the proposed Grants Fund; some funds could be made available by DDCs and VDCs; some joint funding obtained from tourist attractions themselves; local sponsors; donations.
Other related activities
Development of guidebooks (*Activity 6.6*); establishment of Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); tourism awareness course (*Activity 10.1*); waste management courses (*Activity 10.5*); visitor management courses (*Activity 10.6*); tour guide training courses (*Activity 10.8*).

Trekking trails

ACTIVITY 2.2	KTA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement

Upgrade where necessary the Makalu Base Camp Trek trail between Tumlingtar and Murmidanda	
Rationale	
At present, many visitors wishing to trek to Makalu Base Camp first fly into Tumlingtar Airport. From there, they can either hire porters and trek to MBNP via the Salpa Pass, or trek to the park via Murmidanda in the buffer zone, or take a short helicopter flight to Murmidanda and continue on foot from there. The latter is done both to shorten the trekking time by several days, but also in response to the shortage of porters in the area. It is also done to avoid the Tumlingtar-Murmidanda leg of the trekking trail because of the current poor condition of the trail. By improving the standard of this leg of the trekking trail, options for trekking groups travelling to Makalu Barun NP are improved with operational costs possibly being reduced. An improved trail may also result in more porters being hired in Tumlingtar. In the short-term, employment would be provided for local residents working on the trail.	
Brief description	
This activity would begin by deciding exactly which route of the trekking trail needs improving. A survey of the selected route would then be undertaken to determine what improvements and where are required, eg. trail alignment, re-surfacing, bridges, safety precautions, shelter huts, pit toilets, signage, etc. Findings and recommendations would be summarised in a survey report. Physical improvements to the trail would then be carried out primarily by workers employed locally. Throughout, consultations and working together with several VDCs within Bhojpur District (Nepaledada, Kulunga) and Sankhuwasabha District (Mangtewa, Yafu, Makalu) would take place.	
Principal output/s	
Survey report and recommendations; 10 km of significantly-**upgraded trekking trail** between Tumlingtar and Murmidanda.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).	
Focal level of activity	
Local level.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA. **L-1**: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA. **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.	
Priority rating	
Low priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Survey would be carried out in **first half of Year 1**; trekking trail improvements done during **second half of Year 1 and through to Year 3**; improved trail completed by the **end of 2019**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Sankhuwasabha and Bhojpur DDCs, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.	
Implementation partners	
DoT; Nepaledada, Kulunga, Mangtewa, Yafu and Makalu VDCs; local communities; DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 2,000,000.	
Possible funding sources	

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha and Bhojpur DDCs and participating VDCs.

Other related activities

Trail links in with upgrading of other trails (**Activities 2.3** and **2.4**); establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (**Activity 4.12**); establishment of trail-side safe drinking water stations (**Activity 4.13**); establishment of Internet capacity (**Activity 4.14**); construction of shelter huts (**Activity 4.15**); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (**Activity 6.3**).

ACTIVITY 2.3	KTA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement

Upgrade and rerouting where necessary existing trails in the Makalu Barun Buffer Zone north of Num

Rationale

The trekking trails connecting Num with MBNP via Murmidanda, Tashigaon and Unshisha to the north-west and via Barun Dhovan to the north can be presently described as being arduous and not too attractive to trekkers and also not well-maintained. At present, most trekkers to Makalu Base Camp are flown in from Tumlingtar Airport by helicopter to Tashigaon, this being a reflection both of the local shortage of porters and the poor state of the trails. If the trails to Makalu Barun NP from Num are improved and if porter jobs could be more reliably offered to local residents, and also bearing in mind that Num is likely to become a tourist hub in the near future, there is a real opportunity for significantly increasing the number of trekkers passing through the buffer zone from Num on their way to the Park. Improving the northern route would also provide a much-needed alternative route to the Base Camp and connect with the GHT High Route to the north in Hatiya VDC. Furthermore, it would also improve life for local communities and residents, especially those that rely heavily on the trails for their day-to-day existence.

Attention also needs to be paid to the fact that a new road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south will be completed within 5-8 years. In upgrading the trekking trail, therefore, there may need to be a fair amount of re-routing if the trekking trail is not to disappear altogether. Such re-routing should not include skirting around villages as the trail itself could form an integral part of those villages' economies.

Brief description

This activity would begin by deciding exactly which trekking trails need improving or rerouting. A survey of the trails would then be undertaken to determine what improvements are required and where, eg. trail alignment, re-routing, re-surfacing, bridges, safety precautions, shelter huts, pit toilets, signage, etc. Findings and recommendations would be summarised in a survey report. Physical improvements and deviations to the trails would then be carried out primarily by workers employed from the VDCs (Num, Makalu, Pathibhara and Hatiya). Consultations and working together with the VDCs would take place throughout the activity.

Principal output/s

Survey report and recommendations; 20 km of significantly-**upgraded trekking trails** connecting Num with both Murmidanda and Barun Dhovan.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Survey would be carried out in **first half of Year 1**; trekking trail improvements done during **second half of Year 1 and through to Year 3**; improved trails completed by the **end of 2019**.

Implementation driver/s

Sankhuwasabha DDC, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.

Implementation partners

DoT; Num, Makalu, Pathibhara and Hatiya VDCs; local communities; DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 4,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha DDC and participating VDCs.

Other related activities

Trail links in with upgrading of other trails (**Activities 2.2** and **2.4**), the development of a new Makalu Barun Base Camp trekking trail (**Activity 3.19**) and the possible development of an alternative trail along the eastern bank of the Arun River (**Activity 3.20**); establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (**Activity 4.12**); establishment of trail-side safe drinking water stations (**Activity 4.13**); establishment of Internet capacity (**Activity 4.14**); construction of shelter huts (**Activity 4.15**); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (**Activity 6.3**).

ACTIVITY 2.4	**KTA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement**
Upgrade where necessary existing trails within the Makalu Barun National Park	

Rationale

The trekking trails within MBNP can also be described as being in need of improvement and, in some parts, of re-establishment. The quality of the trails varies considerably along their length, but overall the network can do with a significant level of attention to bring them up to an internationally-acceptable standard for a major mountain trekking route. It is envisaged that the trails travelling westwards towards Makalu Base Camp and elsewhere in the Park from Dobatak (Yafu VDC), Narbuchaur (Makalu VDC), Unshisha, Barun Dhovan, Hatiya, Hongon and Chyamtang (all within the Park) would be targeted. Combined with improvements to trails in the buffer zone (*Activities 2.2* and *2.3*) and beyond (*Activities 2.5* and *2.6*) and with the building of an additional alternative trails to Makalu Base Camp within the park itself (*Activity 3.19*) and possibly also along the eastern bank of the Arun River (*Activity 3.20*), upgrading these trails would significantly improve the overall GHT network in the region and help to better-link Makalu Barun with neighbouring Kanchenjunga to the east and Sagarmatha (Everest) to the west. In this way, the overall trekking product in the TDA and marketing and promotion of the region would be significantly enhanced.

Brief description

This activity would begin by deciding exactly which trekking trails need improving. It is envisaged that a survey of the selected trails would then be undertaken to determine what improvements are required and where, eg. trail alignment, re-surfacing, bridges, safety precautions, shelter huts, emergency facilities, pit toilets, signage, etc. Findings and recommendations would be summarised in a survey report. Physical improvements to the trails would then be carried out primarily by workers employed from the affected and neighbouring VDCs (Yafu, Makalu, Hatiya and Pathibhara and Num). Consultations and working together with the DNPWC/MBNP and VDCs would take place throughout the activity.

Principal output/s

Survey report and recommendations; approximately 75 km of significantly-**upgraded trekking trails** in eastern part of MBNP from Dobatak through to Hongon to Makalu Base Camp.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Survey would be carried out during **Year 2**; trekking trail improvements done during **Years 3 to 5**; improved trails completed by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.

Implementation partners

Sankhuwasabha DDC; Yafu, Makalu and Hatiya VDCs; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 15,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by DNPWC, Sankhuwasabha DDC and participating VDCs.

Other related activities

Trails link in with upgrading of other trails (*Activities 2.2* and *2.3*) and development of a new Makalu Barun Base Camp trekking trail (*Activity 3.19*); building of park entrance structures (*Activity 4.7*); establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*); establishment of trail-side safe drinking water stations (*Activity 4.13*); establishment of Internet capacity (*Activity 4.14*); construction of mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (*Activity 6.3*).

ACTIVITY 2.5	**KTA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement**
Upgrade where necessary the Milke Danda Trail and the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) rhododendron route on the GHT Cultural Route that runs east from Khandbari	

Rationale

The Milke Danda Trail falls within Sankhuwasabha District, but the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) Trail lies in the neighbouring Taplejung and Terhathum Districts to the east. The principal attractions of both trails, but especially the TMJ, are the rhododendron forests that occur there. These have proved and will continue to prove popular with many visitors to the eastern

part of Nepal, especially trekkers. The trails also connect the TDA with far-eastern Nepal and Kanchenjunga along the Cultural Route of the GHT. As such, these trails represent an important access route to the TDA and Khandbari for those trekkers who are unable or don't wish to use the GHT's High Route in the north. Improving these trails would significantly improve the overall GHT network in the region and better-link the TDA with the Kanchenjunga/Illam area to the east and Sagarmatha (Everest) to the west. In this way, the overall trekking product in the TDA and marketing and promotion of the region would be significantly enhanced.

It is recognised, however, that this trail is perhaps not a priority in the bigger picture, but the opportunity has arisen to improve it significantly and it could be comfortably included under this TDAP and so enhance the overall tourism product that the TDA and eastern Nepal overall wishes to offer in the future.

Brief description

This activity would begin firstly with the establishment of a joint-DDC task group made up of appropriate representatives from Sankhuwasabha, Terhathum and Taplejung DDCs and other appropriate bodies, such as district/local tourism development committees. This is needed to help coordinate, implement and manage what is a multi-district activity.

A survey of the trails would then be undertaken to determine exactly what sections of the trails need improving and what and where those improvements are required, eg. trail alignment, re-surfacing, bridges, safety precautions, shelter huts, pit toilets, signage, etc. Findings and recommendations would be summarised in a survey report. Physical improvements to the trails would then be carried out primarily by workers employed from the many affected and benefiting VDCs. Consultations and working together with the VDCs would take place throughout the activity, as would consultations with relevant interest groups, eg. conservation groups, botanical specialists, MoFSC, local tourism product owners, etc.

Principal output/s

Survey report and recommendations; approximately 40 km of significantly-upgraded trekking trails which connect the TDA with areas to the east of the region and which pass through unique rhododendron forests.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
M-7: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Surveys would be carried out during **Year 2**; trekking trail improvements done during **Years 3 and 4**; improved trails completed by the **end of 2020**.

Implementation driver/s

Joint **Sankhuwasabha/Terhathum/Taplejung DDCs** task group, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.

Implementation partners

DoT; relevant VDCs; interested local communities; relevant NGOs/interest groups; local tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 8,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha, Terhathum and Taplejung DDCs and affected/benefiting VDCs; possibility also of funding by a donor agency; Nepalese and/or international botanical societies.

Other related activities

Trail links in with upgrading of other trails (*Activities 2.2* and *2.6*); establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (*Activity 6.3*); development of interpretative material (*Activity 6.6*).

ACTIVITY 2.6	**KTA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement**

Upgrade where necessary the GHT Cultural Trail between Khandbari and Makalu Barun buffer zone via Baluwabesi, Salpa Pass and Bung

Rationale

Other than the short section that leads westwards from Khandbari, this trail via Baluwabesi on the Arun River, the Salpa Pass and Bung on the south-western boundary of MBNP doesn't fall within the TDA. With the exception of Bung itself, it also doesn't fall within the southern part of the Makalu Barun buffer zone. However, the trail does represent an important alternative route to Sagarmatha NP and Everest (especially with respect to a longer altitude acclimatisation periods and it being a much less crowded route to Everest) and to Mera Peak (at 5,461 m, this peak can be summited by ordinary trekkers) and it also lies on the GHT Cultural

Route that connects the TDA with points to the west. It represents the extension to the trail dealt with under *Activity 3.5* and also connects with the Tumlingtar-Murmindada trail addressed under *Activity 2.2*. Improving this trail would again significantly improve the overall GHT network in the region and better-link the TDA with the Sagarmatha (Everest) region to the west. In doing so, the overall trekking product in the TDA and eastern Nepal as a whole would be significantly enhanced, especially with appropriate marketing and promotion as another alternative route to Everest.

This trail is again perhaps not a priority with this TDAP, but the opportunity has arisen to improve it significantly and it could be comfortably included under this TDAP and help to enhance the overall tourism product that the TDA and eastern Nepal as a whole wishes to offer in the future. Upgrading of this trail could alternatively be tackled at some time in the future under the proposed MBNP Tourism Development Plan (see *Activity 1.4*), but how this activity is then tackled, and, very importantly, how it would be paid for, would still need to be resolved.

Brief description

This activity would begin with the establishment of a joint-DDC task group made up of appropriate representatives from Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur and Solukhumbu DDCs and other appropriate bodies, such as district/local tourism development committees and the DNPWC/MBNP. This is needed to help coordinate, implement and manage what is a multi-district activity.

A survey would then be undertaken of the trail to determine what improvements are required and where they should take place, eg. trail alignment, re-surfacing, bridges, safety precautions, shelter huts, pit toilets, signage, etc. Findings and recommendations would be summarised in a survey report. Physical improvements to the trail would then be carried out primarily by workers employed locally. Throughout, consultations and working together with several VDCs within Sankhuwasabha District (Khandbari), Bhojpur District (Nepaledada, Kadakkhaule, Dobhane) and Solukhumbu District (Gudel, Bung).

Principal output/s

Survey report and recommendations; approximately 30 km of significantly-**upgraded trekking trail** between Khandbari and Bung in Solukhumbu District.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
M-7: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Survey would be carried out during **second half of Year 2**; trekking trail improvements done during **Years 3 and 4**; improved trail completed by the **end of 2020**

Implementation driver/s

Joint **Sankhuwasabha/Bhojpur/Solukhumbu DDCs** task group, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.

Implementation partners

DoT; relevant VDCs; interested local communities; DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP; local tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 6,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha, Bhojpur and Solukhumbu DDCs and affected/participating VDCs; possibility also of funding by one or more IDAs.

Other related activities

Trail links in with upgrading of other trails (*Activities 2.2* and *2.5*); establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*); establishment of trail-side safe drinking water stations (*Activity 4.13*); establishment of Internet capacity (*Activity 4.14*); construction of shelter huts (*Activity 4.15*); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (*Activity 6.3*).

Key Task Area 3 – Tourism Product Development

Community lodges, campsites and homestays

ACTIVITY 3.1	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Establish community lodge at suitable location adjacent to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Rationale

With the very close proximity of the KTWR, local communities in the buffer zone have an excellent opportunity to benefit from tourism in the area. Arguably one of the best ways to do this is to establish an overnight accommodation facility (lodge) that can cater for the current and future demand from visitors/tourists. It is envisaged that this community-owned and -run mid- to low-market facility would cater primarily for Nepali and Indian tourists, as well as for reasonably well-off local residents. The lodge should be a medium-sized facility catering for upwards of 24-36 people a night in 2/4/6-bed units with ensuite and/or communal toilets and showers, a small communal restaurant/café, dining area, lounge and possibly a small conference/meeting room plus outdoor shelters, benches, tables, children's play area, vehicle parking, craft/souvenir stall/s, etc. The lodge should be based on an aesthetic local architecture and style and be environmentally-sensitive by incorporating sustainable technologies where it can, eg. solar power, septic tanks, efficient waste disposal, inward-facing lighting, etc. Funding would need to be found for the development of the lodge, possibly through an application made to the proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*), but other sources should also be approached.

Operationally, the lodge should have strong linkages with the tourism private sector, preferably formalised through MoUs (*Activity 9.8*), in particular local/regional/national tour companies specialising in tours to rural areas which are able to market the facility and bring visitors to it on a regular basis. The lodge could also have a close/formal business linkage, again formalised through a MoU, with the up-market tourist camp proposed for inside the KTWR (*Activity 3.6*). Effective marketing and promotion of the lodge will be essential and maybe something that the community itself is not best-equipped or skilled enough to do – hence the need for business partnerships with the private sector. Linkages could also be established with nearby proposed community campsites (*Activity 3.2*) and with local homestays (*Activity 3.5*). Close linkages with district tourism information outlets, especially in Itahari, Dharan and Biratnagar Airport (*Activities 4.1*, *4.3* and *4.4*), and NTB would also be needed.

Development of the lodge would be managed by a specially-convened task group drawn from participating local communities. An associated community trust/cooperative and fund would be set up to oversee incomes and expenses and to decide on how revenues are to be re-invested and distributed. This would be addressed under *Activity 7.3*. The lodge would be staffed primarily by local residents, all of whom would need training (*Activity 10.4*), possibly with one or more senior managers with the necessary skills being imported from outside.

Brief description

This activity will firstly involve establishing a local task group whose task it would be to determine exactly which VDCs/communities would be involved in the lodge. At the same time (under *Activity 7.3*) a community trust/cooperative and associated fund would be set up to handle income received from the lodge and the subsequent distribution and/or investment of revenue. The task group would then continue with steps to establish the lodge, this likely involving several consecutive and concurrent steps to be taken. Issues to be addressed would include *inter alia*: ♦ selecting the lodge site; ♦ acquiring the land; ♦ designing the lodge; ♦ constructing the lodge; ♦ furnishing and equipping the lodge; ♦ staffing the lodge; ♦ operating the lodge; and ♦ promoting the lodge. At present, permission to establish the lodge would need to be obtained from DNPWC and presumably the preferred site would also need DNPWC approval.

Advice from the DoT and an independent advisor, possibly through an international development agency (IDA), would be provided to the task group if requested or necessary.

Principal output/s

One **24-36-bed community-owned and -run lodge** established in the Koshi Tappu buffer zone.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Establishment of lodge would take place during **Years 1 and 2**; lodge fully up-and-running by **early-2019**.

Implementation driver/s

Specially-convened '**community tourism task group**' in close cooperation with **participating VDCs** with the assistance of an **independent advisor** possibly through an **international development agency**.

| *Implementation partners* |
| Sunsari DDC; local communities; private sector tour operators. |

| *Estimated budget (rupees)* |
| NPR 20,000,000. |

| *Possible funding sources* |
| Grants Fund; VDCs; IDA; bank loan; possible private sector investor/s. |

| *Other related activities* |
| Inclusion in tourism development plan for KTWR (*Activity 1.3*); compliance with building standards and environmental guidelines (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*); use of Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); establishment of community trust/cooperative and fund (*Activity 7.3*); incorporated into updated DNPWC agreement on buffer zone (*Activity 8.6*); development of MoUs with private sector partners (*Activity 9.8*); tourism awareness course for local community members (*Activity 10.1*); training of lodge staff (*Activity 10.4*). |

| **ACTIVITY 3.2** | **KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development** |

Establish one or more community campsites adjacent to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Rationale

With the very close proximity of the KTWR, local communities in the buffer zone have an excellent opportunity to benefit from tourism in the area. In addition to the establishment of a community lodge (see *Activity 3.1*), one of the simplest and quickest ways to do this is to establish one or more community-owned and -run serviced campsites that can cater for the current and future demand from visitors/tourists, especially those that do not have large pockets or prefer a more basic experience. The campsites could therefore be attractive to Nepali, Indian and third-country visitors, as well as to organised groups, such as school/youth/conservation groups, etc. A community campsite would cater for upwards of 100-150 people using either their own tents or tents that belong to the site and which have already been set up or which can be hired.

The campsite would consist of 20-25 or so individual sites all with access to communal ablution facilities (toilets, wash basins, showers), water supply, purified water and electricity sockets. There would be a central communal facility that would house cooking/kitchen facilities, laundry sinks, recharging sockets for smartphones/cameras/laptops etc.). It could also house a small shop for basic supplies as well as a food outlet and craft/souvenir shop. There would also be a central outdoor rest area with a large shelter as well as picnic tables and benches and a fairly large children's play area and a small vehicle park for cars and one or two busses. All permanent structures within the campsite would be based on an aesthetic local architecture and style and be environmentally-sensitive by incorporating sustainable technologies where it can, eg. solar power, septic tanks, efficient waste disposal, inward-facing lighting, etc.

The campsite should be located quite some way from the proposed community lodge to ensure that the two products, each with different clienteles, don't interfere with one another.

Operationally and administratively, the campsite should ideally be directly linked to the lodge and be an expansion of the community-owned and -run tourism product on offer in the area. Being operationally linked, the campsite, as with the lodge, could also draw on any linkages that have been established with the private sector and local/district tourism information outlets and benefit from all marketing and promotional activities. Funding would need to be found for the development of the campsite, again, as with the community lodge, through an application being submitted to the proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*).

Development of the campsite would be managed by the specially-convened task group drawn from participating local communities that would be set up for the lodge under *Activity 3.1*. The associated community trust/cooperative and fund (*Activity 7.3*) would oversee incomes and expenses and decide how revenues are re-invested and distributed. The campsite would be staffed by several local residents, all of whom would need training (*Activity 10.4*). The campsite manager could be a staff member of the community lodge.

To begin with, just one community campsite should be established, probably fairly close to the entrance to the reserve but not encroaching at all on the proposed community lodge or on other existing tourism products in the area. It may be desirable to have more than one community campsite, but this should only be considered once the first one, which is effectively a pilot, is fully up-and-running and operating successfully, ie. earliest in 2020 (Year 4). A second campsite could be established elsewhere within the buffer zone of KTWR and perhaps benefit a different set of VDCs and communities.

Brief description

This activity will firstly involve establishing a local task group whose task it would be to determine exactly which VDCs/communities would be involved in the campsite. At the same time (under *Activity 7.3*) a community trust/cooperative and associated fund would be set up to handle income received from the campsite and the subsequent distribution and/or investment of revenue. The task group referred to under *Activity 3.1* would undertake the steps necessary to establish the campsite. As with the lodge this would likely involve consecutive and concurrent steps to address *inter alia*: ♦ selecting the location for the campsite; ♦ acquiring the land; ♦ designing the campsite; ♦ constructing necessary buildings; ♦ furnishing and equipping the campsite; ♦ staffing the campsite; ♦ operating the campsite; and ♦ promoting the campsite. Again, permission to establish the campsite at the chosen site, as with the lodge, would need to be obtained from DNPWC.

Advice from the DoT and an independent advisor, possibly through an international development agency (IDA), would be provided to the task group if requested or necessary.
Principal output/s
One **100-150-person community-owned and -run serviced campsite** established in the Koshi Tappu buffer zone.
Targeted zone/s
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
Local level.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.   **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.   **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.   **L-15**: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
Establishment of campsite would take place during **Year 1 and first half of Year 2**; campsite fully up-and-running by **end of 2018**; possible second campsite established by **end of 2020 or 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
Specially-convened '**community tourism task group**' in close cooperation with **participating VDCs** with the assistance of an **independent advisor** possibly through an **international development agency**.
Implementation partners
Sunsari DDC; local communities; private sector tour operators.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.
Possible funding sources
Grants Fund; VDCs; IDA; bank loan; possible private sector investor/s; community members.
Other related activities
Inclusion in tourism development plan for KTWR (***Activity 1.3***); compliance with building standards and environmental guidelines (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***); use of Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***); establishment of community trust/cooperative and fund (***Activity 7.3***); incorporated into updated DNPWC agreement on buffer zone (***Activity 8.6***); training of campsite staff (***Activity 10.4***).

ACTIVITY 3.3	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Establish community campsite at suitable location at junction of Arun, Sunkoshi and Tomar Rivers
Rationale
River rafting is a popular tourist activity within the TDA with the operational centre for rafting tours being in Dharan. It is understood that most of the river rafting presently takes place on the Tomar River with groups of rafters travelling by road from Dharan. They enter the river either up in Taplejung District or below the Tomar Bridge (a tourist attraction in its own right) at Mulghat and travel downstream from there approximately 24 km to the junction of the river with the larger Arun and Sunkoshi Rivers and then further downriver to Barahachhetra. At this point, rafters and all the equipment are then taken by road back to Dharan. These tours usually take place in a single day, although some groups free-camp for one night at the 'Three Rivers' junction.
In order to enhance the experience of visitors and to extend the length of stay, as well as importantly to benefit one or more communities along the way, there may be merit in establishing a community-owned and -run campsite for rafters and their support staff at a suitable location near the 'Three Rivers' junction. The campsite would directly serve the rafting groups that presently use the Tomar River, but could also serve existing and future groups that come down the Arun River from the north.
The community campsite would be a fairly basic facility for upwards of 25-30 people which would provide tents and limited camping equipment for rafting visitors (perhaps in addition to that brought by the rafting companies) together with *inter alia* shelters, ablution facilities (toilets, washbasins, showers), some benches and tables erected around a central campfire, paraffin and/or solar-powered lighting and one or two fridges, secure facility for rafting equipment, etc. Depending on its location, the structural facilities could be a mix of permanent or semi-permanent structures, all with an appropriate, low-tech, low-impact and local architectural theme and design.
Development of the campsite would be managed by a specially-convened task group drawn from participating local VDCs (eg. Chhintang and Ahale in Dhankuta District and possibly Hasanpur in Bhojpur and Mainamaini in Udayapur Districts – exactly which ones would depend on the site of and land access to the campsite) and communities in collaboration with one or more rafting companies. Funding would need to be found for the development of the campsite, possibly again through the proposed Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***). An associated community trust/cooperative and fund would oversee incomes and expenses relating to the campsite operations and decide how revenues are re-invested and distributed amongst the communities. The campsite would be

staffed by one or more local residents, all of whom would need some basic tourism awareness and skills training (**Activities 10.1** and **10.4**).

The success of the campsite would be very dependent on establishing a good working and business partnership with one or more rafting companies, especially as possibly all of the overnight guests would be derived from organised rafting expeditions- although the campsite would also be within its rights to attracting non-rafting visitors. This partnership would need to be cemented through the drawing up of a legally-binding business agreement or MoU between the parties (**Activity 9.8**).

Brief description
This activity will firstly involve establishing a local task group whose task it would be to determine exactly which VDCs/communities would be involved in the campsite and where it would be located. It would also involve entering into discussions and negotiations with prospective rafting company partners. Should these initial discussions and approaches be positive, steps will need to be taken to set up a community trust/cooperative and associated fund (under **Activity 7.3**) to handle income received from the campsite and the subsequent distribution and/or investment of revenue. The task group would then continue with steps to establish the campsite. Issues to be addressed would include *inter alia*: ♦ selecting the location for the campsite; ♦ acquiring the land; ♦ designing the campsite; ♦ constructing the campsite; ♦ equipping the campsite; ♦ staffing the campsite; ♦ operating the campsite; and ♦ promoting the campsite. Advice from the DoT and an independent advisor, possibly through an international development agency (IDA), would be provided to the task group if requested or necessary.

Principal output/s
One **community-owned and -run basic serviced campsite** for 20-25 people established.

Targeted zone/s
Central Zone (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA. **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA. **L-15**: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating
Medium priority.

Timing and target dates
Establishment of campsite would take place during **Year 1**; campsite fully up-and-running by **end of 2017**.

Implementation driver/s
Specially-convened '**community tourism task group**' in close cooperation with **participating VDCs** with the assistance of an **independent advisor** possibly through an **international development agency**.

Implementation partners
Dhankuta DDC; Sunsari Tourism Development Committee; private sector rafting tour operators; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.

Possible funding sources
Grants Fund; VDCs; IDA; community members; bank loan; possible private sector investor/s.

Other related activities
Compliance with building standards and environmental guidelines (**Activities 5.1** and **5.2**); use of Grants Fund (**Activity 7.2**); establishment of community trust/cooperative and fund (**Activity 7.3**); development of MoUs with private sector partners (**Activity 9.8**); tourism awareness course for local community members (**Activity 10.1**); training of campsite staff (**Activity 10.4**).

ACTIVITY 3.4	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Support the establishment of community campsites and lodges in selected villages within the Makalu Barun Buffer Zone and in Makalu Barun National Park
Rationale
At present, overnight accommodation in the Makalu Barun area is fairly limited and restricted to a few basic hotels, guesthouses and homestays scattered along the trails between Gadhidanda and Hatiya up the Arun River valley and at Tashigaon on the Makalu Base Camp Trek trail towards the border of the park. Very little if anything is available to trekkers moving between Tumlingtar and Tashigaon. Most visitors are therefore obliged to camp in the open during their visits, these campsites being almost entirely without any infrastructures or services at all. Most trekkers travel as organised groups with support teams consisting of guides and porters. These groups generally carry with them all of the camping equipment that they need.

In order to attract more visitors and to enhance their experience, as well as to provide some economic benefit to local communities, there is merit in encouraging the development of a number of community-owned and -run campsites and lodges for both trekkers and rafters and their support teams at strategic locations along the trekking trails within the Makalu Barun area. In addition to trekkers, campsites/lodges sited on the banks of the Arun River below the Arun-3 HEP dam could also host groups of rafters (*Activity 3.26*) making their way downriver from the dam towards Tumlingtar.

Some communities in the buffer zone have either already begun to build community campsites to exploit the current or hoped-for future flow of trekkers (eg. Simma in Pathibhara VDC), or are talking about doing so. Interest in community campsites and lodges already exists in the buffer zone and, with increased numbers of visitors expected once the new road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south has been built and is open to traffic, this interest will only increase. It would be best, however, if the siting of community campsites/lodges were done at the same time as a tourism development plan was being put together for MBNP (*Activity 1.4*).

Depending on exactly where it is located, a community campsite would be a fairly basic facility for between 12-25 people. It would provide camping sites for groups of trekkers and rafters, as well as a limited number of tents and camping equipment for hire, together with *inter alia* ablution facilities (toilets, washbasins, showers), shelters/gazebos, some benches and tables erected around a central point, paraffin and/or solar-powered lighting and maybe a fridge, possibly a solar-powered recharging unit for smartphones and the like, a secure facility for any rafting equipment, etc. The structural facilities would likely be permanent or semi-permanent, but all would have an appropriate, low-tech, low-impact and local architectural theme and design.

Some of the more sophisticated and accessible campsites could be developed into community lodges, but this would be something to consider in a few years' time and once the area is much more on the tourist map. A community lodge, however, would likely be a small-sized facility catering for upwards of 12 people a night in 2-bed detached or semi-detached units with ensuite toilets and showers, a small communal eating area with food outlet, plus several outdoor shelters, benches, tables, etc. The lodge should be based on an aesthetic local architecture and style and be environmentally-sensitive by incorporating sustainable technologies where it can, eg. solar power, a septic tank, efficient waste disposal, inward-facing lighting, etc. There is no reason why a campsite and lodge could not exist side by side or form one facility.

Development of each campsite/lodge would be managed by a small task group made up of individuals drawn from the local VDC and communities. Funding would need to be found for the development of each campsite/lodge, possibly through the proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*). An associated community trust/cooperative and fund would oversee incomes and expenses relating to operations of each campsite/lodge and decide how revenues are re-invested and distributed amongst the participating communities. Each campsite/lodge would be staffed by one or more local residents, all of whom would need some basic tourism awareness and skills training (*Activities 10.1* and *10.4*).

The presence of a number of community campsites/lodges distributed along trekking trails that run through the buffer zone and national park would certainly expand the tourism offer within Makalu Barun and make it more attractive to potential visitors. Combined with homestays (*Activity 3.5*), visitors would have the opportunity to interact with local communities and residents and, more importantly, contribute to local economies and to improving the livelihoods of people who live in a remote and very demanding environment.

Brief description
This activity will likely need to be divided into several sub-activities, depending on the number and location of any community campsites or lodges being considered. For each community campsite that is to be established, the activities will firstly involve identifying or establishing a local task group or committee to oversee the whole development process. It would also be necessary to set up an associated community trust/cooperative and fund (*Activity 7.3*) to handle income from the campsite/lodge and to distribute and/or invest the revenues that accrue. The task group/committee/trust/cooperative would then take the necessary steps to establish the campsite/lodge, namely: ♦ select the site for the campsite/lodge and secure the land; ♦ design the campsite/lodge; ♦ construct the campsite/lodge; ♦ furnish and equip the campsite/lodge; ♦ staff the campsite/lodge; ♦ operate the campsite/lodge; and ♦ promote the campsite/lodge. Guidance from the proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (*Activity 8.4*) would be given. Advice from the DoT and an independent advisor, possibly through a IDA-supported intervention, would also be provided to the task group if requested or necessary. Being within either the national park itself or within the buffer zone, permission to establish a campsite or lodge would need to be obtained from DNPWC. An appropriate EIA may also need to be conducted. Once established, the campsites/lodges would be encouraged to become members of the proposed local association of hotels, community lodges and campsites and homestays (*Activity 8.5*).

Principal output/s
At least **eight (8) 12 to 25-bed community-owned and -run campsites** or lodges established in the eastern and south-eastern Makalu Barun area.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.

L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.

L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Establishment of each campsite/lodge may take between one and three years spread over **Years 1 to 5**, depending on its location, size and complexity; envisaged that eight (8) facilities would be fully-up-and running by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Proposed '**Makalu Barun tourism development committee**' in close collaboration with proposed '**community tourism task groups**' and with the assistance of an **independent advisor** possibly through a **IDA-funded intervention**.

Implementation partners

Participating VDCs; IDA-funded intervention; DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP; local communities; Sankhuwasabha DDC.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 15,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Grants Fund; VDCs; communities; donor agency; DoT; commercial bank loans.

Other related activities

Formulation of tourism development plan for MBNP (***Activity 1.4***); development of rafting tours on Arun River (***Activity 3.26***); compliance with building standards and environmental guidelines (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***); use of Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***); establishment of community trust fund (***Activity 7.3***); proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (***Activity 8.4***); proposed local association of hotels, community lodges and campsites and homestays (***Activity 8.5***); tourism awareness course for local community members (***Activity 10.1***); training of campsite staff (***Activity 10.4***); online promotion by tourism product owners (***Activity 11.3***).

ACTIVITY 3.5   KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Support the establishment of homestays in the buffer zones of the TDA's two state protected areas

Rationale

Overnight accommodation for visitors within the buffer zones of the two PAs in the TDA is at present fairly limited and restricted to a few basic hotels and homestays in the Makalu Barun area and a tented camp and one or two low-market hotels and homestays around KTWR. At present, these together are probably just enough to cope with the current flow of visitors.

With the desired and expected significant increase in flow in the future, especially with the arrival of the new road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south, demand for overnight accommodation will undoubtedly increase, especially if the PAs undergo significant developments to attract more visitors. These developments include an improved and extended GHT network (***Activities 2.2***, ***2.3***, ***2.4***, ***3.19*** and ***3.20***), day-visitor facilities (***Activities 3.15*** and ***3.16***), a visitor centre (***Activity 4.5***) and various visitor activities (***Activities 3.23***, ***3.26*** and ***3.27***).

The planned developments also include the establishment of a range of overnight visitor accommodation facilities including an upmarket tented camp and tourist lodge (***Activities 3.6*** and ***3.7***) and community-owned and -run campsites and lodges (***Activities 3.1***, ***3.2*** and ***3.4***). These overnight facilities will all involve varying amounts of capital investment and a good deal of effort on the part of the private sector investors/operators and communities with respect to both their construction and day-to-day operation.

Homestays provide a relatively simple and non-costly way for individual entrepreneurs and their families to exploit the business opportunities offered by a developing tourism sector. They offer visitors with a comparatively cheap, but traditionally authentic form of accommodation during their visit. They also allow visitors to interact with local residents and to experience their day-to-day lifestyles, including the preparation and eating of locally-produced foods. At the very least, a homestay should consist of one or more private rooms for visitors, a communal toilet and shower facility and a suitable place to eat and socialise. In providing paying visitors with such a product and experience, however, homestay owners must place particular emphasis on hygiene, sanitation and health and on providing at least a satisfactory standard of service.

The decision on whether or not to establish a homestay is entirely dependent on the individual prospective home owner and his/her family. There is also very little planners or authorities can do to prevent a homestay from being established, even in a buffer zone. Satisfying market demand and expectations of visitors and providing a quality product and service will determine whether or not any particular homestay is to be financially viable or not.

Funding for homestay would largely come from the hosting family and supporters, but other sources could be exploited, such as commercial bank loans and the proposed SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund (***Activities 7.1*** and ***7.2***). Each homestay would probably be staffed entirely in-house by the homestay owner and his/her family. All would need some basic tourism awareness and skills training (***Activities 10.1*** and ***10.4***).

The presence of a number of homestays distributed along trekking trail routes in the Makalu Barun buffer zone and adjacent to KTWR would certainly expand the tourism offer within both areas and make them more attractive to potential visitors. Combined with community campsites and lodges (*Activities 3.1*, *3.2* and *3.4)*, visitors would certainly have the opportunity to interact with local residents, families and communities. Very importantly, they would also be able to contribute directly to local incomes and so help to improve the livelihoods of people who often live in a remote and very demanding environment, or in areas where economic opportunities can be quite limited.

Brief description

As the decision to establish a homestay is entirely up to the individual homeowners, this activity will be largely reactive and focus on four main sub-activities: 1) raising awareness amongst rural communities of the business and income-generating opportunities that can be offered through homestays; 2) advising and facilitating interested owners and their families in setting up and running homestays; 3) offering and conducting a range of tourism awareness and hospitality training courses for the homestay owners, their families and other staff members; and 4) providing advice on how best to promote and advertise their homestays. The latter three sub-activities will be done largely on request from the homestay owners.

These sub-activities would be driven by either the Sunsari Tourism Development Committee with respect to the KTWR buffer zone, or the proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (*Activity 8.4*) in collaboration with the DoT (regional office). If requested or felt necessary, advice would also be provided to the committees and homestay owners by an independent advisor, most likely through a donor-funded intervention.

Being within a buffer zone, permission to establish a homestay may currently need to be obtained from DNPWC. However, if the buffer zone agreement for Koshi Tappu is to be re-evaluated under *Activity 8.6*, then such permission may not be necessary in the future.

As with any business, prospective homestay owners would be expected to fund much of their enterprise, but they should be able to apply to the proposed SME Financing Facility (*Activity 7.1*) and Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*) for some financial assistance. They could, of course, also apply for loans from commercial banks, but the issues of past experience, collateral and financial risk may make this difficult.

Once established, the homestays would be encouraged to become members of local associations of hotels, community lodges and campsites and homestays (viz. *Activity 8.5* for Makalu Barun).

Principal output/s

Up to four (4) privately-owned and -run homestays established each year (a combined total of 20) within the buffer zones of the KTWR and MBNP.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Establishment of homestays takes place **through Years 1 to 5**; all homestays fully up-and-running by **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Prospective homestay owners in collaboration with their respective **tourism development committees** (ie. Sunsari Tourism Development Committee and proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee') and the DoT.

Implementation partners

Relevant VDCs; possible assistance of an independent advisor through a IDA-funded intervention.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Personal capital; Grants Fund; SME Financing Facility; commercial bank loans; possibly DoT.

Other related activities

Use of proposed SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund (*Activities 7.1* and *7.2*); proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (*Activity 8.4*); proposed Makalu Barun association of hotels, community lodges and campsites and homestays (*Activity 8.5*); tourism awareness course for local community members (*Activity 10.1*); provision of tourism training courses (*Activities 10.4* and *10.9*); online promotion by tourism product owners (*Activity 11.3*).

Up-market private sector concessions

ACTIVITY 3.6	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**

Establish an upmarket tented camp concession at a suitable location within Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
Rationale

Between 5,000 and 6,000 people visit KTWR each year, 90% of whom are Nepali visitors with the other 10% coming from India and third countries. The vast majority of these visitors come on day visits, with only a very few staying in overnight accommodation facilities in the adjacent buffer zone. None of the visitors stay inside the reserve itself.

The only activities which visitors can presently take part in within the reserve are bird-watching, game-viewing from vehicles driving along the Chatara Road (located on top of a large dyke that was built in 1961), site-seeing from viewing points at the end of several of the artificial barriers or groins that have been built, elephant-back rides when available, some fishing and free/wild camping and free picnicking along the banks of the Koshi River. There are also currently no facilities to cater for day-visitors.

At present, most of the revenue generated from the reserve's undoubted attractions accrues to private sector operations located outside of the park in the buffer zone and to local tour operators and private transport companies. The only financial benefit from visitors gained by the reserve is through the entrance fees that are charged and fees collected from elephant-back rides, free camping and fishing permits. The potential for generating revenue for the DNPWC/KTWR from reserve-based overnight accommodation facilities and day-visitor facilities, however, is large and presently completely untapped.

The proposed development of a day-visitor facility and an associated visitor centre is addressed under ***Activities 3.15*** and ***4.5***. Other than through increased entrance gate takings, and maybe some rental or percentage of takings accruing from any food and refreshment outlets that may be set up inside these facilities, these are unlikely to generate huge amounts of revenue for the reserve. At present, for instance, entrance fees are relatively low (foreign nationals – NPR 500; SAARC national – NPR 200; Nepali nationals – NPR 20; children under 10 years old – free), as are camping fees and fishing permits (each NPR 300 per person for non-Nepali nationals and NPR 20 for Nepali nationals) and elephant-back rides (NPR 1,000 per person per hour for non-Nepali nationals and NPR 100 for Nepali nationals).

The provision of an overnight accommodation facility or facilities within the reserve, however, is different, especially if the higher end of the tourist market is targeted. Even with a relatively small facility, if it is marketed, promoted and run well, income to the reserve and to the DNPWC could increase very significantly indeed. This would clearly be of great benefit to the DNPWC and to the reserve as revenue could be obtained and then spent on conservation management activities and other aspects relating to the conservation of a wildlife reserve.

It is envisaged that the overnight accommodation facility would be owned and run by a private sector concession, rather than by the DNPWC itself. In this way, the DNPWC and the reserve would benefit from a quality and well-run overnight guest facility for relatively little effort on the part of the reserve authorities. The private sector partner could also bring in all the necessary management skills and experience as well as the marketing and promotion experience and links. These are areas for which the DNPWC, as with most wildlife conservation agencies around the world, is generally and understandably ill-equipped to provide, especially as it is far-removed from its core business of nature and wildlife conservation.

Assuming that a policy decision is taken by the DNPWC to allow the piloting of private sector concessions in the TDA's two PAs (***Activity 1.1***), the concession for the tented camp would be established firstly through the drawing up and launching of a public tender (***Activity 9.3***) supported by a tourism investment portfolio that has been drawn up (***Activity 9.1***). Following an evaluation of bids received from interested private sector investors/operators, the winning bidder would be selected and invited to take part in negotiations with the DNPWC. During these negotiations, the site of the tented camp and its exact size and composition would be discussed and agreed upon by both parties.

Using a model concession agreement as the basis (***Activity 9.5***), a concession agreement for the tented camp would be drawn up that addresses all aspects that are pertinent to the business agreement, such as *inter alia* a statement of agreement, length of concession period, definitions and terms, fees to be paid, rights and obligations of each party, ownership of structures, general terms, site plan, payment schedule, etc. Once agreement has been reached, the concession agreement would be signed by both parties (***Activity 9.6***). After an initial payment by the Grantee, construction of the tented camp would then begin. This would be tackled under this activity.

At the outset, it should be stated that at no time does the DNPWC, as Grantor, lose authority over the inclusion of a private sector-owned and -run facility and operation within the reserve. The concession agreement will ensure this in legal terms. If at any stage the Grantee does not comply with the terms of the concession agreement, the DNPWC is legally entitled to take the necessary steps to correct any behaviour and, if necessary, to terminate the agreement and evict the Grantee. Under the terms of the agreement, all fixed facilities on site would become the property of the Grantor or DNPWC.

It is envisaged that this private sector-owned and -run up-market tented camp would be aimed primarily at affluent foreign tourists (third-country and Indian), as well as at well-off Nepali citizens. The low-impact tented camp would be sited at a suitable location along the banks of the Koshi River, most likely towards the end of or behind one of the many artificial but now well-vegetated groynes that run into the river floodplain. It would be located as far away from the noisy main road as feasible, so providing guests with as natural experience as possible. The exact site would be chosen by the Grantee in close consultation and with the agreement of the DNPWC. The size and composition of the camp would also be decided through negotiations and agreement between both parties.

For purposes of this TDAP, it is envisaged that the tented camp could cater for upwards of 16-24 people a night in eight (8) 2-bed units (with an additional bed put in if required), each with an ensuite toilet, shower and washbasin. Each of the safari-style tents

could be placed under a thatched shelter built in the local architectural style and sited away from other tents to provide added privacy. A private picnic table and chairs could be provided for each tent.

The camp could also feature a central lounge/restaurant/dining area enclosed under a large thatched building made from local materials and in the local architectural style (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*) and have a small public verandah in front. A guest toilet could be sited close by, while a kitchen, several storerooms, camp office and limited staff accommodation could be located at a suitable distance away. Several small individual shelters with tables and chairs could be provided in front of the main facility along with a central stone-lined campfire. Any parking area for guest and staff vehicles would be sited away from the camp area.

One or two low-impact bird/game viewing hides for the exclusive use of guests could also be built at suitable spots along the riverbank, these being connected to the camp by low-impact paths, possibly including some solar-powered lighting along the way. A small jetty for watercraft to be used on the river by guests could also be erected at a suitable location.

Sustainable technologies would be incorporated as far as possible, eg. solar power, septic tanks, efficient waste disposal and recycling, inward-facing lighting, etc. A link with the national grid, however, would likely be good as a back-up system.

Funding for the development of the tented camp would be provided almost entirely by the Grantee, with the DNPWC being responsible only for the upgrading and maintenance of the access road and the possible connection with the national grid.

Construction of the tented camp would be carried out by the Grantee, with assistance being provided by the DNPWC when appropriate or necessary.

Operationally, the tented camp would be run wholly by the Grantee, this being formalised through a tourism concession agreement (*Activity 9.6*). All marketing and promotion of the camp would be the responsibility of the Grantee.

The tented camp could also have close/formal business linkages with the proposed community lodge in the adjacent buffer zone (*Activity 3.1*) and local homestays (*Activity 3.5*), such facilities offering overnight accommodation for less affluent market segments. In this way, guests of the tented camp could be given the opportunity to spend one or more nights within the community and to let them have an experience of local life and expand their overall experience of Koshi Tappu. These business linkages could be formalised through MoUs (*Activity 9.8*).

In addition to just enjoying the environment and wildlife around the tented camp, guests could also be taken on bird-watching tours and river cruises both upriver and downriver on the Koshi River. Business linkages with communities living in these areas could also be established, in particular with the fishing community. Free camping, or bush camps, for visitors along the banks of the river or on islands could also be organised, with all equipment and supplies being organised from the tented camp. Local residents could also be involved. Tours to other areas within the region could also be organised, such as to the pilgrimage sites at Barahachhetra and Ramdhuni and further afield and to the barrage over the Koshi River to view Ganges river dolphins.

Brief description
This activity would be carried out largely by the private sector concessionaire or Grantee with whom the DNPWC has signed a concession agreement (*Activity 9.6*). The Grantee would be responsible for building the tented camp at the pre-selected site and according to the plans, procedures and time-scale agreed upon with the DNPWC during negotiations. The DNPWC/KTWR should be prepared to provide assistance when requested and appropriate. As per the concession agreement and with due notice being given, the DNPWC would have the right to check up on construction activities and progress being made and to take any appropriate actions if necessary. Some aspects relating to the establishment of the tented camp would be undertaken by the DNPWC. These would include, for example, improving the condition of the access road from the Chatara Road to the camp and providing a link to the national electricity grid. The DNPWC would also be responsible for ensuring that no unauthorized access to the site is allowed both during construction and after the tented camp has opened. The activity would end with the opening of the tented camp. After that time, the Grantee would be fully responsible for operating the camp and for fulfilling its side of the concession agreement. At the same time, the DNPWC must also fulfill its conservation and reserve management obligations to the agreement.
Principal output/s
One (1) upmarket, low-impact, 16-bed tented camp established and operational within KTWR.
Targeted zone/s
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA. **S-9**: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA. **M-5**: Encourage the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the hospitality industry and local existing and potential tourist attractions. **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA. **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
Priority rating

High priority.	

Timing and target dates
Construction and equipping of tented camp undertaken **from first half of Year 2**; tented camp ready for opening by the **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s
Private sector concessionaire/Grantee in collaboration with the **DNPWC/KTWR**.

Implementation partners
With possible assistance from an independent advisor through an IDA-supported intervention; selected VDCs; local communities and individuals.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 10,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Private sector concessionaire/Grantee; DNPWC.

Other related activities
Piloting of DNPWC policy on PA-based concessions (**Activity 1.1**); inclusion in tourism development plan for KTWR (**Activity 1.3**); establishment of community lodge in the buffer zone (**Activity 3.1**); further development of bird tours to the Koshi Tappu area (**Activity 3.23**); development of river boating activities on the Koshi River (**Activity 3.24**); establishment of a visitor centre in KTWR (**Activity 4.5**); installation of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities (**Activity 4.11**); application of environmental guidelines to tourism operations (**Activity 5.2**); review of buffer zone agreement between DNPWC and local communities (**Activity 8.6**); launch of a national/international tender for an upmarket tented camp in KTWR (**Activity 9.3**); formulation and signing of a concession agreement for an upmarket tented camp in KTWR (**Activity 9.6**); facilitating the drawing up of memoranda of understanding between private sector operators and local communities (**Activity 9.8**); establishment of website and Internet-based tourism information portal to promote the TDA as a specific tourism destination (**Activity 11.2**); promotion of tourism products through the TDA website (**Activity 11.3**).

ACTIVITY 3.7	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**

Establish a high-end tourist lodge concession at a suitable location within Makalu Barun National Park

Rationale
Makalu Barun NP currently receives between 1,000 and 1,500 visitors a year, virtually all of whom are either trekkers or mountaineers. Most of these visitors are Nepalese or Indian, with approximately 150 or so of them being from third countries, mostly in the West. At present, the only overnight accommodation available to them are simple campsites, for which they normally bring along their own camping equipment, and a very small number of basic hotels and guesthouses/homestays.
Most of the revenue presently generated from the park's undoubted attractions accrues to private sector operations, such as trekking and mountaineering companies. These are all located outside of the park, mostly based in Kathmandu or other urban centres. Local hotels and guesthouse/homestays also benefit financially. The only financial benefit from visitors accruing to the DNPWC/MBNP is through the comparatively low entrance fees that it charges them (foreign nationals – NPR 1,000; SAARC nationals – NPR 100; Nepali nationals and children under 10 years old – free).
Access to MBNP will be improved considerably with the arrival in several years' time of the Kimathangka-Khandbari-Biratnagar highway (Koshi Highway). This will likely result in a significant increase in the number of visitors, mostly as trekkers, mountaineers and pilgrims. Although the area is unlikely to experience anywhere near the same number of visitors as say Annapurna Conservation Area (100,000+ visitors a year) or Langtang and Sagarmatha National Parks (respectively, approximately 15,000 and 35,000 visitors a year), the impact on the area and the environmental costs associated with it will be felt. With trekking and pilgrimages generally being of a high volume/low value form of tourism, revenue generated by these increased numbers of visitors will be fairly limited and be restricted almost exclusively to park entrance fees. In other words, income flows to the park and to DNPWC will probably not increase significantly. However, park management costs are likely to rise.
If a high volume/low value form of tourism product is pursued in MBNP into the future, there is a real danger of increasing levels of environmental damage taking place and the very qualities which make the Makalu Barun area extra-special and arguably unique within Nepal (remoteness, unspoilt/virgin territory, uncrowdedness, mystic, etc.) will quickly be lost.
These very same qualities, however, provide Makalu Barun with enormous potential for being exploited through low volume/high value forms of tourism. In this regard, one or more high-end, luxury, exclusive, boutique-style tourist lodges established at the right location in beautiful mountainous scenery would likely attract affluent customers from around the world willing to pay a high premium in order to see and experience the Himalayas up close without having to find and spend the time and exertion on long and exhausting treks. Visitors who are simply too elderly or unfit or with very little time to spare could afford to be flown to the lodge by helicopter (from Tumlingtar, Kathmandu, Biratnagar or elsewhere) and spend just a day or two or longer enjoying the mountain scenery and indulging in some easy local hikes or walks with relatively little physical effort.
Such a mountain-based tourism product would be relatively unique to Nepal, although similar initiatives are already on the go in the country. There is no reason why MBNP should miss out on this genuine opportunity.

Even with a relatively small facility, if it is marketed, promoted and run well, income to the park and to the DNPWC could increase very significantly indeed. This would clearly be of great benefit to the DNPWC and to the park as revenue could be obtained and then spent on conservation management activities and other aspects relating to the conservation of a national park.

It is envisaged that the tourist lodge would be owned and run by a private sector concession, rather than by the DNPWC itself. In this way, the DNPWC and the park would benefit from a high quality and well-run overnight guest facility for relatively little effort on the part of the park authorities. The private sector partner could also bring in all the necessary management skills and experience as well as the marketing and promotion experience and links. These are areas for which the DNPWC, as with most wildlife conservation agencies around the world, is generally ill-equipped to provide, especially as it is far-removed from its core business of nature and wildlife conservation.

Assuming that a policy decision is taken by the DNPWC to allow the piloting of private sector concessions in the TDA's two PAs (*Activity 1.1*), the concession for the tourist lodge would be established firstly through the drawing up and launching of a public tender (*Activity 9.4*), supported by a tourism investment portfolio that has been drawn up (*Activity 9.1*). Following an evaluation of bids received from interested private sector investors/operators, the winning bidder would be selected and invited to take part in negotiations with the DNPWC. During these negotiations, the site of the lodge and its exact size and composition would be discussed and agreed upon by both parties.

Using a model concession agreement as the basis (*Activity 9.5*), a concession agreement for the lodge would be drawn up that addresses all aspects that are pertinent to the business agreement, such as *inter alia* a statement of agreement, length of concession period, definitions and terms, fees to be paid, rights and obligations of each party, ownership of structures, general terms, site plan, payment schedule, etc. Once agreement has been reached, the concession agreement would be signed by both parties (*Activity 9.7*). After an initial payment by the Grantee, construction of the lodge would then begin and be tackled under this activity.

At the outset, it should be stated that at no time does the DNPWC, as Grantor, lose authority over the inclusion of a private sector-owned and -run facility and operation within the park. The concession agreement will ensure this in legal terms. If at any stage the Grantee does not comply with the terms of the concession agreement, the DNPWC is legally entitled to take the necessary steps to correct any behaviour and, if necessary, to terminate the agreement and evict the Grantee. Under the terms of the agreement, all fixed facilities on site would become the property of the Grantor or DNPWC.

The lodge would be sited at a suitable location in the north-eastern part of MBNP, probably at a site no higher than 3,000 metres altitude to reduce the chances of altitude sickness for guests and possibly with reach of the Kimathangka- Khandbari-Biratnagar highway once it has been built. It would be located at a site that provides guests with a secluded, private and exclusive experience of the middle reaches of the Himalayas. The exact site would be chosen by the Grantee in close consultation and with the agreement of the DNPWC. The size, design and composition of the lodge would also be decided through negotiations and agreement between both parties. Innovative, unique and world-class designs would be favoured.

For purposes of this TDAP, it is envisaged that the tourist lodge could cater for upwards of 12-18 people a night in six (6) 2- and 4-bed luxury units, each with an ensuite toilet, bath/shower and washbasins, bedroom/s and small lounge, plus an attached verandah with a view. Each unit would be sited at a distance from the other and from the central facility for added seclusion and privacy.

The lodge would also feature a central luxury lounge/restaurant/dining area/bar facility constructed using local materials and in a local architectural style (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*). There may be a large patio out front. Guest toilets would also be included in the central building, as could a souvenir shop/boutique. The central facility would also house a kitchen, several storerooms and a lodge office, although these could be located separately nearby. Limited staff accommodation with necessary facilities could be located at a suitable distance away. A stone-lined campfire and outdoor sitting area could also be established in front of the central facility. One or two helipads that help service the lodge and bring guests in would be located nearby.

Sustainable technologies would be incorporated as far as possible, eg. solar power, septic tanks, efficient waste disposal and recycling, inward-facing lighting, etc. A link with the national grid would, however, would be good as a back-up system.

Funding for the development of the tourist lodge would be provided almost entirely by the Grantee, with the DNPWC being responsible only for providing Internet and Wi-Fi capacity and providing a possible connection with the national grid, depending on exactly where the lodge is located.

Construction of the tented camp would be carried out almost entirely by the Grantee, with assistance being provided by the DNPWC when appropriate or necessary.

Operationally, the tourist lodge would be run entirely by the Grantee, this being formalised through a tourism concession agreement (*Activity 9.7*). All marketing and promotion of the lodge would be the responsibility of the Grantee.

Brief description

This activity would be carried out largely by the private sector concessionaire or Grantee with whom the DNPWC has signed a concession agreement (*Activity 9.7*). The Grantee would be responsible for building the lodge at the pre-selected site and according to the plans, procedures and time-scale agreed upon with the DNPWC during negotiations. The DNPWC/MBNP should be prepared to provide assistance when requested and appropriate. As per the concession agreement and with due notice being given, the DNPWC would have the right to check up on construction activities and progress being made and to take any appropriate actions if necessary.

Some aspects relating to the establishment of the tented camp may be undertaken by the DNPWC. These could include, for example, providing Internet and Wi-Fi capacity and availability in the area (***Activity 4.14***), and possibly providing a link to the national electricity grid. The DNPWC would also be responsible for ensuring that no unauthorised access to the site is allowed both during construction and after the tourist lodge has opened. The latter would depend on exactly where the lodge is located with respect to the trekking trails and nearby settlements.

The activity would end with the opening of the tourist lodge. After that time, the Grantee would be fully responsible for operating the lodge and for fulfilling its side of the concession agreement. At the same time, the DNPWC must also fulfill its conservation and park management obligations to the agreement.

Principal output/s
One (1) high-end, 12-bed tourist lodge established and operational within Makalu Barun NP.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.   **S-9**: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.   **M-5**: Encourage the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the hospitality industry and local existing and potential tourist attractions.   **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.   **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.   **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA
Priority rating
High priority.
Timing and target dates
Construction and equipping of high-end tourist lodge undertaken **from second half of Year 2 and through Year 3**; high-end tourist lodge ready for opening by the **end of 2019**.
Implementation driver/s
Private sector concessionaire/Grantee in collaboration with the **DNPWC/MBNP**.
Implementation partners
With possible assistance from an independent advisor through a donor-funded intervention; selected VDCs (eg. Makalu and Hatiya VDCs); local communities and individuals.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 30,000,000.
Possible funding sources
Private sector concessionaire/Grantee; DNPWC.
Other related activities
Piloting of DNPWC policy on PA-based concessions (***Activity 1.1***); inclusion in tourism development plan for MBNP (***Activity 1.4***); Improvements to Tumlingtar Airport (***Activity 4.10***); establishment of Internet and Wi-Fi capacity and availability within the Makalu Barun area (***Activity 4.14***); application of building regulations and environmental guidelines to tourism infrastructures and operations (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***); launch of a national/international tender for a high-end tourist lodge in MBNP (***Activity 9.4***); formulation and signing of a concession agreement for a high-end tourist lodge in MBNP (***Activity 9.7***); establishment of website to promote the TDA as a specific tourism destination (***Activity 11.2***); promotion of tourism products through the TDA website (***Activity 11.3***).

Tourism niches

ACTIVITY 3.8	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development
Encourage the development of selected tourism niches within the TDA	
Rationale	

The tourism industry in most free-market economies is driven largely by the private sector, the state mostly being concerned with helping to provide the environment within which the tourism sector can grow. It is therefore not the state that decides whether or not certain tourism niches will be exploited by the private sector, but the private sector itself. The private sector does this by assessing market demand and supply and then investing the necessary financial and other resources into designing and developing products of its own choosing in order to exploit that demand for profit.

There are certain tourism niches within the TDA that could be exploited much more than they are at present. Examples include religious/pilgrimage tourism, MICE tourism, business tourism and health tourism.

Religious tourism, which is also commonly referred to as faith tourism, is a type of tourism where people travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary or fellowship purposes. Pilgrimage tourism involves visiting one or more scared sites for

purposes of veneration, respect and worship. Some people do not like to equate pilgrimage with tourism, but for all intents and purposes pilgrimage is a form of tourism.

MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions/Events) is a type of tourism in which large groups, usually planned well in advance, are brought together for a particular purpose. MICE events are usually centered on a theme or topic and are aimed at a professional, academic or trade organisation or other special interest group.

Business tourism is when individuals are still working and being paid but they are doing so away from both their workplace and home. Business tourism activities include meetings and attending conferences and exhibitions, but normally as individuals or small groups.

Health tourism, which can also be referred to as or include medical tourism, involves travelling for the purpose of receiving medical treatment or improving health or fitness.

All of the above niches are already being exploited in the TDA to varying degrees. This is particularly so with pilgrimage tourism, which currently involves large numbers of mainly Indian but also Nepali visitors travelling to Hindu and Buddhist sacred sites throughout the region. Business tourism is also popular, primarily because of the high level of business being conducted in the region. Business tourists include those from Nepal as well as from neighbouring India and China and wider a field. Chinese businessmen, for instance, regularly visit the northern parts of the TDA in pursuit of business opportunities relating to *yarchagumba*, *rudraksha* beads, textiles and herbs and spices and are a major contributor to local economies. MICE tourism is also common, linked as it is to the business sector. The TDA is well-known in Nepal and neighbouring India for some of its excellent health facilities, especially in and around Dharan, such as the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences. The cooler and healthier climate north of the Terai is especially attractive for Indian tourists.

All of these and other sectors, however, have room for further development and exploitation. Many of the pilgrimage sites, for instance, are in need of improvement with respect to visitor comfort and experience (*Activity 2.1*) and relatively unknown or rarely-visited sites could be developed to attract pilgrims. With the opening of the Kimathangka-Khandbari-Biratnagar highway (Koshi Highway) in 4-5 years and the possible construction of an alternative highway from Kathmandu, as well as with improvements to the regional airports (*Activity 4.10*), the flow of businessmen and women could increase substantially. The cooler climate that exists in and around Bhedetar, Dhankuta and Hile could be exploited much more for MICE tourism purposes, especially if they are linked and promoted to the development of visitor parks and other facilities, such as proposed cable car systems and other tourist attractions (*Activities 3.10 to 3.14*). The health and wellbeing aspects of the higher altitudes in the TDA could also be exploited more with the development, for example, of centres for meditation, massage, yoga, reiki, etc. and the further promotion of existing health facilities in Dharan and elsewhere and the possible development of others.

Under the TDAP, a large number of improvements and developments within the regional tourism sector are planned for implementation. Other developments within the sector will likely take place independent of the TDAP. Opportunities for the private sector and regional and district authorities to exploit these and other tourism niches will therefore arise.

This activity is aimed at raising awareness of these opportunities within the tourism industry, not just the established industry, but also amongst budding entrepreneurs and individuals who may want to enter into the tourism sector as product owners or providers. Whether or not these opportunities will then be taken up and exploited is largely the prerogative of the private sector and will again depend on perceived market demand and supply and an assessment of business risk.

It would largely be up to the DoT to broadcast the opportunities that could arise, assisted where possible by district authorities.

Brief description

This activity would most likely be in the form of a promotional campaign and be largely driven by the NTB with assistance being provided during the initial stages through a possible IDA-supported intervention. Assistance would also be given by the respective DDCs for whom increased levels in business in the targeted tourism niches would be of obvious benefit.

In consultation with the three DDCs within the TDA, it is envisaged that the activity would firstly decide on the tourism niches to be targeted in each district. After this, the activity would proceed in several stages, namely: ♦ formulation of strategy; development of promotional content; ♦ production and distribution of pamphlets for each targeted niche; ♦ placement of pamphlets/content on the NTB website, in particular through the webpage specifically developed for the TDA (*Activity 11.2*); ♦ promotion of the niches through the social media; ♦ presentation of seminars to interested groups; ♦ holding informative/advisory meetings as required; and ♦ responding to any approaches from interested parties.

The activity would probably be conducted twice, initially near the beginning of the implementation period of the TDAP and then again towards the end. This would allow for an updated promotional campaign to take place once new developments under the TDAP and external to it have come online.

Funding of the promotional activity itself would be covered by the DoT/NTB and the IDA-supported intervention.

Funding of the development of the tourism niches would probably be one of the key issues that will be raised as it will be this that would likely be the main factor that holds back the development of any initiative or idea. In this regard, the proposed SME Financing Facility (*Activity 7.1*) and Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*) would be promoted as being two possible options available for securing at least some of the required finances. The SME Financing Facility could offer soft loans to existing businesses and other applicants within the targeted tourism niches and be administered by the DoT and/or other state body. The Grants Fund, on the other hand, could offer small loans to emerging entrepreneurs within the same niches and be administered through the same body.

In responding to any requests for loans or small grants that are received from interested businesses and emerging entrepreneurs, formal proposals/applications would be requested. Guidance on exactly what should be included in proposals and applications would be given by the NTB and the advisor working through the IDA-supported intervention. Proposals/applications received would then be individually assessed on merit by a specially-convened evaluation committee made up of representatives from the DoT/NTB, the three DDCs and the IDA-supported intervention. Representatives from any district-level tourism development committee should also be involved.

Funding would be allocated to the successful applicants and the respective DDC and tourism development committees would be responsible for seeing that it is spent according to criteria set down by the Facility or Fund and that the development of the tourism niche enterprise takes place as intended.

The ability of an applicant to be prepared to part-fund some of his/her enterprise, especially in the initial stages, would be looked at favourably. From where the applicant obtains the self-funding would likely vary from case to case, but this would probably be through their own savings or capital loans from relatives and friends, possibly through local donations and sponsorships and, less likely, through bank loans.

Advice would also be given on any tourism-related training that may need to be undertaken as part of developing or emerging niche tourism products (*Activities 10.3*, *10.5* and *10.6*).

Any targeted tourism niche products that are developed would be promoted through the proposed website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activities 11.2* and *11.3*).

Principal output/s	
	Promotional campaign resulting in significantly **increased level of business in four tourism niches** (religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business, health) within the TDA.
Targeted zone/s	
	Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity	
	District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed	
	S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
	L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
	L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
	L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.
Priority rating	
	Medium priority.
Timing and target dates	
	Development of promotional material undertaken **during first half of Year 2**; promotional campaign conducted **during Years 2 to 4**; promotional campaign repeated **during Year 5**; range of new targeted tourism niche-related product enterprises fully-established or up-and-running by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s	
	DoT/NTB with possible support from an **IDA intervention**.
Implementation partners	
	Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; district-level tourism development committees; interested associations; custodians of tourist attractions; tourism product owners; private sector business; interest groups;
Estimated budget (rupees)	
	NPR 2,500,000.
Possible funding sources	
	DoT/NTB; IDA intervention.
Other related activities	
	Inclusion in district-level tourism development plans (*Activity 1.5*); improvements to selected tourist attractions within the TDA (*Activity 3.1*); development of unique tourism products within the TDA (*Activity 3.9*); development of visitor parks and cable car systems (*Activities 3.10 to 3.13*); development of new tourist attractions (*Activity 3.14*); encourage tour operators to undertake excursions to tourist attractions in the TDA (*Activity 3.22*); access to proposed SME Financing Facility (*Activity 7.1*); access to proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); formulation of MoUs between communities and the private sector (*Activity 9.8*); provision of tourism-related training (*Activities 10.3*, *10.5* and *10.6*); promotion of targeted niche tourism products through the proposed website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activities 11.2* and *11.3*).

ACTIVITY 3.9	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development
Encourage and support the development of unique tourism products based on locally-produced foods and materials and intangible assets	
Rationale	

The development and promotion of unique locally-produced foods, beverages, arts and crafts, festivals, intangible and other products within the TDA should be encouraged. In many ways this is similar to the 'One Village One Product' (OVOP) programme, led by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Agricultural Development in collaboration with the Agro Enterprise Centre of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), except that the focus is not only on agricultural products, but also on products that are tourism-related.

Although the TDA is already fairly active in producing goods and activities that are unique to the region (eg. bamboo crafts, honey products, beverages, textiles, beans, carvings, festivals, markets, etc.), there is certainly room for the development and sale of many additional tourism-related products and events to be promoted. In many ways, this activity is similar to *Activity 3.14* which focuses on the development of new tourist attractions.

Again what is needed is a concerted effort to encourage VDCs, communities and individuals to further develop tourism-related products and events that already exist in their home areas or to develop new ones altogether. On their own or taken together these would all help to expand and diversify the tourism product on offer in the TDA. They would also contribute in varying degrees to improving livelihoods and boosting local economies.

Brief description	
	This activity would be driven largely by the tourism development committees in each district, backed up by their respective DDCs. Funding would likely be the key factor that holds back the development of any initiative or idea, so linking the encouragement of communities and individuals to develop what products they can to a possible source of funding is again probably the way to go.

Working with the Grants Fund proposed in this TDAP (*Activity 7.2*) and to be run most likely through an IDA-supported intervention in partnership with the DoT, the tourism development committees would ask for proposals and applications to be submitted. Guidance on exactly what should be included in proposals and applications would be given by an advisor working through the donor-funded intervention. Proposals/applications would then be individually assessed on merit by a specially-convened evaluation committee made up of representatives from the tourism development committees, the three DDCs, DoT and the IDA-supported intervention. Funding would be allocated to the successful applicants and the respective tourism development committees would be responsible for seeing that it is spent according to criteria set down by the Fund and that the development of the enterprise takes place as planned.

The ability of an applicant to be prepared to part-fund some of his/her enterprise, especially in the initial stages, would be looked at favourably. From where the applicant obtains the self-funding would likely vary from case to case, but this would probably be through their own savings or capital loans from relatives and friends, possibly through local donations and sponsorships and, less likely, through bank loans. |
Principal output/s	
	At least **30 new tourist-related product micro-enterprises** established within the TDA, **at least 10 in each district**.
Targeted zone/s	
	Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity	
	District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed	
	S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.
Priority rating	
	Low priority.
Timing and target dates	
	Calls for applications commence in **Year 2 and extend through to Year 5**; range of new tourist-related product enterprises up-and-running or fully-established by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s	
	Tourism development committees (Sunsari and Sankhuwasabha Districts) and **Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry** in collaboration with an **advisor** working through an IDA intervention.
Implementation partners	
	Individual entrepreneurs; interested communities; interest groups; relevant VDCs; the three DDCs; local businesses.
Estimated budget (rupees)	
	NPR 7,500,000.
Possible funding sources	
	SME Financing Facility; Grants Fund; certain amount of self-funding expected; possible bank loans; VDCs; local communities; donations; sponsorships.
Other related activities	
	Promotion of the development of selected tourism niches (*Activity 3.8*); development of new tourist attractions (*Activity 3.14*); funding through SME Financing Facility (*Activity 7.1*) and Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); possible establishment of community trusts

for community-based products and events (***Activity 7.3***); tourism awareness course for communities (***Activity 10.1***); training of entrepreneurs (***Activity 10.9***); promotion of the products and events (***Activities 11.2 to 11.4***).

New tourist attractions

ACTIVITY 3.10	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Support the development of a visitor park in Bhedetar

Rationale
Bhedetar is without doubt the main gateway to Dhankuta District and the foothills of the Himalayas within the TDA. Located at an altitude of 1,420 m, it is significantly cooler than Dharan and the Terai to the south and more than 1,000 m higher. With the cooler climate and the superb views that can be had, it has been attractive to visitors for centuries and presently draws both local residents and Nepali and Indian tourists visiting the TDA. For this reason, a number of hotels already exist in the area with others coming online even now. Other than the Bhedetar or Charles' Tower (a large and, it has to be said, incompatible three-story viewing tower built on the top of a hill), there is very little else for visitors to do in the area.

Amongst other things (eg. a cable-car between Dharan and Bhedetar – see ***Activity 3.12***), there has been talk about establishing some form of outdoor visitor park in the area to offer day and overnighting visitors something to while away their time. Such a facility would certainly make Bhedetar more attractive to visitors, not only drawing more visitors to the area but also persuading them to stay longer and to hopefully spend more. The concept, therefore, does have real merit.

The facility would need to be located on suitable ground within walking distance of the village and would, ideally, be able to offer superb views of Dharan, the Terai and the surrounding hills and valleys. It should consist of an open mixed-grassy and wooded area, not necessarily flat, that includes *inter alia* a number of small shelters, picnic tables and benches, BBQ sites, one or more children's playgrounds, central area for an evening campfire, interpretative signage, several coin/token-operated public telescopes, sufficient public toilets, several refreshment and/or local produce/foods kiosks, several craft/souvenir stalls, outdoor lighting, waste disposal containers and a parking area for motorcycles, bicycles, cars and busses. It could also provide recharging facilities for smartphones, etc. and have a small tourist information kiosk operationally linked to the proposed tourism information centre in Bhedetar itself (***Activity 4.3***). Consideration should also be paid to building a small functions/meeting room for hire as well as an outdoor music/dance stage. The wisdom and desirability of erecting a small shrine could also be considered.

The facility need not, and indeed should not, have a specially-built viewing tower as in many ways this detracts from the attractive natural environment and views that already exist. Such a structure also represents a major and arguably unnecessary expense, apart from the fact that the Charles' Tower already exists.

If a cable-car is built between Dharan and Bhedetar (***Activity 3.12***), direct access to the visitor park should be made possible for passengers.

Development of the visitor park would be managed by the Vedetar VDC which would also take responsibility for the day-to-day management and maintenance of the facility using several locally-employed staff members. These may need some basic tourism awareness training (***Activity 10.1***). A limited number of vendors would be contracted to provide a range of quality services to visitors, eg. takeaway food and refreshments, crafts, souvenirs, etc.

Funding for the establishment of the visitor park could found from a number of sources, including the DoT, Dhankuta DDC, Vedetar VDC and possibly also the proposed Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***). Funding might also be available through one of the IRPs (see ***Section 3.10***), or through limited investment from selected local tourism product owners.

Brief description
This activity would be driven largely by the Vedetar VDC and Dhankuta DDC. Assuming that the concept for a visitor park is both attractive to and approved by the Dhankuta DDC, Vedetar VDC and the local community and residents, a series of development steps need to be taken. These include *inter alia*: ♦ identifying and selecting the location for the visitor park; ♦ acquiring the necessary land and the approaches to it; ♦ designing the park and drawing up a spatial plan; ♦ laying out and constructing the park; ♦ appropriately equipping the park; ♦ and addressing staffing needs and training requirements. This activity would effectively end with the opening of the visitor park and the completion of any staff training that is carried out. Vedetar VDC, or a community cooperative, would then take over the day-to-day management and maintenance of the facility and be responsible for any future enhancement or development.

Principal output/s
Spatial plan; one **outdoor visitor park** to cater for upwards of 200-250 people at any one time.

Targeted zone/s
Central Zone (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

Priority rating
Medium priority.

Timing and target dates
Planning and securing the site would take place **during Year 1**; construction would take place **during Year 2**; visitor park would open by the **end of 2018**.
Implementation driver/s
Vedetar VDC with possible **technical assistance** through an **IDA-supported intervention** or locally-hired **planner/advisor**.
Implementation partners
Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Dhankuta Tourism Development Committee; local businesses.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 10,000,000.
Possible funding sources
DoT; Dhankuta DDC; Vedetar VDC; Grants Fund; possibly through an IRP; local tourism product owners.
Other related activities
Improving visitor experience at tourist attractions (*Activity 2.1*); possible Dharan-Bhedetar cable-car (*Activity 3.12*); encourage the sale of local foods and produce (*Activity 3.15*); tourism information centre in Bhedetar (*Activity 4.3*); Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); staff training (*Activity 10.6*); promotion of the visitor park (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).

ACTIVITY 3.11	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**

Support the development of a visitor park adjacent to Hile
Rationale
The town of Hile in Dhankuta District lies at an altitude of around 1,850 m and at the head of a long and deep valley. Like Bhedetar to the south, the town is considerably higher than Dharan and the Terai region of Nepal and consequently has a much cooler and more pleasant climate. This has proved and will continue to prove very attractive to Nepali and Indian visitors wishing to escape the heat and humidity of the lowlands. Hile is also located in very attractive hilly scenery and is easily accessible by road from the district capital, Dhankuta, approximately 7 kilometres as the crow flies to the south. A number of hotels are found in Hile, including a recently-built large resort hotel that can accommodate upwards of 75 guests. Most guests visit Hile for the cool climate, while many travel on northwards and eastwards to indulge in trekking. As with Bhedetar, however, there is very little else for visitors to do in the area other than enjoy the climate and the views.
It is understood, however, that 132 *ropanis* (6.7 hectares) of land has been set aside by the Dhankuta Municipality for the establishment of a visitor park, this concept proving to be a popular one locally. A proposal to establish the park has been put forward to the MoCTCA/DoT, but so far nothing positive has come of it, possibly because of lack of funding. The concept is a good one, especially as such a park could provide activities and facilities for visitors to the area as well as for residents of Hile and Dhankuta. It could also result in more visitors being attracted to the area and persuade them to stay longer and spend more. As with Bhedetar, there is also talk of building a cable-car to connect Dhankuta with Hile and provide a further attraction to visitors (see *Activity 3.13*). If this were able to stop at the visitor park, this would significantly enhance the attractiveness of both the park and the cable car.
In addition to being suitably and sensitively landscaped, the visitor park should include *inter alia* a number of small shelters, picnic tables and benches, BBQ sites, one or more children's playgrounds, central area for an evening campfire, interpretative signage, sufficient public toilets, several refreshment and/or local produce/foods kiosks, several craft/souvenir stalls, outdoor lighting, waste disposal containers and a parking area for motorcycles, bicycles, cars and busses. It could also provide recharging facilities for smartphones, etc. and have a small tourist information kiosk operationally linked to the proposed tourism information centre in Hile (*Activity 4.3*). Consideration should also be paid to building a small functions/meeting room for hire as well as an outdoor music/dance stage.
There is some talk about erecting a viewing tower in the park, but this should not be pursued any further as such a structure would spoil the attractive natural environment and views that already exist. Such a structure is also expensive to build and costly to maintain.
If a cable-car is built between Dhankuta and Hile (*Activity 3.13*), direct access to the visitor park should be made possible for passengers. It is questionable, however, how financially and commercially viable such a cable-car service would be.
Development of the visitor park would be managed by the Dhankuta Municipality (ie. VDC) which would also take responsibility for the day-to-day management and maintenance of the facility using several locally-employed staff members. These may need some basic tourism awareness training (*Activity 10.1*). A limited number of vendors would be contracted to provide a range of quality services to visitors, eg. takeaway food and refreshments, crafts, souvenirs, etc. It is possible that the visitor park could be run by a community cooperative.
Funding for the establishment of the visitor park could found from a number of sources, including the DoT, Dhankuta DDC, Dhankuta Municipality and possibly also the proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*). Funding might also be available through one of the IRPs (see *Section 3.10*), or through limited investment from selected local tourism product owners.
Brief description
This activity would be driven largely by the Dhankuta Municipality with support from the DDC. A series of development steps need to be taken. Assuming that the site land has already been identified and secured by the Municipality, these steps include *inter alia*: ♦ designing the park and drawing up a spatial plan; ♦ laying out and constructing the park; ♦ appropriately equipping the

park; ♦ and addressing staffing needs and training requirements. This activity would effectively end with the opening of the visitor park and the completion of any staff training that is carried out. Dhankuta Municipality would then take over the day-to-day management and maintenance of the facility and be responsible for any future enhancement or development.

| *Principal output/s* |
| **Spatial plan**; one **outdoor visitor park** to cater for upwards of 200 people at any one time. |

| *Targeted zone/s* |
| **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District). |

| *Focal level of activity* |
| **District** and **local** levels. |

| *Strategic objectives addressed* |
| **S-10**: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA. |
| **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA. |

| *Priority rating* |
| **High** priority. |

| *Timing and target dates* |
| Planning the site would take place **during Year 1**; construction would take place **during Year 2**; visitor park would open by the **end of 2018**. |

| *Implementation driver/s* |
| **Dhankuta Municipality** with possible **technical assistance** through an **IDA-supported intervention** or locally-hired **planner/advisor**. |

| *Implementation partners* |
| Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce; local businesses. |

| *Estimated budget (rupees)* |
| NPR 10,000,000. |

| *Possible funding sources* |
| DoT; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta Municipality; Grants Fund; possibly through an IRP; local tourism product owners. |

| *Other related activities* |
| Improving visitor experience at tourist attractions (***Activity 2.1***); possible Dhankuta-Hile cable-car (***Activity 3.13***); encourage the sale of local foods and produce (***Activity 3.15***); tourism information centre in Hile (***Activity 4.3***); Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***); staff training (***Activity 10.6***); promotion of the visitor park (***Activities 11.2 to 11.4***). |

ACTIVITY 3.12	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**

| *Promote the building of a cable-car service between Dharan and Bhedetar* |

| *Rationale* |
| As the crow flies, the hill station at Bhedetar is only four or so kilometres north of the urban centre of Dharan. However, the station is more than 1,000 m higher in altitude than the city. To reach Bhedetar requires a steep and windy drive half-hour drive up the road from Dharan. Taking into consideration the spectacular views of Dharan, the Terai and the surrounding hills to be had from Bhedetar and the noticeably cooler and less humid climate, it is not surprising that there has been talk for quite some time about building a cable-car facility connecting Dharan with the hill station and offering residents, visitors and tourists an exciting alternative way of getting there. The success of the Manakamana cable-car in Gorkha District in central Nepal clearly provides some inspiration for a possible Dharan-Bhedetar cable-car. |
| From the point of view of offering visitors and tourists to the area something else and unusual to do and developing new tourism attractions and products in the area, the cable-car concept has some real merit. Technically, and with the local (eg. Manakamana) and international experience that is available, it should not be difficult to build the cableway and the associated infrastructure. The biggest issues will probably relate to the exact route to be followed, the location of the terminuses, construction cost and who will fund and drive the development process. |
| With the general lack of outdoor recreation facilities in the vicinity of Dharan and wider afield, it is probable that the cable-car would become a major tourist attraction for both domestic and international tourists, especially those coming up from India. |

| *Brief description* |
| This activity will firstly need to establish a small task group comprising representatives from the local authorities (eg. Dharan Municipality, Vedetar VDC, Sunsari and Dhankuta DDCs), Sunsari Tourism Development Committee, Sunsari Chamber of Commerce and Industry, regional branch of DoT, local communities (especially those that may be affected by the cable-car) and selected private sector players. This group will commission a feasibility study to be carried out by a suitable team of experts. The findings, recommendations and conclusions of this study will be presented in a report. This report will then be the basis for further discussions and the taking of a final decision on whether or not to pursue the cable-car concept any further. If a green light is given, funding for the entire development will be found and ring-fenced and detailed planning undertaken. |
| The plan will address *inter alia* the route for the cable-way, location of terminuses, vehicle parks, securing the land, compensation issues (if any), technical design, implementation schedule, key players and responsibilities, development budget, possible need |

for an EIA, management options, etc. The plan would need to be approved by the task group and the appropriate authorities. Once the plan has been approved construction can begin.

It is envisaged that funding for the facility would be secured from both state (ie. municipalities, DDC) and non-state sources (ie. private sector investors, bank loans, etc.). A public-private partnership (PPP) would be formed and the facility as a whole would be run as a wholly-commercial enterprise with the local authority/authorities and the private sector operator/s being beneficiary partners.

This activity could be carried out at much the same time as *Activity 3.13*, which sees the possible construction of another cable-car facility between Dhankuta and Hile. Of the two possible cable-car services, however, the Dharan-Bhedetar system would likely be much more financially and commercially feasible than the Dhankuta-Hile system.

Principal output/s	
Feasibility study report and recommendations; detailed **planning document**; one **5-6-kilometre cable-car** facility between Dharan and Bhedetar.	
Targeted zone/s	
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
District and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA	
Priority rating	
Medium priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Feasibility study and planning carried out during **Year 2**; construction during **Year 3**; testing and certification during **first half of Year 4**; cable-car operational by **end of June 2020**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Dharan Municipality in collaboration with **Vedetar VDC**.	
Implementation partners	
Sunsari DDC; Dhankuta DDC; Sunsari Tourism Development Committee; Sunsari Chamber of Commerce and Industry; DoT; affected local communities; private sector investors; specialist experts; contracting companies.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 30,000,000	
Possible funding sources	
Private sector; bank loans; Dharan and Vedetar Municipalities; Sunsari and Dhankuta DDCs; DoT; possible initial funding through proposed Grants Fund.	
Other related activities	
Linking in with proposed visitor park in Bhedetar (*Activity 3.10*); development of similar cable-car between Dhankuta and Hile (*Activity 3.13*); possible funding through Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); PPP MoU between authorities and private sector (*Activity 9.8*); promotion of the cable-car facility (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).	

ACTIVITY 3.13	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**
Promote the building of a cable-car service between Dhankuta and Hile	
Rationale	

Hile is approximately six kilometres as the crow flies from the district capital of Dhankuta. Lying at an altitude of 1,850 m, Hile is also almost 900 m higher than Dhankuta (960 m). To reach Hile requires a steep and windy drive up the road from Dhankuta. The idea of building a cable-car facility between Dhankuta and Hile has been proposed and discussed by the local authorities and the concept has attracted a fair amount of support from local business. The cable-car would certainly provide something additional for residents, visitors and tourists to do and experience, especially in an area that generally lacks tourist attractions and recreational activities. The success of the Manakamana cable-car in Gorkha District in central Nepal clearly provides some inspiration for a possible Dhankuta-Hile cable-car. The cable-car would certainly give passengers excellent views of the surrounding hills and valleys, this possibly being supplemented by the cable-way stopping off at the proposed visitor park (*Activity 3.10*).

From the point of view of offering visitors and tourists to the area something else and unusual to do and developing new tourism attractions and products in the area, the cable-car concept has some real merit. Technically, and with the local (eg. Manakamana) and international experience that is available, it should not be difficult to build the cableway and the associated infrastructure. The biggest issues will probably relate to the exact route to be followed, the location of the terminuses, construction cost and who will fund and drive the development process. Importantly, the overall financial viability of the project would need to be seriously considered, especially as the potential market for passengers is a little limited (cf. the proposed Dharan-Bhedetar cable-car).

With the general lack of outdoor recreation facilities in the vicinity of Dhankuta and Hile and wider afield, it is possible, however, that the cable-car would become a major tourist attraction for both domestic and international tourists, especially those coming up from India.

Brief description
This activity will firstly need to establish a small task group comprising representatives from the local authorities (eg. Dhankuta Municipality, Dhankuta DDC), Dhankuta Tourism Development Committee, Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, regional branch of DoT, local communities (especially those that may be affected by the cable-car) and selected private sector players. This group will commission a feasibility study to be carried out by a suitable team of experts. The findings, recommendations and conclusions of this study will be presented in a report. This report will then be the basis for further discussions and the taking of a final decision on whether or not to pursue the cable-car concept any further. If a green light is given, funding for the entire development will be found and ring-fenced and detailed planning undertaken. The plan will address *inter alia* the route for the cable-way, location of the two terminuses plus a possible intermediate terminus adjacent to the proposed visitor park (*Activity 3.11*), vehicle parks, securing the land, compensation issues (if any), technical design, implementation schedule, key players and responsibilities, development budget, possible need for an EIA, management options, etc. The plan would need to be approved by the task group and the appropriate authorities. Once the plan has been approved construction can begin. It is envisaged that funding for the facility would be secured from both state (ie. municipality, DDC) and non-state sources (ie. private sector investors, bank loans, etc.) and possibly also through the proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*). A public-private partnership (PPP) would be formed and the facility as a whole would be run as a wholly-commercial enterprise with the local authority/authorities and the private sector operator/s being beneficiary partners. This activity could be carried out at much the same time as *Activity 3.12*, which sees the possible construction of another cable-car facility between Dharan and Bhedetar. Of the two possible cable-car services, however, the Dharan-Bhedetar system would likely be much more financially and commercially feasible than the Dhankuta-Hile system.
Principal output/s
Feasibility study report and recommendations; detailed **planning document**; one **6-7-kilometre cable-car** facility between Dhankuta and Hile.
Targeted zone/s
Central Zone (Dhankuta District).
Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Feasibility study and planning carried out during **Year 2**; construction during **Year 3**; testing and certification during **first half of Year 4**; cable-car operational by **end of June 2020**.
Implementation driver/s
Dhankuta Municipality would be the principal driver.
Implementation partners
Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta Tourism Development Committee; Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry; affected local communities; private sector investors; specialist experts; contracting companies.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 20,000,000.
Possible funding sources
Private sector; bank loans; Dhankuta Municipality; Dhankuta DDC; DoT; possible initial funding through proposed Grants Fund.
Other related activities
Linking in with proposed visitor park adjacent to Hile (*Activity 3.11*); development of similar cable-car between Dharan and Bhedetar (*Activity 3.12*); possible funding through Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); PPP MoU between authorities and private sector (*Activity 9.8*); promotion of the cable-car facility (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).

ACTIVITY 3.14	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**

Encourage and support the development of a range of selected tourist attractions throughout the TDA

Rationale
Although the TDA already has a large number of tourist attractions, some of which are very popular with visitors from both within Nepal and from outside (especially India), there is certainly room for more to be developed, both geographically and thematically. This includes sites that already exist but which may not at present attract many visitors. What is needed is a concerted effort to encourage communities and VDCs to develop tourism attractions in their home areas, both by significantly improving those sites that already exist and by establishing new ones altogether. The range of possible attractions is quite large and includes *inter alia* temples and shrines and other pilgrimage destinations, agriculture-related attractions, public parks, children's adventure playgrounds, zip-wires, local festivals, bird-hides (Koshi River floodplain), vulture

restaurants/viewing sites and many and varied other innovative ideas (eg. a submarine attraction on the Arun or Koshi Rivers, beach resort on the banks of the Koshi River, Ganges river dolphin museum, etc.). On their own or taken together these would all help to expand and diversify the tourism product on offer in the TDA.

Brief description	
	This activity would be driven largely by the tourism development committees in each district, backed up by their respective DDCs.
	Funding would likely be the key factor that holds back the development of any initiative or idea, so linking the encouragement of communities and authorities to develop what assets they may have to a possible source of funding is probably the way to go.
	Therefore, working with the Grants Fund proposed in this TDAP (***Activity 7.2***) and to be run most likely through an IDA-supported intervention in partnership with the DoT, the tourism development committees would ask for proposals and applications to be submitted. These would then be individually assessed on merit by a specially-convened evaluation committee made up of representatives from the tourism development committees, the three DDCs, DoT and the IDA-supported intervention. Funding would be allocated to the successful applicants and the respective tourism development committees would be responsible for seeing that it is spent according to criteria set down by the Fund and that the development takes place as planned and to the required standards.
	The ability of applicants to be prepared to self-fund some of the development would be looked at favourably. From where the applicant obtains the self-funding would likely vary from case to case, but might include funds obtained from VDCs, DDCs, donations, sponsorships, etc.
Principal output/s	
	Up to **20 new tourist attractions** established within the TDA, **at least five in each district**.
Targeted zone/s	
	Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity	
	District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed	
	S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA.
	L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
Priority rating	
	Medium priority.
Timing and target dates	
	Calls for applications commence in **Year 2 and extend through to Year 4**; new tourist attractions fully-established by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s	
	Tourism development committees (Sunsari and Sankhuwasabha Districts) and **Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry** in collaboration with **interest groups**.
Implementation partners	
	Interested communities; relevant VDCs; the three DDCs; relevant local experts and specialists; local businesses; entrepreneurs.
Estimated budget (rupees)	
	NPR 20,000,000.
Possible funding sources	
	Grants Fund; VDCs; Local communities; certain amount of self-funding expected; possible bank loans; donations; sponsorships.
Other related activities	
	Provision of adequate visitor facilities and services (***Activity 2.1***); improvement of access roads to tourist attractions (***Activity 4.8***); compliance with building standards (***Activity 5.1***); environmental guidelines (***Activity 5.2***); compliance with heritage protection guidelines and regulations (***Activity 5.3***); establishment of QR code-based tourist/visitor information system (***Activity 6.4***); development of guidebooks (***Activity 6.6***); funding through Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***); tourism awareness course for communities (***Activity 10.1***); training of custodians (***Activity 10.6***); promotion of the attractions (***Activities 11.2 to 11.4***).

Outdoor recreational facilities

ACTIVITY 3.15	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**
Establish a day-visitor facility within Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve for use by local residents and tourists	
Rationale	
	Between 5,000 and 6,000 people visit KTWR each year, 90% of whom are Nepali visitors with the other 10% coming from India and third countries. All of them, including tourists staying overnight in the buffer zone, visit the reserve on day-trips. Of the Nepali visitors, it is likely than many live in the immediate vicinity of the reserve or further afield in settlements, towns and cities in eastern Nepal. With outdoor recreational facilities being scarce in the area, the reserve is probably looked at as being one of the few popular areas that people can visit to enjoy the outdoors and nature.

At present the only activities that visitors can take part in in the reserve are game-viewing from vehicles driving up or down the Chatara Road (located on top of a large dyke that was built in 1961), site-seeing from viewing points at the end of several of the artificial barriers or groynes that have been built, elephant-back rides when available, bird-watching, fishing, free-camping and picnicking free along the banks of the Koshi River. Other than these limited activities, visitors can presently do very little else in the reserve.

The reserve currently has no facilities at all to cater for day-visitors. Even the basic provision of adequate toilet facilities and waste control is not really met. As an outdoor recreation destination, therefore, the reserve is very poorly prepared to handle visitors and to offer them a comfortable and memorable experience. It doesn't really cater for day-visiting tourists and visitors or the recreational needs of local residents, nor does it adequately address the impact on the environment of such visitors.

If a formal day-visitor facility was to be established within the reserve, significantly more fee-paying visitors would be attracted and the tourism and outdoor recreation potential of the reserve would be realised much more than at present. Income to the reserve and DNPWC would increase and the reserve as a whole would be looked at by adjacent communities and people living in the district and beyond as being a real asset to them. This surely can only be of benefit to the reserve and to DNPWC.

The day-visitor facility for KTWR envisaged under this TDAP would be sited at a suitably-elevated location beside the Koshi River and within walking distance of the northern entrance gate to the reserve (*Activity 4.6*). It would consist of *inter alia* a small vehicle parking area close to the dyke road, a number of small picnic sites spread out along the river and the groyne featuring picnic tables and benches, stone-lined open fireplaces, shelters, several public toilet blocks and washbasins, a number of standpipes, one or two children's playgrounds, well-sited waste bins, a caretaker's office and possibly a nearby bird-hide. Any buildings within the facility should be designed to fit in with local traditional architecture (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*).

In addition to these basic amenities and facilities, the day-visitor facility would also have several food and refreshment stalls run by entrepreneurs drawn preferably from the local community in the buffer zone. A MoU would be drawn up between these entrepreneurs and the DNPWC which formalises the business arrangement between them (*Activity 9.8*).

The caretakers for the day-visitor facility could be DNPWC staff members or suitable individuals employed from the local community, or a combination of the two. Any training that may be required could be provided under *Activity 10.6*.

Ideally, the visitor centre that is proposed for KTWR (*Activity 4.5*) would be sited close to or form part of the day-visitor facility. In this way, the day-visitor facility caretakers could also look after the visitor centre.

An incineration and solid waste collection and disposal facility (*Activity 4.11*) would be placed close to the day-visitor facility but out of sight.

Brief description

This activity would be driven largely by the DNPWC, possibly in collaboration with and support from a donor-funded intervention. Consultations would be held with interested local VDCs and committees and the Sunsari DDC.

Assuming that the concept for a day-visitor facility is attractive and approved by the DNPWC and the MoFSC, a series of development steps need to be taken. These include *inter alia*: ♦ identifying and selecting the location for the day-visitor facility within the reserve; ♦ designing the facility and drawing up a spatial plan; ♦ constructing the facility and undertaking associated landscaping; ♦ appropriately furnishing and equipping the facility; ♦ addressing caretaker staffing needs; ♦ drawing up MoUs as appropriate; and ♦ addressing possible training requirements. This activity would effectively end with the opening of the day-visitor facility and the completion of any training that is carried out.

KTWR would take over the responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day management and maintenance of the facility and be responsible for any enhancement or development of the facility in the future.

Principal output/s

One (1) **day-visitor outdoor facility** established at a suitable site in KTWR.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Planning of the day-visitor facility would take place **during the second half of Year 1**; construction would take place **during Year 2**; day-visitor facility would open by the **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

DNPWC/KTWR in close associated with an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Prakashpur, Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha and Sripurjabdi VDCs; Sunsari DDC; local communities; local committees.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 1,000,000.
Possible funding sources
DNPWC; IDA-supported intervention.
Other related activities
Included in tourism development plan for KTWR (***Activity 1.3***); establishment of community lodge, community campsites and homestays in buffer zone (***Activities 3.1***, ***3.2*** and ***3.5***); establishment of upmarket tented camp in KTWR (***Activity 3.6***); encouragement of site-seeing excursions and bird watching tours (***Activities 3.22*** and ***3.23***); establishment of visitor centre in KTWR (***Activity 4.5***); construction of new entrance facilities to KTWR (***Activity 4.6***); installation of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities (***Activity 4.11***); development of building standards and environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***); MoU between DNPWC and local entrepreneurs providing services (***Activity 9.8***); training for custodians of tourist attractions (***Activity 10.6***); promotion of the day-visitor facility (***Activities 11.2 to 11.4***).

ACTIVITY 3.16	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**
Establish a day-visitor facility at a suitably-accessible site overlooking the Arun-3 dam wall	
Rationale	

It is envisaged that construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam would be completed sometime around 2020-21. Once complete, the dam itself and the waterbody that is created behind it on the Arun River will probably be of significant interest to tourists, visitors and residents alike, especially those travelling north or south down the newly-completed highway (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka and Khandbari and Biratnagar beyond or using the nearby trekking trails.

Prior to the dam being completed, this TDAP proposes the establishment of a range of outdoor recreation facilities in and around Num to serve primarily the 3,000 or so dam construction staff and workers and their families (***Activity 3.17***). It is intended to convert these facilities for general use by local residents, visitors and tourist once the dam has been completed and the staff and workers have left (***Activity 3.18***). These recreation facilities, however, would all be sited within or close to Num itself and the Arun-3 HEP dam and waterbody will not be visible.

There is an opportunity, therefore, for a day-visitor facility to be built on a suitable site deep in the Arun River valley close to and overlooking the dam. This facility, which would probably be located on land that falls under the jurisdiction of the SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Pvt. Ltd (SAPDC), would be accessible from the newly-completed Koshi Highway and would provide local residents, visitors and tourists with an additional much-needed outdoor recreation facility away from what would probably become a bustling settlement of Num.

It is envisaged that, with the nature of the terrain close to the dam, the day visitor area would not be particularly large and would be perched on the hill slopes above the dam wall, either on the east or west bank of the river, ie. above present-day Num Bazar or close to the small settlement of Chiuribas on the opposite side of the river. It would likely consist of *inter alia* a small vehicle parking area, several picnic sites dotted along the hillslope, picnic tables and benches, shelters, one or two public toilet blocks and washbasins, a small children's playground, well-sited waste bins and a caretaker's office. In addition, there would be several food and refreshment stalls runs by local entrepreneurs. The downslope side of the facility may need to be fenced off with a low wall.

The inclusion within the day-visitor facility of a small visitor centre could be considered. This would be decided and acted upon by the SAPDC with any information and displays presented in the centre being developed by the company, possibly with the assistance of interpretative specialists.

Any buildings erected within the day-visitor facility should be designed to fit in with local traditional architecture (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***).

A MoU could be drawn up between the entrepreneurs operating in the day-visitor facility and the SAPDC (and/or Num VDC) which formalises the business arrangement and obligations between them (***Activity 9.8***).

The caretaker/s for the day-visitor facility could be one or more SAPDC/Num VDC employees, or one or more suitable individuals employed from the local community, or a combination of both. The caretaker/s could also look after the visitor centre. Any training that may be required could be provided under ***Activity 10.6***.

The day-visitor facility could also act as the base and springboard for any water-based activities that may be allowed to take place on the water body behind the dam (***Activity 3.28***). Any rafting activities that may take place on the Arun River (***Activity 3.27***) would likely launch from a point on the river below the dam and would not impact on the day-visitor facility.

Brief description

This activity would be driven largely by the DoT and Sankhuwasabha DDC in close association with SAPDC. It is possible that this activity could be carried out as an extension to the activity that focuses on the conversion of recreational facilities that were built in and around Num for dam construction staff and workers and their families (***Activity 3.18***). Support may alternatively come from an IDA-funded intervention.

Assuming that the concept for a day-visitor facility is attractive and approved by SAPDC and Sankhuwasabha DDC, a series of development steps need to be taken. These include *inter alia*: ♦ identifying and selecting the exact location for the day-visitor facility around the Arun-3 HEP dam wall; ♦ undertaking a site survey and EIA for the facility; ♦ designing the facility and drawing up a spatial plan; ♦ constructing the facility and undertaking associated landscaping; ♦ appropriately furnishing and equipping the facility; ♦ addressing caretaker staffing needs; ♦ drawing up MoUs as appropriate; and ♦ addressing possible training

requirements. This activity would effectively end with the opening of the day-visitor facility and the completion of any training that is carried out.

Num VDC, in collaboration with SAPDC, would take over the responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day management and maintenance of the facility and be responsible for any enhancement or development of the facility in the future.

Principal output/s
One (1) **day-visitor outdoor facility** established at a suitable site overlooking the Arun-3 HEP dam wall.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.

Timing and target dates
Planning of the day-visitor facility would take place **during the second half of Year 4**; construction would take place **during Year 5**; visitor park would open by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
DoT and **Sankhuwasabha DDC** in close association with **SAPDC** and a **donor-funded intervention**.

Implementation partners
IBN; Num VDC; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 500,000.

Possible funding sources
SAPDC; possibly through a proposed IRP that focuses on the initial development and subsequent conversion of recreational facilities at Num; donor-funded intervention; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha DDC and Num VDC; local business.

Other related activities
Possible inclusion in tourism development plan for MBNP (***Activity 1.4***); conversion of recreational facilities built for dam construction staff and workers (***Activity 3.18***); establishment of new trekking trail along Arun River valley (***Activity 3.20***); development of selected water-based activities (***Activity 3.27***); development of building standards and environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures (***Activities 5.1*** and ***5.2***); MoU between SAPDC/Num VDC and local entrepreneurs providing services (***Activity 9.8***); training for custodians of tourist attractions (***Activity 10.6***); promotion of the day-visitor facility (***Activities 11.2 to 11.4***).

ACTIVITY 3.17	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**

Establish a range of recreational facilities in and around Num to serve dam construction staff and workers, local residents and visitors

Rationale
Construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam and associated Head Race Tunnel (HRT) will involve the employment of upwards of 3,000 people over a period of several years. Most of these will be skilled and unskilled labourers brought in from outside, including from India, while others will be Nepali and Indian management staff of various seniority. All will need to live on-site for varying lengths of time and many of them, especially those that are married, may be living there with their families.

The impact of 3,500-4,500 or more additional people on the settlement of Num will be very significant indeed. At present, Num would simply not be able to cope with this new inflow of residents, albeit temporary ones. The settlement currently has only about four fairly basic hotels, few public eating areas and virtually no outdoor or indoor recreational facilities of note. There is clearly going to be a need to build substantial amounts of infrastructure to house and service the staff/workers.

The construction of several staff/workers' 'villages' down at the dam site at Num Bazar and in or around Num has already been incorporated into the plans for the Arun-3 HEP project. By necessity, much of this will need to be completed before construction of the dam can begin in earnest.

In addition to suitable staff/worker accommodation and catering facilities, there is a need to also provide a range of recreational facilities and activities within or adjacent to the 'villages' for the employees and their families to take advantage of out of hours and during holiday periods. If these recreational facilities are not provided, staff/workers will quickly become bored and disillusioned with life in the area. This would likely lead to a negative impact on Num as a whole and in particular on the lives of local residents and on the social fabric that holds the community together. The inclusion of recreational facilities in the 'village' construction plans is therefore crucial and a non-negotiable.

It is envisaged that the recreational facilities would be a mix of indoor and outdoor facilities and activities. These could include, for example (and certainly not prescriptively), restaurants and other food outlets, bars, cinemas, nightclubs, entertainment stages and gyms and football/cricket fields and associated buildings, public park/s, children's playgrounds, picnic sites, shelters, etc. These would all need to be sited to fit in with the overall 'village/s' and with Num itself.

The recreational facilities would be built primarily to service dam construction staff/workers. However, local residents should clearly be allowed to use most if not all of the facilities, as should tourists and visitors. The decision on how this can best be done should be left up to the Arun-3 HEP project management.

This activity, which focuses primarily on the provision of recreational facilities, is intended to go hand-in-hand with the construction of accommodation and catering facilities for staff/workers in the dam construction-related 'villages'. Both would be undertaken as an integral part of the project.

In planning and establishing the 'villages', consideration has to be paid to the fact that once construction of the dam has been completed upwards of 4,500 people will suddenly leave the area. There is a real danger, therefore, that Num and the surrounding areas may be left with considerable numbers of empty buildings and unused facilities. This would seriously impact on the local community and environment and also detract from the touristic appeal of the area.

An opportunity exists, however, for much of this infrastructure and facilities to be adapted for various post-dam construction purposes, including for use by local residents and for tourism. For instance, staff/worker housing and catering facilities could be converted into residential housing and a variety of tourist accommodation facilities whilst staff recreational facilities could be made available to residents and visitors alike. Such a conversion is addressed in more detail under *Activity 4.19*. To assist in this transformation of dam construction-oriented infrastructure into something that could contribute to local community development and to tourism, it will therefore be necessary to innovatively plan the staff/worker 'villages' with this in mind.

In doing this, a real chance presents itself of establishing Num as a future tourism centre or hub in the upper reaches of the TDA. Num and the Arun-3 dam could function as the first major 'stop' for visitors and travellers from Tibet using the newly-opened Kimathangka-Khandbari-Biratnagar highway (Koshi Highway). It could also function as a key launch point for the various trekking trails that run northwards and westwards (*Activities 2.3* and *3.20*) into the Makalu Barun area, as well as for proposed rafting activities on the Arun River (*Activity 3.26*).

Brief description

This activity, which will focus primarily on the provision of recreational facilities, will form one of the proposed investment-ready projects (IRPs) under this TDAP. The IRP is described in more detail in *Annex 2*.

In brief, however, the activity will be driven primarily by the SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Private Ltd (SAPDC) working in close collaboration with the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN) and be undertaken in parallel with the implementation of plans to develop staff/worker 'villages' in the area. SAPDC and IBN will also need to work very closely with Sankhuwasabha DDC, Num VDC, the local community as a whole and local business, as well as with interested locally-based and external private sector investors and entrepreneurs.

It will firstly be necessary to decide on the type and number of recreational facilities to be built in the area and where these will be located in relation to the workers' 'village' beside the dam construction site and to the staff 'village' adjacent to Num, as well as to Num itself. This should be done in close consultation with the local community and Num VDC. Some of the facilities could be established within the existing settlement of Num (eg. restaurants, bars, cinemas, etc.), while others can be incorporated into the nearby 'village' (eg. nightclubs, entertainment stage/s, gym, etc.), or located at a short distance away from both of them (eg. football/cricket pitch, picnic sites, etc.). The facilities would be a mix of publicly- and privately-owned and -run products and enterprises.

In addition to the planned recreational facilities included in the proposed IRP, it is quite possible that additional facilities may be built by private sector investors and entrepreneurs who wish to independently exploit the business opportunities that are being offered. In such cases and in keeping with free enterprise, market demand and standard business practices, neither the Arun-3 HEP project, nor IBN, nor the proposed IRP could legitimately stand in their way. In contrast, such interest from the private sector should be welcomed as it does help to address and fulfil the recreational needs of the construction staff/workers and local residents.

Construction of the public recreational facilities (eg. football/cricket pitches, playgrounds, public parks, etc.) would then be carried out largely by contractors taken on by SAPDC to build the worker/staff 'villages'. The privately-owned and business-oriented recreational facilities (eg. restaurants, bars, nightclubs, etc.) would be constructed by contractors taken on by individual private sector investors and entrepreneurs, or by the investors and entrepreneurs themselves.

Funding of the public recreational infrastructures and buildings would be provided mostly through the Arun-3 HEP project and the proposed IRP. Funding for privately-owned and business-oriented recreational facilities on the other hand would come mostly from the private sector investors and entrepreneurs themselves, quite possibly supported through loans or grants obtained following the submission of applications to the proposed SME Financing Facility (*Activity 7.1*) and the Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*).

Maintenance of the public and the privately-owned recreational facilities would be carried out by a mix of SAPDC, Num VDC and private sector product owners and operators. Once construction of the dam has been completed and workers and staff have left the area, those facilities that have been maintained by the SAPDC would become the responsibility of either the VDC or individual private sector businesses.

Principal output/s

Varied **selection of public and private sector indoor and outdoor recreational facilities** established in and around Num.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).	
Focal level of activity	
Local level.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
S-11: Provide recreational facilities in and around Num for Arun-3 HEP construction staff and workers and their families. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA. **L-5**: Establish Num as a tourism centre or hub in the northern TDA.	
Priority rating	
High priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Planning of the recreational facilities undertaken **during the first half of Year 1**. Construction of recreational facilities undertaken **during second half of Year 1 and first half of Year 2**; all planned public and private sector recreational facilities up-and-running by the **end of June 2018**.	
Implementation driver/s	
SAPDC in close collaboration with **IBN**, the **proposed IRP** which focuses on the provision of recreational facilities for the workers and staff employed to build the Arun-3 HEP dam and the **private sector**.	
Implementation partners	
Sankhuwasabha DDC; Num VDC; local communities; local interest groups; tourism product owners; private sector business.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 10,000,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Proposed IRP; SAPDC; IBN; private sector; SME Financing Facility; Grants Funds; commercial bank loans.	
Other related activities	
Inclusion in district-level tourism development plan for Sankhuwasabha District (*Activity 1.5*); upgrading and development of trekking trails in Makalu Barun area (*Activities 2.3* and *3.20*); establishment of a day-visitor facility overlooking the Arun-3 dam wall (*Activity 3.16*); conversion of accommodation, catering and recreational facilities developed for dam construction staff/workers to serve local residents and tourists (*Activity 3.18*); establishment of rafting activities on the Arun River (*Activity 3.26*); establishment of a tourism information centre in Num (*Activity 4.3*); installation of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities in Num (*Activity 4.12*); enforcement of building standards (*Activity 5.1*); application of environmental guidelines for infrastructures and operations (*Activity 5.2*); establishment of proposed SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund (*Activities 7.1* and *7.2*).	

ACTIVITY 3.18	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**
Convert as necessary the accommodation, catering and recreational facilities developed for dam construction staff/workers in and around Num to serve local residents and tourists after construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam has been completed	
Rationale	
Construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam and associated HRT will involve more than 3,000 construction staff/workers being on-site for several years. During this time, Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center these employees, many of whom will have their families living with them, will need to be adequately housed and fed and also provided with recreational facilities and activities. This will necessitate the building of two or possibly more 'villages' in and around Num Bazar and Num.	

The construction of accommodation, catering and recreational facilities will all form part of the overall Arun-3 HEP project. It is expected that these will be established within a year or so of the project beginning on the ground and largely before construction of the dam itself begins proper. In designing these facilities, however, cognisance will need to be taken of the fact that, once construction of the dam has ended, there will be a fairly sudden outflow of upwards of 4,500 people from the area. For this reason, the accommodation, catering and recreational facilities will all need to be designed with their eventual use by local residents, visitors and tourists being borne in mind.

Much of the staff/worker housing, for instance, could be converted into accommodation for visitors and tourists, or even taken on by local residents as their own houses. Likewise, the catering facilities could be converted into food outlets for visitors and tourists, or converted for other uses, such as a community centre, meeting rooms, school classrooms, theatres/stages, etc. The recreational facilities, many of which would already have been open to the public and to visitors and tourists, could also be converted to better suit visitors and tourists, or again be used for other purposes by the community and private sector. It is very likely, however, that with the sheer number of buildings involved and in the context of community development and tourism, some of the facilities may prove to be located in the 'wrong' place or extra to what is needed. This could result in a number of them being demolished and the land reclaimed.

With what has been built, however, a real opportunity exists to establish Num as a major tourism centre or hub in the northern part of the TDA. Num and the Arun-3 dam could function as the first major 'stop' for visitors and travellers from Tibet using the

newly-opened Kimathangka-Khandbari-Biratnagar highway (Koshi Highway). It could also function as a key launch point for the various trekking trails that run northwards and westwards (*Activities 2.3* and *3.20*) into the Makalu Barun area, as well as for proposed rafting and water-based activities on the Arun River (*Activities 3.26* and *3.27*). This activity therefore focuses on transforming the dam construction-related 'villages' into something that can be of long-term use and benefit to both the local communities and to the tourism industry in the area and wider afield.

For purposes of this TDAP, it is assumed that the dam will be completed by the end of 2020. After this date, the transfer of the various accommodation, catering and recreational facilities to public, community and private sector hands can begin. Ideally, as much as possible of the facilities should be transferred to the local community of VDC. Others can be dispensed in some form or another to the private sector (eg. leased through a PPP, or fully or partly sold). For example, football/cricket pitches, playgrounds, public parks, etc. could be transferred to community or Num VDC ownership to be used free-of-charge by residents, visitors and tourists alike. Some of the housing could be taken on by communities and run as a wholly community-owned and -run tourism operations (eg. resort, small hotels, guest houses, etc.). Some of the more business-oriented recreational facilities (eg. restaurants, bars, nightclubs, etc.) could be acquired by the community and run similarly.

The conversion of the 'villages' would be carried out at much the same time as the day-visitor facility above the Arun-3 dam wall is being established (*Activity 3.16*).

Much of this activity would be coordinated by the IBN in close collaboration with the Num VDC and Sankhuwasabha DDC and working with interested private sector buyers. If they are needed, conversions to public facilities would be paid for through the IRP or by funds made available by Sankhuwasabha DDC and Num VDC. Any conversions to the facilities transferred to the private sector would be carried out by the new owners and in keeping with the appropriate building regulations (*Activity 5.1*) and environmental guidelines (*Activity 5.2*).

Facilities that become community-owned ones, such as hotels and restaurants, could be run and managed by suitable private sector tourism service providers through a form of concession agreement or MoU drawn up and signed between the partners (*Activity 9.8*). In this way the facilities are professionally run but remain the property of the community. Should the private sector partner prove to underperform or not be reliable, then the community can take legal steps to replace it with a better one.

With community-owned and -run facilities, as well as with community-owned tourism products which are run in partnership with the private sector, consideration should be paid to establishing an appropriate community trust or similar institution along with an associated community fund (*Activity 7.3*). The trust, on behalf of the community, would guide the tourism product's development and oversee its overall operations, whilst the fund would handle income that accrues to the trust from the tourism product, whether this is a wholly community-run enterprise or one that is run as a joint venture with a private sector partner.

The conversion and transfer or disposal of any facilities should take into consideration and be coordinated with the development of a day-visitor facility located above the Arun-3 dam wall (*Activity 3.16*) and any water-based activities that may be developed (*Activity 3.27*).

Brief description
This activity, which will focus primarily on the conversion and/or transfer of accommodation, catering and recreational facilities from the former dam construction 'villages' to community and tourism use, will also form part of the proposed investment-ready project (IRP) under this TDAP that deals with recreational facilities in Num. This IRP is described in more detail in *Annex 2*. In brief, however, the activity will be guided primarily by the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN) in close collaboration with the proposed IRP, Num VDC, Sankhuwasabha DDC, Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center, the local community as a whole and local business, as well as with interested locally-based and external private sector investors and entrepreneurs. It is possible that a donor-funded intervention may be able to assist. The activity will involve an appropriate mix of *inter alia* the following, depending largely on exactly which type of facility is being converted or transferred: ♦ selection of facility; ♦ physical conversion of the facility if required; ♦ transfer of responsibility and/or ownership to the community/VDC if required; ♦ transfer of ownership through sale to the private sector; ♦ drawing up of necessary MoUs with respect to community-private sector joint ventures; ♦ demolition of unwanted structures and reclamation of land; and ♦ carrying out of necessary landscaping. Any conversion of facilities that is needed would be carried out by the owners (community, VDC, private sector). Funding for public recreational facilities would be sourced through the IRP, or obtained from the DDC and/or VDC or other pubic source, while those for private sector facilities would be obtained through the normal commercial banking channels. Applications for funding for both forms of facilities, however, could be made to the proposed SME Financing Facility (*Activity 7.1*) or Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*). With respect to these, the ability of an applicant to be prepared to part-fund at least some of the development would be looked at favourably. Subsequent maintenance of the tourism and recreation facilities would be the responsibility of the new owners, whether this be community, VDC or private sector. Overall, the conversion and transfer of the former construction site facilities should lead to Num becoming a major tourism centre or hub in this part of the TDA and Nepal as a whole.

Principal output/s
Varied **selection of community- and privately-owned and -run tourist accommodation, catering and recreational facilities** up-and-running in the newly-established tourism centre or hub of Num.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).	
Focal level of activity	
District and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.	
L-5: Establish Num as a tourism centre or hub in the northern TDA.	
Priority rating	
Low priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Planning for the conversion and/or transfer of dam construction staff/worker accommodation, catering and recreation facilities to full public and tourist use undertaken **during second half of Year 4;** conversion and transfer of facilities undertaken **during Year 5;** Num as a tourism centre or hub established by the **end of 2021.**	
Implementation driver/s	
IBN in close collaboration with the **proposed IRP** which focuses on the provision of recreational facilities for the workers and staff employed to build the Arun-3 HEP dam and with possible assistance from an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
Num VDC; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center; private sector; local communities; local interest groups; tourism product owners; private sector business.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 3,000,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Proposed IRP; possible IDA-supported intervention; private sector; SME Financing Facility; Grants Funds; commercial bank loans.	
Other related activities	
Inclusion in district-level tourism development plan for Sankhuwasabha District (*Activity 1.5*); upgrading and development of trekking trails in Makalu Barun area (*Activities 2.3* and *3.20*); establishment of a day-visitor facility overlooking the Arun-3 dam wall (*Activity 3.16*); establishment of a range of recreational facilities in and around Num to serve dam construction staff/workers, local residents and visitors (*Activity 3.17*); encourage tour operators to undertake excursions to tourist attractions in the TDA (*Activity 3.22*); establishment of rafting activities on the Arun River (*Activity 3.26*); development of water-based activities on the Arun River upstream of the Arun-3 dam (*Activity 3.27*); establishment of a tourism information centre in Num (*Activity 4.3*); application of environmental guidelines for infrastructures and operations (*Activity 5.2*); installation of tourism information boards and signage within Num (*Activity 6.1*); establishment of proposed SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund (*Activities 7.1* and *7.2*); establishment of community trusts (*Activity 7.3*); formulation of MoUs between communities and the private sector (*Activity 9.8*); delivery of tourism awareness courses for the local community (*Activity 10.1*); delivery of tourism-related training to the local community and interested individuals (*Activities 10.3 to 10.5*); promotion of the recreational facilities in Num (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).	

Trekking trails

ACTIVITY 3.19	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**
Establish within the Makalu Barun National Park a new and alternative trekking trail along a suitable route between the Barun Dhovan-Hatiya area and Yangri Kharka on the existing main Makalu Base Camp Trek trail	
Rationale	
There are effectively only three trekking trails in the eastern part of MBNP and associated buffer zone, namely: 1) the Makalu Base Camp Trek trail between Seduwa/Num and Base Camp; 2) the GHT High Route between Chyamtang and the latter trail via Hongon; and 3) between Num and Hongon via the buffer zone and Barun Dhovan. Trekkers entering the area from the south presently take the first trail, while those entering from the east (Kanchenjunga) take the third trail. The second trail is little-used as it effectively goes nowhere.	
If, however, a new trail were to be built connecting the northern end of the third trail with the existing Makalu Base Camp Trek trail (most likely by linking into the second trail), then an attractive alternative route to the Base Camp could be established. This route would also allow trekkers using the present Makalu Base Camp Trek trail to return to Num along an entirely different route. Building such a trail would significantly improve the overall GHT network in the region by provided an added incentive for trekkers to visit the TDA and to better-link Makalu Barun with neighbouring Kanchenjunga to the east and Sagarmatha (Everest) to the west. In this way, the overall trekking product in the TDA and marketing and promotion of the region would be significantly enhanced.	
Discussions between several VDCs and the DNPWC on establishing this new trekking route are quite advanced and a specific route, with possibly one or two alternatives, has been selected. This is presently the subject of an EIA being done for the DNPWC. Under this TDAP activity, momentum for the successful establishment of this new trekking route can be created and the necessary funding and other resources found.	
Brief description	

It is envisaged that the exact alignment and general requirements of the route (especially bridges) will have been determined and the EIA carried out and approved by the DNPWC before implementation of the TDAP has begun. Consequently, this activity would focus more on facilitating the various stakeholders and players in the trail's development, securing the necessary funding and ensuring that the standard of the trail is world class. The activity will recommend what additional structures and facilities there should be, especially with regard to safety precautions, mountain/shelter huts, emergency facilities, signage, helipads, etc.

Construction of the trail would likely be carried out by workers employed from the affected and neighbouring VDCs (Hatiya and Pathibhara) and perhaps wider afield. Consultations and working together with the DNPWC/MBNP, VDCs and Sankhuwasabha DDC would be ongoing.

Principal output/s

Approximately 20 km of **new trekking trail** in eastern part of MNNP from Barun Dhovan-Hatiya area to existing Makalu Base Camp Trek trail.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Trekking trail constructed **during Years 1 and 2**; new trail completed by the **end of June 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.

Implementation partners

Sankhuwasabha DDC; Hatiya and Makalu VDCs; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 6,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by DNPWC, Sankhuwasabha DDC and participating VDCs.

Other related activities

Trails link in with upgrading of other trails (*Activities 2.3* and *2.4*); building of park entrance structures (*Activity 4.7*); establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*); establishment of trail-side safe drinking water stations (*Activity 4.13*); establishment of Internet capacity (*Activity 4.14*); construction of mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (*Activity 6.3*); promotion of the new trail (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).

ACTIVITY 3.20	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Establish a new and alternative trekking trail along the eastern bank of the Arun River above the new dam between Num Bazar and Barun Dhovan

Rationale

Within the next 4-5 years, it is very likely that a main road (Koshi Highway) will be built and opened to traffic between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north of the TDA and Khandbari to the south and points beyond right down to the Nepal-India border. The road, which along part of its length is already being built, will very likely travel between Hatiya and Num above the western bank of the Arun River. In doing so, at many points along this stretch it may interfere with the existing trekking trail and in some points it may absorb the trail entirely. In order for this route to remain a viable trekking route for visitors and not to disappear entirely, the overall route and alignment of that trail will need to be altered to ensure that it doesn't merge with the new road. Experience in the Annapurna CA has shown that this can devastate local economies dependent on passing trekkers and guides. *Activity 2.3* will address these concerns, but probably only partly so.

What should be considered, therefore, is the establishment of an entirely new trekking route that travels up the eastern bank of the Arun River above the future water body formed by the Arun-3 HEP dam and between Num and Barun Dhovan. Such a route would provide an alternative trekking route for trekkers travelling to Hongon and the GHT High Route and beyond to Makalu Base Camp and Kanchenjunga. There are a number of villages along the route that could benefit considerably from this alternative trekking trail. Trekkers may also be able to utilise any waterbody-based activities (*Activity 3.27*) along the way if they are established.

Brief description

This activity would begin by undertaking a survey of possible routes for the trail. In addition to identifying the exact alignment of a preferred route, and one that definitely aims to include local villages along its length, the survey would also determine what infrastructures and facilities are required, eg. bridges, safety precautions, shelter huts, signage, toilets, solid waste disposal, etc.

Findings and recommendations would be summarised in a survey report. Construction of the trail would then begin and be carried out by workers employed from the affected VDCs (Num and Pawakhola) and wider afield in neighbouring VDCS (Pathibhara and Hatiya). Consultations and working together with the Num and Pawakhola VDCs and Sankhuwasabha DDC would be ongoing.

Principal output/s

Survey report and recommendations; approximately 25 km of **new trekking trail** on the eastern bank of the Arun River between Num and Barun Dhovan.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Survey would be carried out **during Year 3**; trekking trail construction done **during Years 4 and 5**; new trail completed by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Sankhuwasabha DDC, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.

Implementation partners

DoT; Num and Pawakhola VDCs; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 7,500,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha DDC and participating VDCs.

Other related activities

Establishment of trail-side solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*); establishment of trail-side safe drinking water stations (*Activity 4.13*); establishment of Internet capacity (*Activity 4.14*); construction of mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*); erection of GHT-branded trail signage (*Activity 6.3*); promotion of the new trail (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).

ACTIVITY 3.21	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Establish a network of day-visitor hiking and cycling/mountain-biking trails in the vicinity of Hile

Rationale

The town of Hile in Dhankuta District lies at an altitude of around 1,850 m and at the head of a long and deep valley. The town is considerably higher the Terai region of Nepal and consequently has a much cooler and more pleasant climate. This has proved and will continue to prove very attractive to Nepali and Indian visitors wishing to escape the heat and humidity of the lowlands. Hile is also located in very attractive hilly scenery and is easily accessible by road from the district capital, Dhankuta. A number of hotels are found in Hile, including a recently-built large resort hotel that can accommodate upwards of 75 guests. Most guests visit Hile for the cool climate, while many travel on northwards and eastwards to indulge in trekking.

Within the Hile area, however, there is very little for visitors to do other than to enjoy the climate and the views and to maybe visit the nearby Guranse Tea Estate and Pakhribas Agricultural Research Centre. It is understood that many of the younger Indian visitors to Hile have expressed an interest and demand for hiking and cycling activities and this could/should be exploited.

Ideally the trails to be developed around Hile would tie in with existing longer trekking routes that head north-eastwards towards the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale rhododendron route and beyond to Kanchenjunga and towards Khandbari and Makalu Barun and westwards towards the Arun River.

Development of the trails around Hile, and eventually their maintenance, would be managed by the Dhankuta Municipality. Funding for the trails could be found from several sources, including the DoT, Dhankuta Municipality and DDC, local business and through sponsorships and donations. It is possible that some funding could be made available through the proposed Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*).

Brief description

This activity would involve Dhankuta Municipality commissioning a study and survey to be done that would identify the routes and alignments for the trails and other requirements. The route selected may take in the town of Hile itself as well as the proposed visitor park (*Activity 3.11*), but generally it would be a very rural trail. Requirements would likely include safety precautions, viewing points, picnic tables and benches, several pit toilets, signage, etc. The routes and recommendations would be summarised in a report. Construction of the trail would then begin and be carried out by a mix of locally-employed workers and volunteers from Dhankuta Municipality and Pakhribas VDC. Consultations and working together with Municipality and VDC as well as with local villages and communities would be ongoing.

It is envisaged that the route would be developed in stages and over several years, eventually resulting in a relatively medium-sized network of trails around Hile that offer half-day and full-day hikes and cycling/mountain-bike tours for visitors.

Principal output/s
Survey report and recommendations; approximately 15 km of **new hiking/cycling/mountain-bike trails** around Hile.

Targeted zone/s
Central Zone (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-10: Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA.

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.

L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

L-6: Develop hiking and cycling/mountain biking trails with the TDA.

Priority rating
Medium priority.

Timing and target dates
Survey would be carried out **during Year 2**; gradual trail construction done **from Years 3 to 5**; network of new trails completed by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
Dhankuta Municipality primarily, with assistance from **local hotels**.

Implementation partners
Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry; local schools; interest groups; local businesses; volunteers.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 3,000,000.

Possible funding sources
DoT; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta Municipality; local tourism product owners; Grants Fund; donations; sponsorships.

Other related activities
Possible linkage to proposed Hile visitor park (*Activity 3.11*); provision of bicycles/mountain-bikes (*Activity 3.28*); possible funding through Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); promotion of the trail (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).

Tours and tourism activities

ACTIVITY 3.22	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Encourage tour operators to develop short and longer site-seeing excursions that take in a range of different tourist attractions within the TDA

Rationale
A large proportion of the visitors to the TDA originate from across the border in India, most undertaking pilgrimages to religious and historical sites and wanting to enjoy the cooler climate that can be found in the foothills of the Himalayas. Tourists from India come across the border either in their own vehicles or on foot. Those on foot then use public transport to move around the southern TDA, or take part in organised tours offered by local tour operators. It appears that most of these tours are directed primarily at the several important pilgrimage sites in the region, such as those at Barahachhetra, Ramdhuni, Bijayapur, etc. Some visitors take in the more nature-based attractions in and around Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve while others visit various view sites and other points of interest in the hilly areas in Dhankuta DDC, such as Bhedetar and Hile. In general, though, the tours are fairly short and focused on specific attractions or activities.

There is certainly room, however, for more attractions to be included in existing tours, for new excursions to be developed and for the overall length of stay of visitors to be extended. This can be done by either increasing, for example, the number of pilgrimage sites and temples covered in a single tour, or by combining a range of different attractions (religious, nature, day visitor facilities, visitor parks, viewing points, festivals, intangible heritage products, river-based activities, etc.) to be visited on an excursion. Incorporating one or more overnight stays (eg. hotels, community lodges, campsites, homestays, etc.) could also be considered, so allowing more sites to be visited and over a wider geographical area.

In addition to providing an improved tourism offer for visitors, especially those from India and for domestic tourists, and within Nepal, the economic benefits of these expanded and extended tours can be spread to communities living in the vicinity of the various tourist attractions.

Brief description
This activity is mainly about encouraging private sector tour operators currently working within the TDA (probably based in urban centres such as Biratnagar, Itahari and Dharan) to approach and liaise with the custodians and owners/managers of a wide range of those tourist attractions and tourism products that exist in the region, especially in Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts, and vice versa. Much of this activity will hinge on Sunsari Tourism Development Committee, in close collaboration with the regional branch

of the DoT in Kakarbhitta and the tourism officers of DDCs, promoting and facilitating contact between the two main parties that make up tours and excursions (tourist attractions and tour providers) in order to develop expanded or extended excursions within the TDA.

Ultimately, the decision on whether or not to include specific tourist attractions in excursions will lie with the individual tour operators who will most likely base their decisions on purely financial and business grounds. Ideally, many of the business relationships that are established between the tour operators and the custodians of tourist attractions and product owners should be formalised through MoUs (*Activity 9.8*), although it is recognised that this may not be practical or desirable in every case.

It is hoped that with the envisaged improvements to visitor experience being made to a number of tourist attractions in the area (*Activity 2.1*) and the bringing into being of new attractions (eg. *Activities 3.10* to *3.15*), tour operators will seriously consider both increasing the number of tours to cover more sites of interest and developing longer-stay excursions. The development of such tours could be promoted through the proposed East Nepal-India cross-border destination area liaison group (*Activity 11.4*) and advertised online (*Activities 11.2* and *11.3*).

Principal output/s	
Significantly **increased number of day-long and multiple-day excursion tours** available for visitors to the TDA.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
District level.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA. **L-7**: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.	
Priority rating	
Medium priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Development of extended and new excursion tours at **any time from Year 1**; tours fully-established and being established by the **end of 2021**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Sunsari Tourism Development Committee and **Dhankuta DDC** in close association with the **regional branch of the DoT**.	
Implementation partners	
Private sector tour operators; custodians of tourist attractions; tourism product owners; KTWR; VDCs; NTB.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Primarily private sector tour operators.	
Other related activities	
Improving visitor experience at tourist attractions (*Activity 2.1*); establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (*Activities 3.1 to 3.3* and *3.5*); development of new tourist attractions (*Activities 3.10* to *3.15*); establishment of new tourism/recreation activities (*Activities 3.23* to *3.25*); establishment of tourism service and information centres/kiosks (*Activities 4.1 to 4.4*); establishment of visitor centre (*Activity 4.5*); drawing up of MoUs (*Activity 9.8*); promotion of tours (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).	

ACTIVITY 3.23	**KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development**
Encourage the further development of bird-watching opportunities in the Koshi Tappu area	
Rationale	

The Koshi Tappu WR was established in 1976 and designated as Nepal's only Ramsar wetland site in 1987. The Reserve and surrounding area is especially rich in birdlife and is one of 27 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Nepal. With more than 485 species of resident and migratory birds having been recorded from the area (more than half of Nepal's 895 bird species), and with a number of those species being rare, vulnerable or endangered, it is no surprise that the area is popular with birdwatchers and conservationists.

Although already largely established as a bird-watching destination, the Koshi Tappu area suffers from poor infrastructural development. At present, many of the visitor/tourist groups visiting the Reserve stay at one of the few tourist facilities in the area (eg. Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp), or travel in from elsewhere on day visits. In many ways, the lack of facilities in and around the reserve discourages more birding groups from visiting.

If the number of overnight accommodation facilities were to be increased and diversified (viz. *Activities 3.1*, *3.2*, *3.5* and *3.6*), increasing numbers of groups of birdwatchers could be accommodated. Similarly, if bird organisations could also lobby and help

persuade local private sector product owners, operators, communities and entrepreneurs to develop expanded and new accommodation facilities, then undoubtedly significantly more bird-watching groups would visit.

The development of bird-watching opportunities can also tie in very well with rural development and improving the livelihoods of local communities and residents. In this respect, the UK-based Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) and the local conservation NGO, Bird Conservation Nepal, have for a number of been facilitating alternative livelihoods for people reliant on the KTWR, primarily to overcome antipathy to its protection and the overuse of its resources. There would clearly be merit in liaising closely with these two bird conservation organisations as well as with bird conservation bodies, bird-watching societies and bird-watching tour companies.

Should local communities become more involved in bird-watching enterprises, it is likely there will be a need for a certain amount of tourism awareness training (*Activity 10.1*) and tour guide training (*Activity 10.8*) to be undertaken, in addition to good courses on bird identification being offered.

The development of further bird-watching tours to Koshi Tappu should go hand-in-hand with the production of appropriate guidebooks, checklists and apps (*Activities 6.5* and *6.6*) and the online promotion of the tours (*Activities 11.3* and *11.4*).

Bird watchers are usually highly educated, affluent, interested in wildlife, keen to see as many species as possible and willing to travel to areas where bird life is abundant and which may be remote. With respect to Koshi Tappu, therefore, birdwatching really does represent a key tourism niche for the area and one that should be exploited to its fullest.

Brief description
This activity is largely about promoting the Koshi Tappu area as major and international-standard bird-watching destination. Although the area already has a high profile in this regard, this activity will focus on lobbying players both in the national and international bird conservation field, as well as in the bird-watching tourism niche. The latter includes tour operators and the custodians of those areas popular with bird-watchers.
The activity would likely need to be driven by a national NGO with a strong interest in birds and bird-watching, such as Bird Conservation Nepal, working on behalf of the Koshi Tappu area in collaboration with the Sunsari DDC and the DNPWC and KTWR. Interested VDCs, communities and private sector product owners in the area would also be taken on board. Together, this body of state, community and private sector players should lobby and persuade those tour operators within Nepal and internationally that specialise in bird-watching tours to consider developing and running more tours to the Koshi Tappu and other birding areas within the TDA.
As with most private sector-run operations, the decision on whether or not to develop new birding tours will lie with the individual tour operators who will likely base their decisions on perceived demand and on financial and business grounds. Some of the business relationships that may be established, such as between the birding tour operators and individual hotels/lodges/camps, etc. and the DNPWC, may best be formalised through MoUs (*Activity 9.8*).
Principal output/s
Promotional campaign to significantly **increase numbers of bird-watching groups and birdwatchers** visit the Koshi Tappu area and the TDA more broadly.
Targeted zone/s
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
Development of promotional campaign and expanded and new bird-watching opportunities **any time from Year 1**; significantly more bird-watching opportunities available and being developed by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
BCN working in association with **private sector wildlife/bird-watching tour companies**.
Implementation partners
DNPWC/KTWR; WWT; WWF/Hariyo Ban program; local hotel/lodge/camp/campsite/homestay owners; regional office of DoT; NTB; local communities; relevant VDCs.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 250,000.
Possible funding sources
Primarily private sector wildlife/bird-watching tour operators.
Other related activities
Establishment of new overnight facilities for visitors/tourists (*Activities 3.1*, *3.2*, *3.5* and *3.6*); building of one or more bird-hides (*Activity 3.14*); establishment of a visitor centre in KTWR (*Activity 4.5*); development of interpretative booklets and apps (*Activities 6.5* and *6.6*); tourism awareness training (*Activity 10.1*); tour guide training (*Activity 10.8*); marketing and promotion of the bird-watching destination (*Activities 11.2 to 11.4*).

ACTIVITY 3.24	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Encourage the development of river boating activities on the Koshi River around _Barahachhetra_

Rationale

The temple and pilgrimage site at Barahachhetra is a very popular destination for Indian and Nepali tourists, as well as for local residents. In the near future, the road to the site will have been improved considerably by the Sunsari DDC, significantly improving access to the site and presumably then increasing the number of visitors.

At the site, visitors presently have the opportunity to take a short boat excursion on the river in the immediate vicinity of Barahachhetra. There is potential, however, for establishing a visitor/tourist river excursion service that travels upriver from Barahachhetra to the junction of the Sunkoshi, Arun and Tomar Rivers ("Three Rivers") and points beyond and downriver to Chatara and into the upper and middle reaches of the Koshi River floodplain and possibly right down to KTWR. This tour could tie in with the proposed community campsite at the junction of the three rivers (_Activity 3.3_), offering an overnight stop for passengers if they wish.

The excursion service, which could begin at either Barahachhetra or elsewhere along the Koshi River (eg. Chatara and KTWR), could provide an alternative and attractive means of access to the pilgrimage site. It could also offer specialised birdwatching tours. Another possible option relates to the proposed upmarket tented camp in KTWR (_Activity 3.6_). This private sector operation could be persuaded to run riverboat tours of its own from the Reserve right up to "Three Rivers".

In essence, the Koshi River has good potential for a variety of river boating excursions and services which up until now seem largely unexploited.

Brief description

This activity is more about convincing commercial private sector operators to establish such an excursion service for visitors and tourists than developing any infrastructures _per se_. Consequently, much of this activity will revolve around the Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee, Sunsari Tourism Development Committee and Sunsari DDC lobbying suitable private sector investors and operators to establish an operation in the area. Indeed, the enterprise that currently runs the river boat excursions could be persuaded to expand its business.

Principal output/s

Promotional campaign and **riverboat excursions** between "Three Rivers" and the Koshi River floodplain.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Establishment of the river boating activities at **any time from Year 1**; fully-established by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee in collaboration with **Sunsari Tourism Development Committee**.

Implementation partners

Sunsari DDC; private sector river boating operators; entrepreneurs; "Three Rivers" community campsite; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 250,000.

Possible funding sources

Private sector; possible funding through the proposed SME Financing Facility; possible funding from Sunsari DDC.

Other related activities

Improvement of existing tourist attractions (_Activity 2.1_); establishment of community campsite at "Three Rivers" (_Activity 3.3_); expanded bird-watching tours to KTWR (_Activity 3.23_); possible funding through SME Financing Facility or Grants Fund (_Activities 7.1_ and _7.2_); promotion of river boating activities (_Activities 11.2 to 11.4_).

ACTIVITY 3.25	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Encourage tea estates in the region to develop tours and day-visitor and overnight facilities for visitors

Rationale

Tea estates round the world have often proven to be visitor attractions in their own right. This is largely because tea plantations can be very scenic and attractive and tours around the estates and associated tea factories both interesting, as well as aromatically pleasing. Eastern Nepal produces excellent tea with much of it being produced for the export market. Dhankuta District within the

TDA is a well-known tea-growing area, as are the neighbouring districts of Terhathum, Panchthar and Illam to the east. There are several tea estates in Dhankuta District, such as the Guranse Tea Estate south of Hile. This estate already receives visitors from neighbouring hotels, but on an *ad hoc* and largely informal basis through personal contacts between the estate managers and the hotel owners.

Guranse Tea Estate, as with other tea estates, is understandably focused primarily on tea production rather than on hosting visitors. However, the estate is open to handling visitors in a more organised and commercial manner and is tentatively considering the building of several small cottages for overnight visitors at suitable sites within the plantation and the establishment of a small day-visitor area where visitors can relax.

Tea estates with established visitor facilities would be able to host visitors, either as organised tours from nearby hotels and resorts, or as small independent groups or individuals. Guides for visitors would be drawn from a small pool of existing staff on a needs basis. These guides, as well as the caretakers of any overnight facilities that are established, may need to receive some tourism-related training (**Activities 10.4** and **10.8**).

In addition to boosting business for the estates, there are also opportunities to use such tourist operations to address a number of socio-economic problems in the areas, especially where they relate to family and community break-ups relating to the demand for labour in the Middle East. Community social funds which are funded through tourism activities could be set up to address these social issues. This concept is addressed under **Activity 7.4**.

The decision on whether or not to open tea estates to visitors on a more formal basis, however, would understandably need to be made at head office level and not by the estate managers. Placing tea estates in Dhankuta District more firmly on the tourist map, however, would certainly result in a more diversified tourism product in the region and offer a wider range of activities for visitors to indulge in.

Brief description

This activity would be undertaken primarily by the NTB, perhaps assisted by the local hotel and tourism association and chamber of commerce and industry and the Dhankuta Municipality. An IDA-supported intervention may be able to facilitate the activity. Their task would be to encourage tea estate owners and senior management to develop visitor facilities on the estates. This would likely involve meetings being held with the head offices of the tea estates, probably in Kathmandu, and with plantation and factory managers in the district itself.

Whether or not formal visitor facilities are to be established will ultimately be the decision of the estate owners themselves and this should be respected. Tea estates should still be encouraged, however, to host parties of visitors, even if this is on a very informal and *ad hoc* basis. This is because tea factories and plantations will continue to be attractive to visitors and the demand and requests for visits won't go away.

Principal output/s

Promotional campaign and small range of **day-visitor and overnight accommodation facilities** and **tea factory and plantation tours**.

Targeted zone/s

Central Zone (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Discussions and negotiations held **during Year 1**; development of day visitor facilities and first organised tours **during Years 2 and 3**; development of overnight facilities **from Years 2 to 4**; all facilities completed and tours fully up-and-running by **end of 2020**.

Implementation driver/s

NTB with possible assistance of an **independent advisor** maybe through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Dhankuta Municipality; local hotel and tourism association and chamber of commerce and industry; tea estate company head offices and plantation management; local tourism product owners (hotels, resorts, guesthouses, etc.).

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 250,000.

Possible funding sources

Primarily by private sector (tea estate companies); possible funding through SME Funding Facility.

Other related activities

Development of interpretative material (**Activity 6.6**); possible part-funding through SME Funding Facility (**Activity 7.1**); establishment of community social fund (**Activity 7.4**); encouragement of local hotels/resorts to organise tours to local attractions

(**Activity 8.2**); tourism awareness course for communities (**Activity 10.1**); basic tourism training courses (**Activity 10.4**); tour guide training courses (**Activity 10.8**); online promotion of tourism product (**Activities 11.2 to 11.4**).

ACTIVITY 3.26	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Promote the development of rafting and powerboat tours between the Arun-3 dam and Tumlingtar and beyond

Rationale

Construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam will see upwards of 3,000 workers and staff being in the Num area for several years, perhaps up until the end of the First TDAP itself in 2021. During that time it will be necessary to provide as much outdoor recreational activities for the workers and their families as possible (**Activity 3.18**). Once these are established and the construction of the dam is completed, they can then be carried over and adapted for general resident/visitor/tourist use after.

Two such possible recreational activities are river-rafting and short powerboat tours on the Arun River, although clearly the amount of water in the river at any one time will influence how they can be used. Such tours could use the recreational facility established near the dam wall (**Activity 3.16**) as an operational base and launching point downstream of the dam wall. Easy access to the facility and rafting base would be provided by the future main road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border and Khandbari to the south.

Tumlingtar, the probable main destination for the rafting tours, could be reached by raft over several days. The rafting tours could therefore link in very well with several community campsites established along the way beside the Arun River (**Activity 3.4**). The rafting tours could also continue on as far as "Three Rivers" and even to KTWR.

If powerboats were to be used on the Arun River, there is an opportunity of providing an alternative and attractive means of access to and departure from the Makalu Barun area by river for trekkers arriving in or departing from Tumlingtar by air or road. Such a tourism product would certainly enhance trekking opportunities in the area.

Brief description

This activity is more about convincing existing commercial river-rafting and/or powerboating operators to establish such an operation of the Arun River than developing any infrastructures *per se*. Consequently, much of this activity will revolve around the Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center and Sankhuwasabha DDC lobbying established river-rafting and boating companies to expand their businesses into the area. The committees could also lobby and persuade entirely new entrepreneurs from the immediate area to take up the business opportunities offered. These entrepreneurs may be able to apply to the Grants Fund (**Activity 7.2**) but should be prepared to part-fund the enterprise him/herself.

Principal output/s

Promotional campaign and **rafting and powerboat tours** on the Arun River between Arun-3 HEP dam and Tumlingtar and possibly to points beyond.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Initial establishment of rafting/powerboat tours **during Year 2**; rafting/powerboat tours fully-established after completion of the Arun-3 dam by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center in close consultation with private sector business and entrepreneurs.

Implementation partners

Sankhuwasabha DDC; private sector river-rafting/powerboat operators; entrepreneurs; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 250,000.

Possible funding sources

Private sector; possible funding through the proposed SME Financing Facility.

Other related activities

Establishment of riverside community campsites (**Activity 3.4**); establishment of day-visitor facility near Arun-3 dam wall (**Activity 3.16**); establishment of outdoor recreational facilities for dam construction staff (**Activity 3.17**); possible funding through SME Financing Facility and/or Grants Fund (**Activities 7.1** and **7.2**); promotion of rafting and powerboat tours (**Activities 11.2 to 11.4**).

ACTIVITY 3.27	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Encourage the development of appropriate water-based activities on the Arun River upstream of the Arun-3 HEP dam

Rationale

At present, it is not SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Pvt. Ltd (SAPDC) policy to allow any recreational use of the waterbody that will be created behind the completed Arun-3 HEP dam. *Activity 1.2* will attempt to persuade the company to change its policy to allow carefully managed and monitored use of the water body for a limited range of recreational activities. It is envisaged that these would include *inter alia* swimming, canoeing, kayaking, rowing boats, rubber dinghies and rafts. It may be agreed that 5-horsepower motors could be used, but primarily for safety reasons. No waterskiing or powerboating should be allowed. All these activities could only be permitted once construction the dam has been completed and the waterbody has filled up. This will likely only take place towards the end of the implementation of the First TDAP, ie. 2021.

Due to the steep valley sides in the Arun River valley, access to the waterbody will likely be very limited and difficult. This means that these activities will likely need to take place fairly close to the dam wall, perhaps at the proposed day-visitor facility (*Activity 3.16*), or at specific sites upriver that can provide access. The latter sites are likely to be fairly small and linked to future local 'lakeside' villages (eg. Pepuwa, Dhodeni, Gola) and would be used primarily by trekkers using the proposed new trekking trail (*Activity 3.20*). Ideally, the activities should be operationally-linked to and complement the proposed day-visitor facility, although they should function as separate SMEs. A certain amount of tourism awareness training for staff members will likely be necessary (*Activity 10.1*). Training in more specialised subjects, such as First Aid and lifesaving, will likely also be required.

Consideration needs to be paid to the fact that the water body that is formed after the Arun-3 dam is completed could vary in depth quite considerably in the future, depending on the amount of rain and ice melt experienced in the catchment. Visitor access to the waterbody itself would probably also be affected.

Brief description

This activity is mostly about encouraging local entrepreneurs and communities to develop small businesses that offer a range of low-impact water-based recreational activities. Much of this activity will therefore hinge on the Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center and Sankhuwasabha DDC, in collaboration with a proposed IRP (*Section 2.10*), attracting potential investors and operators. This will be done in close consultation with SAPDC.

It is envisaged that the enterprises would consist of basic equipment (eg. canoes, kayaks, dinghies, rafts, etc.) plus a small range of land-based infrastructures, such as site offices, boathouses and storage facilities, changing-rooms/toilets, visitor rest area, solid waste disposal facilities, etc. These should be built according to building standards and regulations (*Activity 5.1*) and environmental guidelines (*Activity 5.2*).

Interested entrepreneurs and communities may be able to apply to the Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*) for funding, but they should be prepared to part-fund the enterprise.

Principal output/s

Promotional campaign and variety of **low-impact water-based recreational activities** established next to Arun-3 dam and waterbody.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-5: Establish Num as a tourism centre or hub in the northern TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Water-based activities likely to be established **during Year 5**; activities partly- or wholly-established by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP** aimed at establishing a tourism hub in and around Num.

Implementation partners

SAPDC; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Num and Pawakhola VDCs; private sector; entrepreneurs; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 250,000.

Possible funding sources

Proposed IRP; private sector; possible funding for entrepreneurs through the proposed SME Financing Facility and/or Grants Fund.

Other related activities

Establishment of day-visitor facility near Arun-3 dam wall (**Activity 3.16**); existence of new trekking trail along eastern bank of Arun River (**Activity 3.20**); conforming to building regulations and environmental guidelines (**Activities 5.1** and **5.2**); possible funding through SME Financing Facility or Grants Fund (**Activities 7.1** and **7.2**); tourism awareness training for communities and new SMEs (**Activity 10.1**); promotion of water-based activities (**Activities 11.2 to 11.4**).

ACTIVITY 3.28	KTA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Encourage the development of cycling tours and provision of mountain bikes in selected areas of the TDA

Rationale

Mountain-biking is becoming an increasingly popular outdoor activity in Nepal. It is proving particularly popular with Nepalis, in addition to foreign tourists from India and third countries. Although much of the focus of this activity currently appears to be on established tourist areas within Nepal, especially those that can offer a good support service in terms of overnight accommodation, food and refreshments, etc., cyclists and mountain-bikers are found throughout the country and increasingly so in the TDA. The majority of these two-wheeled tourists, however, own the bicycles that they use. Tour companies, however, also hire out the bicycles.

With the already large number of visitors in the TDA from India, there is potentially a large market of Indian and Nepali tourists and local residents, as well as third-country tourists, who may want to hire bicycles and mountain-bikes for fairly short periods of time, ranging from a few hours to several days, or possibly even weeks. These cycling trips could be undertaken on the existing trail network in the TDA and beyond, as well as on proposed new ones (eg. **Activity 3.21**).

There is merit, therefore, in encouraging existing and upcoming hotels, resorts and guesthouses, tour companies and bike-hire companies to stock bicycles and mountain-bikes for subsequent hire within the TDA. This could be done particularly in areas around Koshi Tappu, Dharan and Bhedetar, Hile and Pakhribas, Basantapur, TMJ rhododendron route, Tumlingtar and Khandbari and Num. The Makalu Barun area also has big potential for mountain-biking, especially with the range of different trekking trails envisaged for the future.

Overall, the future of mountain-biking in Nepal and in the TDA is looking very positive. Of note, once the new road (Koshi Highway) from Tibet into the TDA has opened through Kimathangka, there is potentially a large Chinese market for biking tours.

Brief description

As with several other TDAP activities, this activity is also about encouraging local hotel/resort/guesthouse owners and entrepreneurs throughout the TDA, but especially in those areas where cycling could prove particularly attractive, to invest in bicycles and mountain-bikes and to then offer them for hire to visitors and tourists.

It should perhaps fall to the tourism development committees or similar district-level committees or chambers of commerce and industry in each district to approach potentially-interested hotels, resorts, guesthouses, etc., existing bike hire companies, entrepreneurs, etc. This could be backed up with a promotional drive undertaken by the Nepal Cycling Association (NCA) in collaboration with the NTB.

The only real expense involved will be the initial purchase of bicycles, plus a small range of tools for basic maintenance. Interested businesses and entrepreneurs may be able to apply to the Grants Fund (**Activity 7.2**) for funding, but they should be prepared to part-fund much of the enterprise.

Principal output/s

Promotional campaign and significantly **increased number of bicycles and mountain-bikes** available for hire within the TDA.

Targeted zone/s

Central Zone (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-6: Develop hiking and cycling/mountain biking trails with the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Purchase and hire of bicycles/mountain-bikes at **any time from Year 1**; purchase and hire of bicycles/mountain bikes **continuing beyond 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

District-level **tourism development committees** and/or **chambers of commerce and industry** in collaboration with the **NCA**.

Implementation partners

Local hotels, resorts and guest houses; entrepreneurs; communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 250,000.
Possible funding sources
Local hotels, resorts, guesthouses, etc.; entrepreneurs; communities; NCA; possibly SME Funding Facility; possibly Grants Fund.
Other related activities
Established trekking trails within the TDA (***Activities 2.2 to 2.6***); establishment of new trails (***Activities 3.19 to 3.21***); possible part-funding through SME Funding Facility (***Activity 7.1***) and Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***); promotion of cycling activities (***Activities 11.2 to 11.4***).

Key Task Area 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services

Tourism service centres

ACTIVITY **4.1**	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services
Establish a tourism service centre at a suitable central location in Itahari	
Rationale	

The majority of international visitors to the TDA are Indian tourists. They enter the region from India through the many border posts, especially at Biratnagar and close to the barrage over the Koshi River and from the east via Kakarbhitta. Many come across the border on day-visits, but most visit the region for several days. Nepali and third-country visitors also visit the region, mostly travelling from Kathmandu by road or by air via Biratnagar Airport.

During their visits, many domestic and foreign tourists will require information about their visits. Nowadays, much of this can be sourced on the Internet, but not all visitors can afford or have access to the Internet. There is also still a great deal of information that cannot be put on-line and is only really available in the traditional printed form (eg. brochures, pamphlets, booklets, maps, posters, notices, etc.). Obtaining such material, however, can be a problem, unless it is readily-available at clearly indicated centralised locations. Furthermore, many visitors may have questions that they would like answered.

Itahari is located on an important crossroads in the TDA, lying as it does on the East West or Mahendra Highway (AH2) and on the south-north road (H08) linking Biratnagar with Dharan and all points to the north. As most visitors to the TDA enter the region from the south and likely pass through Itahari almost immediately, it makes sense to establish some form of tourism information centre in the town that is easily accessible to passing visitors. Located close to the main north-south/east-west crossroads on the Mahendra Highway in the middle of the town would be ideal.

In addition to being just an information outlet, this centre could and perhaps should offer travelling visitors more than just an information service. Under this TDAP, it is envisaged that a 'tourism service centre' would be established in Itahari. This key centre, located at the 'southern gateway' to the TDA, would effectively act as a 'one-stop shop' for visitors on the move and represents the top echelon of tourism information outlets within the TDA – the other two being 'tourism information centres' (*Activity 4.3*) and 'tourism information kiosks' (*Activity 4.4*).

The tourism service centre in Itahari would be located in an existing and converted building along the main street close to the main crossroads. If feasible and funding allows, a purpose-built facility could be considered. The building itself would feature or include *inter alia* a parking zone, large visitor reception area, visitor reading/rest area, staff room/s, staff and public toilets and washbasins, public showers possibly, plumbing, power supply and sockets, lighting, telephone landline, etc.

The building would be furnished and equipped with reception counters/desks and chairs, visitor tables and chairs, display cabinets, brochure display racks, notice boards, computer equipment, relevant software, telephones, recharging points, public Internet facilities, Wi-Fi, audio-visual facilities, touch-screen information displays, QR codes (*Activity 6.4*), first aid station, etc. It could also feature a counter or stall that sells a range of crafts and souvenirs and a small refreshment area that sells hot and cold drinks. Directional signage to the centre and signage within the centre would also be included (*Activity 6.1*).

Printed guidebooks (*Activities 6.5* and *6.6*), brochures, pamphlets, maps, posters, etc. featuring tourist attractions, activities and services all around the TDA would be on display and available to take away or purchase. Staff would be on-hand to answer questions and suggest destinations and activities. In the future, a centralised booking service could also be developed and implemented, enabling visitors to choose and book overnight accommodation in advance.

The whole purpose of the service centre is that visitors would not only be able to obtain information, but also to have access to the Internet, recharge smartphones and laptops, use well-maintained toilets and washbasins (and possibly showers), rest, read up in advance on places they wish to visit, enquire about tourist attractions and the availability of accommodation, buy souvenirs and refreshments, etc. The centre could also act as an obvious rendezvous point for visitors and residents alike.

The centre would be linked to the Internet and work closely with it. This would allow not only staff and visitors to search for any information and to communicate, but it would also give access to the TDA's own tourism website and allow everyone to use the proposed Internet information portal (*Activity 11.2*). Under the TDAP, it is the intention to link all of the tourism service centres and tourism information centres within the TDA through the Internet.

The service centre would be manned by two or more full-time staff members, depending on the level of usage by passing visitors and local residents. Staff members would need to receive appropriate training (*Activities 10.4* and *10.6*). It is envisaged that the service centre, as with other tourism service and information centres in the TDA, would be run as a business partnership, or PPP, between the DoT/NTB, Itahari Municipality and local private sector tourism product owners and operators (*Activity 8.1*). The partnership could be formalised through the drawing up of a detailed MoU (*Activity 9.8*).

Brief description	

This activity, which will be driven largely by the DoT/NTB in close collaboration with the Itahari Municipality and possibly with the assistance of an IDA-supported intervention, will proceed in several consecutive and concurrent stages. These will involve *inter alia*: ♦ identifying within Itahari a suitable building or site for a new building; ♦ establishing a PPP to run and manage the centre (undertaken under *Activity 8.1*); ♦ designing the conversion or new building; ♦ converting/constructing the building; ♦ procuring necessary furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; ♦ installing furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; ♦ identifying and training staff

members (undertaken under **Activities 10.4** and **10.6**); ♦ acquiring information material; ♦ opening the service centre; and ♦ operating it.

It would be important to ensure that this tourism service centre is closely linked through the Internet to other tourism service and information centres in the TDA and any tourism information kiosks that may have been set up.

Principal output/s
One (1) tourism service centre, fully-furnished and -equipped, established in Itahari.

Targeted zone/s
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-2: Provide a network of tourism service and information centres and kiosks within the TDA.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA

Priority rating
High priority.

Timing and target dates
Acquisition of suitable building or site for Itahari tourism service centre undertaken **during second half of Year 1**; conversion or construction of building and sourcing and purchase of furniture and equipment undertaken **during Year 2**; tourism service centre opened and fully-operational by the **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s
DoT/NTB with possible assistance from an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
Itahari Municipality; Sunsari DDC; local private sector tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 3,500,000.

Possible funding sources
DoT/NTB; possible funding from IDA-supported intervention; possible funding under a proposed IRP; possible funding from Itahari Municipality and Sunsari DDC.

Other related activities
Establishment of tourism service centre in Chyamtang (**Activity 4.2**), tourism information centres (**Activity 4.3**) and tourism information kiosks (**Activity 4.4**); provision of signage (**Activity 6.1**); establishment of a QR Code-based information system (**Activity 6.4**); provision of tourism information (**Activities 6.5** and **6.6**); drawing up of a MoU (**Activity 9.8**); provision of training for centre staff (**Activity 10.4**); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (**Activity 11.2**).

ACTIVITY 4.2	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services

Establish a tourism service centre in Chyamtang

Rationale
At present, the Makalu Barun area part of the TDA receives between 1,000 and 1,500 visitors a year. The majority of these are Nepali or Indian tourists with about 10% of them originating from third countries. Currently, most of these visitors are trekkers using the GHT High Route. With the opening in about 4-5 years' time of the planned main road (Koshi Highway) between the border post at Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border and all points south, there is likely to be a significant increase in the number of visitors from Tibet and China. Although mainly Chinese, these will probably include non-Chinese foreign visitors undertaking trips through China and Tibet.

During their visit to the TDA, many of these tourists will require information of various sorts. Nowadays, much of this can be sourced on the Internet, but not all visitors can afford or have access to the Internet. Trekkers, for instance, may not have the equipment or be able to access the Internet. There is also still a great deal of information that cannot be put on-line and is only really available in the traditional printed form (eg. brochures, pamphlets, booklets, maps, posters, notices, etc.). Obtaining such material, however, can be a problem, unless it is readily-available at clearly indicated centralised locations. Furthermore, many visitors may have questions that they would like answered.

Chyamtang could be viewed as being the 'northern gateway' to the TDA, located as it is on both the east-west GHT High Route and the planned Koshi Highway south from Kimathangka. The settlement could therefore be an ideal location to site a 'tourism service centre' in order to serve both trekkers using the GHT High Route and visitors travelling down by road from Tibet. Located on a suitable site within Chyamtang, the service centre would act as a 'one-stop shop' for trekkers and other visitors on the move in the Makalu Barun area and offer more than just an information service. Like the proposed tourism service centre in Itahari

(*Activity 4.1*), this centre would represent the top echelon of tourism information outlets within the TDA, the other two being 'tourism information centres' (*Activity 4.3*) and 'tourism information kiosks' (*Activity 4.4*).

The building itself would feature or include *inter alia* a small parking area for vehicles, an indoor visitor reception area, visitor reading/rest area, staff room, staff and public toilets and washbasins, public showers possibly, plumbing, power supply and sockets, lighting, telephone landline, etc.

It would be furnished and equipped with some outdoor tables, benches and shelters, a reception counter/desk and chairs, several visitor tables and chairs, display cabinets, brochure display racks, notice boards, computer equipment, relevant software, telephones, recharging points, public Internet facilities, Wi-Fi, possibly audio-visual facilities and touch-screen information displays, QR codes (*Activity 6.4*), first aid station, etc. It could also feature a counter or stall that sells a range of crafts and souvenirs and a small refreshment area that sells hot and cold drinks. Directional signage to the centre and signage within the centre would also be included (*Activity 6.1*).

Printed guidebooks (*Activities 6.5* and *6.6*), brochures, pamphlets, maps, posters, etc. featuring tourist attractions, activities and services in the Makalu Barun area and all around the TDA and perhaps neighbouring regions (ie. Kanchenjunga and Everest) would be on display and available to take away or purchase. Staff would be on-hand to answer questions and suggest destinations and activities. In the future, a centralised booking service could also be developed and implemented, enabling visitors to choose and book overnight accommodation in advance.

The whole purpose of the service centre is that visitors would not only be able to obtain information, but also to have access to the Internet, recharge smartphones and laptops, use well-maintained toilets and washbasins (and possibly showers), rest, read up in advance on places they wish to visit, enquire about tourist attractions and the availability of accommodation, buy souvenirs and refreshments, etc. The centre could also act as an obvious rendezvous point for visitors and residents alike.

The centre would be linked to the Internet and work closely with it. This would allow not only staff and visitors to search for any information and to communicate, but it would also give access to the TDA's own tourism website and allow everyone to use the proposed Internet information portal (*Activity 11.2*). Under the TDAP, it is the intention to link all of the tourism service centres and tourism information centres within the TDA through the Internet.

The service centre would be manned by one or two full- or part-time staff members, probably drawn from the local community. Staff members would need to receive appropriate training (*Activities 10.4* and *10.6*). It is envisaged that the service centre, as with other tourism service and information centres in the TDA, would be run as a business partnership, or PPP, between the DoT/NTB, Chepuwa VDC and local private sector tourism product owners and operators (*Activity 8.1*). The partnership could be formalised through the drawing up of a detailed MoU (*Activity 9.8*).

A decision will need to be made midway through the implementation of this TDAP on whether or not the establishment of a tourism service centre in Chyamtang is justified. The level of visitation in the Makalu Barun area may not be as high as expected, or it may be perceived that there is no demand for such a centre. The service centre could be located elsewhere in the area (eg. Chepuwa), or it could be 'downgraded' to a smaller tourism information centre.

Brief description
This activity, which will be driven largely by the DoT/NTB in close collaboration with the Sankhuwasabha DDC and Chepuwa VDC and possibly with the assistance of a donor-funded intervention, will proceed in several consecutive and concurrent stages. These will involve *inter alia*: ♦ identifying within Chyamtang (or elsewhere) a suitable building or site for a new building; ♦ establishing a PPP to run and manage the centre (undertaken under *Activity 8.1*); ♦ designing the conversion or new building; ♦ converting/constructing the building; ♦ procuring necessary furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; ♦ installing furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; developing ♦ identifying and training staff members (undertaken under *Activities 10.4* and *10.6*); ♦ acquiring information material; ♦ opening the service centre; and ♦ operating it.   It would be important to ensure that this tourism service centre is closely linked through the Internet to other tourism service and information centres in the TDA and any tourism information kiosks that may have been set up.

Principal output/s
One (1) tourism service centre, fully-furnished and -equipped, established in Chyamtang.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA. **M-1**: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists. **M-2**: Provide a network of tourism service and information centres and kiosks within the TDA. **M-3**: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA. **M-6**: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area. **L-18**: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.

Timing and target dates	
Acquisition of suitable building or site for the Chyamtang tourism service centre undertaken **during second half of Year 3**; conversion or construction of building and sourcing and purchase of furniture and equipment undertaken **during Year 4**; tourism service centre opened and fully-operational by the **end of 2020**.	
Implementation driver/s	
DoT/NTB with possible assistance from an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
Sankhuwasabha DDC; Chepuwa VDC; selected local private sector tourism product owners.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 2,500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
DoT/NTB; possible funding from IDA-supported intervention; possible funding under a proposed IRP; possible funding from Chepuwa VDC and Sankhuwasabha DDC.	
Other related activities	
Establishment of tourism service centre in Itahari (***Activity 4.1***), tourism information centres (***Activity 4.3***) and tourism information kiosks (***Activity 4.4***); establishment of Internet capacity in MBNP (***Activity 4.14***); provision of signage (***Activity 6.1***); establishment of a QR Code-based information system (***Activity 6.4***); provision of tourism information (***Activities 6.5*** and ***6.6***); drawing up of a MoU (***Activity 9.8***); provision of training for centre staff (***Activity 10.4***); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (***Activity 11.2***).	

Tourism information centres and kiosks

ACTIVITY 4.3	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**
Establish tourism information centres in Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile and Num	
Rationale	

During their visit to the TDA, most domestic and international tourists and other visitors will require information of various sorts. Nowadays, much of this can be sourced on the Internet, but not all visitors can afford or have access to the Internet. There is also still a great deal of information that cannot be put on-line and is only really available in the traditional printed form (eg. brochures, pamphlets, booklets, maps, posters, notices, etc.). Obtaining such material, however, can be a problem, unless it is readily-available at clearly indicated centralised locations. Furthermore, many visitors may have questions that they would like answered.

Activities 4.1 and ***4.2*** described the establishment of two proposed tourism service centres in Itahari and Chyamtang, respectively the effective southern and northern 'gateways' to the TDA. It is envisaged that these top echelon tourism information outlets would be supported within the TDA by a number of second-level tourism information centres and third-level tourism information kiosks. These would be located at strategic points throughout the key tourist destinations within the TDA. The proposed tourism information centres covered under this activity would be located at Dharan, Bhedetar and Hile within the Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts and at Num within the Sankhuwasabha District.

Each of the tourism information centres would be located in an existing and converted building in a central location within the town or settlement. If no suitable existing building is available and if funding allows, a purpose-built facility could be considered.

The buildings themselves would feature or include *inter alia* a small parking area for vehicles, an indoor visitor reception area, visitor reading/rest area, staff room, staff and public toilets, plumbing, power supply and sockets, lighting, telephone landline, etc.

They would each be furnished and equipped with a reception counter/desk, some visitor tables and chairs, display cabinets, brochure display racks, notice boards, computer equipment, relevant software, telephones, recharging points, public Internet facilities, Wi-Fi, possibly audio-visual facilities and touch-screen information displays, QR codes (***Activity 6.4***), first aid station, etc. Directional signage to the centres and signage within the centres would also be included (***Activity 6.1***).

Printed brochures, pamphlets, posters, etc. featuring local tourist attractions, activities and services and wider afield in the TDA would be on display and available to take away or purchase. Staff would be on-hand to answer questions and suggest destinations and activities. In the future, a centralised booking service could be developed and implemented, enabling visitors to choose and book overnight accommodation in advance.

The centres would be linked to the Internet and work closely with it. This would allow not only centre staff and visitors to search for any information and to communicate, but it would also give access to the TDA's own tourism website and allow everyone to use the proposed Internet information portal (***Activity 11.2***). Under the TDAP, it is the intention to link all of the tourism information centres with tourism service centres within the TDA through the Internet.

The information centres would be manned by one or two full- or part-time staff members, probably drawn from the local community. Staff members would need to receive appropriate training (***Activities 10.4*** and ***10.6***). It is envisaged that the information centres, as with the tourism service centres in the TDA, would be run as a business partnership, or PPP, between the DoT/NTB and the relevant municipalities and VDCs and local private sector tourism product owners and operators (***Activity 8.1***). These partnerships could be formalised through the drawing up of a detailed MoU (***Activity 9.8***).

Brief description

This activity will likely be carried out as four sub-activities, each dealing with a single tourism information centre.

The overall activity will be driven largely by the DoT/NTB in close collaboration with the appropriate municipality or VDC and the Sankhuwasabha DDC. It is possible that a donor-funded intervention would assist. Each of the sub-activities would proceed in several consecutive and concurrent stages and involve *inter alia*: ♦ identifying within the town or settlement a suitable building or site for a new building; ♦ establishing a PPP to run and manage the centre (undertaken under **Activity 8.1**); ♦ designing the conversion or new building; ♦ converting/constructing the building; ♦ procuring necessary furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; ♦ installing furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; developing ♦ identifying and training staff members (undertaken under **Activities 10.4** and **10.6**); ♦ acquiring information material; ♦ opening the service centre; and ♦ operating it.

It would be important to ensure that each of the tourism information centres are closely linked to each other through the Internet and are also linked to the tourism service centres and any tourism information kiosks that may have been set up.

Principal output/s

Four (4) tourism information centres, fully-furnished and-equipped, established in Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile and Num.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-2: Provide a network of tourism service and information centres and kiosks within the TDA.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Acquisition of suitable buildings or sites for four (4) tourism information centres in Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile and Num undertaken **during second half of Year 1**; conversion or construction of buildings and sourcing and purchase of furniture and equipment undertaken **during Year 2**; four (4) tourism information centres opened and fully-operational by the **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

DoT/NTB with possible assistance from an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Dharan and Dhankuta Municipalities; Vedetar and Num VDCs; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; selected local private sector tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 8,000,000.

Possible funding sources

DoT/NTB; possible funding from IDA-supported intervention; possible funding under a proposed IRP; possible funding from Dharan and Dhankuta Municipalities and Vedetar and Num VDCs; possible funding from Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.

Other related activities

Establishment of tourism service centres (**Activities 4.1** and **4.2**) and tourism information kiosks (**Activity 4.4**); establishment of Internet capacity in MBNP (**Activity 4.14**); provision of signage (**Activity 6.1**); establishment of a QR Code-based information system (**Activity 6.4**); provision of tourism information (**Activities 6.5** and **6.6**); drawing up of a MoU (**Activity 9.8**); provision of training for centre staff (**Activity 10.4**); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (**Activity 11.2**).

ACTIVITY 4.4	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**

Establish tourism information kiosks at Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports and at a number of other strategic locations in the TDA

Rationale

During their visit to the TDA, most domestic and international tourists and other visitors will require information of various sorts. Nowadays, much of this can be sourced on the Internet, but not all visitors can afford or have access to the Internet. There is also still a great deal of information that cannot be put on-line and is only really available in the traditional printed form (eg. brochures, pamphlets, booklets, maps, posters, notices, etc.). Obtaining such material, however, can be a problem, unless it is readily-available at clearly indicated centralised locations. Furthermore, many visitors may have questions that they would like answered.

Activities 4.1, **4.2** and **4.3** described the establishment of two proposed tourism service centres in Itahari and Chyamtang, respectively the southern and northern 'gateways' to the TDA, and four tourism information centres largely in the central part of the region. It is envisaged that these first- and second-level tourism information outlets would be supported by a number of less

sophisticated third-level tourism information kiosks. These would be located at various strategic points within the TDA. The at least 10 proposed tourism information kiosks covered under this activity would be located at Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports (both of which can be considered as 'air gateways' to the TDA) and at other strategic locations within the TDA, such as in Basantapur in Terhathum District and Khandbari and Hatiya within the Sankhuwasabha District.

The tourism information kiosks envisaged for the two airports would consist of a small area set aside within the arrivals hall which houses several free-standing or table-top brochure/pamphlet display racks, some visitor tables and chairs one or two notice boards and possibly one or two touch-screen information displays, as well as posters and a stock of printed brochures, pamphlets and maps featuring local tourist attractions, activities and services would be on display and available to take away or purchase. Recharging facilities could also be provided. Ideally, Internet and Wi-Fi should be made available and QR codes could be used (*Activity 6.5*). Airport officials would be on hand to answer any questions that arriving passengers may have. Within Biratnagar Airport, it may be feasible to hire a part-time attendant to man the tourism information kiosk.

Kiosks elsewhere in the TDA could be very similar, but would be located within private sector-owned hotels, guesthouses, travel agencies, etc. and possibly also in community campsites or lodges. They would vary in sophistication from a small area set aside within a room to function specifically as a visitor zone providing a limited amount of information and service to just one or more table-top or free-standing brochure/pamphlet displays placed on a table or in a corner somewhere. Again, if possible, Internet and Wi-Fi should be made available. Directional signage to the publically-accessible kiosks would be necessary (*Activity 6.1*) and QR codes could be used (*Activity 6.4*). Employees of the hosting hotel/guesthouse/travel agency/campsite/lodge, etc. would be on hand to answer questions. These may need to undergo some training (*Activity 10.4*).

The kiosks would be kept supplied with informative material (ie. brochures, pamphlets, maps, etc.) on a regular basis by the nearest tourism information or service centre.

It is envisaged that the information kiosks, as with the tourism service and information centres in the TDA, would be run in a form of business partnership, or PPP, between the DoT/NTB, 'parent' tourism service or information centre and the participating private sector or community-owned or -run hotels/guesthouses/travel agencies/campsites/lodges, etc. (*Activity 8.1*). If felt necessary, these partnerships could be formalised through the drawing up of a detailed MoU (*Activity 9.8*).

There is no reason why further kiosks could not be established, especially where there is a particular demand from visitors for information. Under this TDAP, the provision of information for visitors to popular tourist attractions in the TDA (eg. temples, pilgrimage sites, etc.) and Koshi Tappu WR is largely covered under *Activities 6.6* and *4.5*, respectively.

Although it will clearly take some commitment and effort to run a tourism information kiosk, the hosting of such kiosks by private sector- or community-run enterprises offers obvious benefits to the hosts and the overall concept should be promoted across the TDA.

Brief description	
	The activity will be driven largely by the DoT/NTB in close collaboration where appropriate with the CAAN and Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airport management, interested local private sector tourism product owners and the relevant municipalities, VDCs or DDCs. It is possible that an IDA-supported intervention would assist.
	The activity, which would likely be made up of a number of sub-activities focusing on individual kiosks, would proceed in several consecutive and concurrent stages and involve *inter alia*: ♦ identifying private sector and community tourism product owners interested in housing a kiosk; ♦ identifying locations within the airports and hotels, campsites, lodges, tour agents, etc. to set up a kiosk; ♦ drawing up an MoU to run and manage the kiosk (undertaken under *Activity 9.8*); ♦ designing the kiosk if necessary; ♦ procuring necessary furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; ♦ constructing the kiosk if necessary; ♦ installing any furniture, equipment, signage, etc.; ♦ identifying and training individuals responsible for maintaining the kiosks (undertaken under *Activities 10.4* and *10.6*); ♦ acquiring information material; ♦ opening the kiosk; and ♦ operating it.
Principal output/s	
	At least 10 tourism information kiosks, adequately-furnished and -equipped, established in Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports and at other strategic locations within the TDA.
Targeted zone/s	
	Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity	
	National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed	
	M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists
	M-2: Provide a network of tourism service and information centres and kiosks within the TDA
	M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA
	L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA
Priority rating	
	Low priority.
Timing and target dates	

Identification of suitable premises for tourism information kiosks undertaken **from second half of Year 2**; sourcing and purchase of furniture and equipment and setting up of kiosks undertaken **during Years 3 to 5**; at least 10 tourism information kiosks opened and fully-operational by the **end of 2021**.	
Implementation driver/s	
DoT/NTB with possible assistance from an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports (CAAN); selected local private sector tourism product owners; Khandbari Municipality; Basantapur and Hatiya VDCs; Terhathum and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 1,500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
DoT; possible funding from donor-funded intervention; possible funding under a proposed IRP; possible funding from CAAN, Basantapur and Khandbari Municipalities and Hatiya VDC; possible funding from Terhathum and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.	
Other related activities	
Establishment of tourism service centres (*Activities 4.1* and *4.2*) and tourism information centres (*Activity 4.3*); proposed improvements to local airports (*Activity 4.10*); establishment of Internet capacity in Makalu Barun NP (*Activity 4.14*); provision of signage (*Activity 6.1*); establishment of a QR Code-based information system (*Activity 6.4*); provision of tourism information (*Activities 6.5* and *6.6*); drawing up of a MoU (*Activity 9.8*); provision of training for kiosk staff (*Activities 10.4* and *10.6*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (*Activity 11.2*).	

Visitor centre

ACTIVITY 4.5	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services
Establish a visitor centre within Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve	
Rationale	

Between 5,000 and 6,000 people visit KTWR each year, 90% of whom are Nepali visitors with the other 10% coming from India and third countries. All of them, including tourists staying overnight in the buffer zone, visit the reserve on day-trips. Of the Nepali visitors, it is likely than many live in the immediate vicinity of the reserve or further afield in settlements, towns and cities in eastern Nepal. With outdoor recreational facilities being scarce in the area, the reserve is probably looked at as being one of the few popular areas that people can visit to enjoy the outdoors and nature.

At present the only activities that visitors can take part in in the reserve are game-viewing from vehicles driving up or down the Chatara Road (located on top of a large dyke that was built in 1961), site-seeing from viewing points at the end of several of the artificial barriers or groins that have been built, elephant-back rides when available, bird-watching, fishing and picnicking free along the banks of the Koshi River. Other than these limited activities, visitors can presently do very little else in the reserve and have very little opportunity to learn about the reserve, its wildlife and the communities that live around it.

The reserve currently has no facilities at all to cater for visitors. Even the basic provision of adequate toilet facilities and waste control is not really met. The reserve also provides very little information or interpretation to visitors. Overall, as a nature-based tourist destination and outdoor recreation destination, the reserve is poorly prepared to handle tourists and visitors and to offer them a comfortable, memorable, informative or educational experience.

Under this TDAP, a day-visitor area has been proposed for the reserve (*Activity 3.15*). A reserve-based private sector-owned and -run upmarket tented camp has also been proposed (*Activity 3.6*). Outside of the reserve and inside the buffer zone, the TDAP also proposes the establishment of a community-owned and -run lodge and campsite (*Activities 3.1* and *3.2*) and promotes the development of homestays (*Activity 3.5*). Elsewhere in the TDAP, private sector tour operators are to be encouraged to develop and extend tours to various tourist attractions in the TDA, KTWR included and bird-watching tour operators to expand their operations based on the reserve.

Should all or even some of these proposals be successfully implemented, it is hoped that the attraction of KTWR to potential visitors will be significantly enhanced and that many more tourists and local residents will visit. If a visitor centre were to be built in the reserve, this would not only be an added attraction, but would also allow visitors (including guests of the proposed upmarket tented camp) to be better-informed and educated on a variety of subjects relating to the reserve, including *inter alia* its history, how the ecosystem works, its fauna (especially birds) and flora, the use of the river (including the downstream Koshi Barrage) and information about the history, culture and traditions of the local community.

The visitor centre envisaged for KTWR need not and should not be a large structure. Ideally, it would be sited at a suitably-elevated location within walking distance of the northern entrance gate to the reserve (*Activity 4.6*) and preferably form an integral part of the proposed day-visitor facility (*Activity 3.15*). It would likely consist of a small- to medium-sized locally and traditionally-designed two-story thatched building (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*) which houses a number of rooms that feature interpretative, educational and interactive displays and possibly a small shop selling souvenirs. A small meeting room could also be incorporated, perhaps furnished and equipped for small conference groups. Toilet facilities could be included into the structure, but these could equally be available nearby in the adjacent day-visitor area, as would rest areas, picnic sites, food and refreshment kiosks/stalls, etc.

The interpretative displays and the information they contain could be provided and developed by DNPWC specialist staff or other relevant specialists. It would be important to ensure that the interpretative displays are as interactive as possible, of a high quality and easy to maintain. It is envisaged that the displays would also include large numbers of photographs and specimens obtained locally.

The caretakers for the visitor centre could be DNPWC staff members or suitable individuals employed from the local community, or a combination of the two. Ideally, the visitor centre caretakers would also be responsible for looking after the day-visitor centre. Any training that may be required could be provided under *Activity 10.6*.

Brief description
This activity would be driven largely by the DNPWC, possibly in collaboration with and support from an IDA-funded intervention, and with the assistance of a number of conservation and interpretation specialists providing advice and materials for inclusion in the centre. Consultations would also be held with interested local VDCs, committees and residents. Assuming that the concept for a visitor centre is attractive and approved by the DNPWC and the MoFSC, a series of development steps need to be taken. These include *inter alia*: ♦ identifying and selecting the location for the visitor centre within the reserve; ♦ designing the centre and drawing up architectural plans; ♦ constructing the centre and undertaking associated landscaping; ♦ developing interpretative exhibits and materials; ♦ appropriately furnishing and equipping the centre; ♦ installing exhibits; ♦ addressing staffing needs; and ♦ addressing possible training requirements. This activity would end with the opening of the visitor centre and the completion of any training that is carried out. KTWR would take over the responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day running and maintenance of the visitor centre, possibly in collaboration with some community members, and be responsible for any enhancement or development of the centre in the future.
Principal output/s
One (1) **visitor centre** established at a suitable site in KTWR.
Targeted zone/s
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists. **M-3**: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA. **L-2**: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA. **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA. **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
Planning of the visitor centre would take place **during the second half of Year 1**; construction would take place **during Year 2**; furnishing and equipping of the visitor centre would take place **during the first half of Year 3**; visitor centre would open by the **end of June 2019**.
Implementation driver/s
DNPWC/Koshi Tappu WR in close associated with an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
Conservation and interpretation specialists; Prakashpur, Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha and Sripurjabdi VDCs; Sunsari DDC; local communities; local committees.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 2,500,000.
Possible funding sources
DNPWC; IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Included in tourism development plan for KTWR (*Activity 1.3*); establishment of community lodge, community campsites and homestays in buffer zone (*Activities 3.1*, *3.2* and *3.5*); establishment of upmarket tented camp in KTWR (*Activity 3.6*); establishment of day-visitor facility in KTWR (*Activity 3.15*); encouragement of site-seeing excursions and bird watching tours (*Activities 3.22* and *3.23*); construction of new entrance facilities to KTWR (*Activity 4.6*); development of building standards and environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*); training for custodians of tourist attractions (*Activity 10.6*).

Park entrance structures

ACTIVITY 4.6	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services

Design and erect new entrance facilities to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Rationale

Koshi Tappu WR, one of two PAs in the TDA, represents one of the key attractions to visitors to the region. It presently receives between 5,000 and 6,000 visitors a year, 90% of them Nepali citizens while the other 10% come from India and third countries. All of them arrive by road and enter the reserve either from the north-east near Prakashpur, or from the east close to the reserve's headquarters at Kusaha, or from the south approximately 4.5 kilometres north of Haripur on the Mahendra Highway (AH2). The Chatara Road, which runs along a high and largely straight dyke, connects the three main visitor entry/exit points.

If KTWR is to become a prime day-visitor and tourist destination in eastern Nepal, it would be both appropriate and good for the image of the reserve and the DNPWC if all visitors knew when they had actually 'arrived' at the reserve boundary. At present, however, the entrance gates that exist are, for all intents and purposes, military outposts manned by armed soldiers. This can be rather intimidating and not very welcoming to visitors, especially those from third countries. Notwithstanding the need for such security, much more welcoming entry points for visitors need to be established.

Each of the three existing security-focused entry points can be improved for visitors by erecting a small visitor entrance facility that consists of, for example, a small parking or pull-in area for arriving vehicles, vertical swing boom barrier, small office hut for the gate attendant, toilet facility for staff and visitors, two flag poles (Nepal and DNPWC flags), appropriate signage and some attractive landscaping. The structures should be aesthetic-looking and reflect local traditional architecture.

Signage at each entrance point should feature a "Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve" welcome sign with appropriate wording and branding. It should also include a separate sign which features a large and attractive map of the reserve and its buffer zone, together with the Rules and Regulations to be followed. A "Thank You for Visiting Us" or similar sign and wording should be placed in view of visitors leaving the reserve. The signage should be in both Nepali and English and possibly Hindustani as well. Signage is specifically addressed elsewhere under this TDAP (*Activities 6.1* and *6.2*).

Ideally, the entrance facilities and associated signage should all be of a similar design and structure and be aesthetic and appropriate to the Koshi Tappu area (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*). They should, as much as possible, complement any structures which may be erected within the proposed day-visitor facility (*Activity 3.15*) and visitor centre (*Activity 4.5*).

Although not essential, these entrance facilities and associated signage would certainly contribute to and enhance a visitor's experience and memories of KTWR. They would also be good corporate promotion for the DNPWC. The need for reserve entrance structures would be incorporated into the proposed tourism development plan for KTWR (*Activity 1.3*). This plan would probably include other entry points to the reserve, especially those located on the western banks of the Koshi River in Saptari District.

Brief description

Assuming that a decision is taken by the DNPWC to erect visitor-oriented entrance facilities at the reserve, the exact sites on which to build them will need to be determined. An appropriate standard and aesthetic design would then need to be drawn up. Building materials would be obtained locally. Labour to build the structures should be drawn from local communities and/or nearby towns and be supervised by reserve staff. Entry point-related signage would be designed and produced under *Activities 6.1* and *6.2*.

As the distance between the three gates is not large (17 km) and road access is very easy, it is suggested that all three entrance facilities should be constructed at the same time. This would help cut down on the overall costs and time relating to the use of construction equipment, materials and labour.

Principal output/s

Three (3) entrance facilities with associated signage constructed.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Three entrance structures designed and built **during Year 2**; all three entrance structures completed by **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

DNPWC/KTWR.

Implementation partners

Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha and Sripurjabdi VDCs; local communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 500,000.
Possible funding sources
DNPWC; possible funding through IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Incorporation into proposed tourism development plan for KTWR (**Activity 1.3**); establishment of day-visitor facility and visitor centre (**Activities 3.15 and 4.5**); compliance with building standards and environmental guidelines (**Activities 5.1 and 5.2**); design and provision of signage (**Activities 6.1 and 6.2**).

ACTIVITY 4.7	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**

Design and erect official entrance structures at appropriate entry points to Makalu Barun National Park
Rationale
Makalu Barun NP, one of two PAs in the TDA, represents one of the key attractions to visitors to the region. At present, to get to the park from either the south or the east requires an arduous trek undertaken over a number of days. In the future, and once the new road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south has been built and is open, access to the park will be much easier and quicker. Visitors arriving from Tibet and China in the north will be able to enter the park at points that lie adjacent to the main road, ie. Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border, Chyamtang on the GHT High Route from Kanchenjunga and Barun Dhovan on the park-buffer zone border on the Arun River. Other park entry points will still require trekkers to walk for one or more days, ie. Unshisa on the Makalu Base Camp Trek trail and close to Narbuchaur and to Dobatak further to the south on alternative trails into the park.
If MBNP is to become a prime trekking and pilgrimage destination in Nepal, it would be both appropriate and good for the image of the park and the DNPWC if all visitors knew when they had actually 'arrived' at the park boundary. This can be done by erecting a simple entrance structure at the key and subsidiary entry points to the park. It is envisaged that a maximum of seven entrance structures will be required, four of them being located at key entry points (Unshisa, Barun Dhovan, Chyamtang and Kimathangka) while the other three would be located above Narbuchaur (possibly two structures) and Dobatak.
These entrance structures need only be, for example, fairly simple but aesthetic, low dry-stone walls beside the road (Kimathangka) or straddling the trails which incorporate a large "Makalu Barun National Park" welcome sign with appropriate wording and branding. At each entry point, a separate sign just inside the boundary should also be erected that features a large and attractive map of the park and its buffer zone, together with the Rules and Regulations to be followed. A second map that focuses on the specific area of the park being visited could also be provided. The reverse side of the dry-stone entrance walls, visible to outbound trekkers and pilgrims, should incorporate a "Thank You for Visiting Us" or similar sign. The signage should be in two or more appropriate languages (ie. Nepali, English and Chinese). Signage is specifically addressed elsewhere under this TDAP (**Activities 6.1 and 6.3**). Ideally, the entrance structures and associated signage should all be of a similar design and structure and be aesthetic and appropriate to the area (**Activities 5.1 and 5.2**). They should certainly not be large and overly-conspicuous structures.
Although not essential, such entrance structures and associated signage would certainly contribute to and enhance a visitor's experience and memories of MBNP. They would also be good corporate promotion for the DNPWC. The need for park entrance structures would be incorporated into the proposed tourism development plan for MBNP (**Activity 1.4**).
Brief description
This activity, which will be largely driven by the DNPWC and the management of the park, will firstly need to identify those points on the park boundary that require an entrance structure and to then select the exact site on which to build them. An appropriate standard and aesthetic design would then need to be drawn up. Building materials would be obtained on-site. Labour to build the structures should be drawn from local communities and be supervised by park staff. Entry point-related signage would be designed and produced under **Activities 6.1 and 6.3**.
It is suggested that the entrance structures at Unshisa, Barun Dhovan and Chyamtang be built first, followed by those located close to Narbuchaur and Dobatak. The entrance structure at Kimathangka can be built last and once the new main road has been opened.
Principal output/s
A maximum of **six (6) entrance structures** with associated signage constructed.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).
Focal level of activity
Local level.
Strategic objectives addressed
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.
L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.

L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Entrance structures designed and first three built **during Year 2**; second three entrance structures built **during Years 3 and 4**; entrance structure at Kimathangka built **during Year 5**; all seven entrance structures completed by **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
DNPWC/MBNP.
Implementation partners
Makalu, Hatiya, Chepuwa and Yafu VDCs; local communities.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 350,000.
Possible funding sources
Primarily through a **proposed IRP** that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; **DNPWC**.
Other related activities
Incorporation into proposed tourism development plan for Makalu Barun NP (*Activity 1.4*); upgrading of existing and development of new trekking trails (*Activities 2.3*, *2.4* and *2.20*); compliance with building standards and environmental guidelines (*Activities 5.1* and *5.2*); design and provision of signage (*Activities 6.1* and *6.3*).

Access

ACTIVITY 4.8	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services
Improve access roads to selected tourist attractions within the TDA	

Rationale
There are a large number of tourist attractions within the TDA, many of them religious and/or pilgrimage sites in rural and sometimes quite remote areas. Some of them, especially in the Makalu Barun area can only be reached after several days or trekking. Most others within the TDA are accessible by road. However, the condition of the approach roads can vary enormously from excellent black-top roads to roads and tracks that even 4-wheel-drive vehicles have difficulty negotiating.
Poor approach roads often means that fewer visitors are prepared to travel to attractions. This in turn translates into fewer visitors being received by the attractions and consequently less economic activity. The attractions and businesses around them also have difficulty in obtaining necessary supplies and goods and opportunities for improving the attraction itself and the local economy it supports are few.
Under this TDAP, *Activity 2.1* addresses the need to improve the experience of visitors at selected popular tourist attractions, usually by providing better infrastructure and services. In many instances this can only be done effectively and fully if the access roads to those attractions are of a good enough quality. Improving visitors experience at the attractions, therefore, goes hand in hand with improving access to those sites.
What is clearly needed is for a concerted effort to be made to improve access roads to a selected range of tourist attractions. This is currently being done in some locations (eg. Barahachhetra), but not in others.
The construction, rebuilding and maintenance of roads in Nepal fall under the responsibility of the Department of Roads (DoR) of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT). The DoR has a number of projects it is currently involved in or which are being prepared, some of these dealing with the TDA (eg. Hile-Basantapur-Khandbari Feeder Road Project, Hile-Basantapur Road Improvement Project). With many of these projects financial support is being given by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
The maintenance of many minor roads, however, is usually the responsibility of individual DDCs. This is subject to prioritising and the availability of limited and over-stretched funds and the needs of the tourism sector obviously do not always dictate what those priorities are. DDCs and the DoR would therefore need to be lobbied strongly for improvements to be made to minor roads that lead to popular tourist attractions. In this respect, lobbying needs to focus on the developmental and socio-economic benefits to local communities rather than on simply providing easier access for visitors and tourists.
In planning and undertaking any road improvements, attention should be paid to the need for the roads not to overly-impose or impact on the attractions or the communities living in their vicinity. The need for local residents and visitors alike to be able to walk safely along pedestrian-only pavements, for example, should be addressed. The need for the integrity of roadside historic buildings to be preserved and protected should also be taken into consideration.
Brief description
This TDAP activity would focus primarily on the lobbying of DDCs and the DoR to improve the condition of certain access roads to popular tourist attractions. It is envisaged that this lobbying would be carried out by the various tourism development committees and chambers of commerce and industry that exist in the TDA in collaboration with the custodians of interested tourist attractions and local communities and business and the regional branch of the DoT.
Lobbying may also require the drawing up and submission of supportive position papers or proposals to DDCs that set out the reasons and perceived benefits of certain road improvements. Proposals could also be drawn up and submitted directly to

potential interested donor agencies and NGOs (eg. UNDP). Assistance with this lobbying may be forthcoming from a donor-funded intervention that focuses on tourism development in the TDA.

Any actual improvements made to the roads resulting from this lobbying will be the responsibility of the relevant DDC and the DoR. Funding for the improvements would likely come from the state and from the donor, IFI and international NGO community (eg. ADB, UNDP, etc.).

Principal output/s

Position papers/proposals produced. Approval obtained for at least **10 access roads** to tourist attractions within the TDA to be significantly improved. Road improvements either undertaken, in the process of being done or planned.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-9: Improve access to selected popular tourist attractions within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Position papers and proposals developed and lobbying undertaken **throughout Years 1 to 5**; improvements to at least 10 access roads being undertaken or approved by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee, **Sunsari Tourism Development Committee**, **Sunsari Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, **Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, **Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center** in collaboration with **DoT**.

Implementation partners

DoR; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; possible IDA-supported intervention; custodians of tourist attractions; local communities; local tourism product owners; local businesses.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 1,000,000.

Possible funding sources

GoN/DoR; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; WB; ADB; donor agencies; international NGOs.

Other related activities

Inclusion in district-level tourism development plans (**Activity 1.5**); improvements to visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (**Activity 2.1**); development of tourist attractions (**Activity 3.14**); heritage protection guidelines and regulations (**Activity 5.3**); development and erection of roadside directional signage (**Activity 6.2**).

ACTIVITY 4.9	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services

Promote the construction of access roads to settlements located along the new highway between Kimathangka and Num

Rationale

The construction of the planned main road (Koshi Highway) from Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border south to Khandbari and beyond to Biratnagar will radically improve access to the Makalu Barun area and will allow traffic, people and goods to move in and out of Nepal and through to India much more easily than at present. The alignment of this highway, which will follow the Arun River valley, has already been determined and passes through or very close to several settlements in the area.

Some settlements and communities in the area, however, have expressed concern that the highway will bypass them entirely, effectively leaving them cut off and isolated from the passing traffic and the commercial opportunities that the road would likely bring and offer.

The settlement of Simma is an example. With the highway's alignment passing quite some distance downhill from the village, it is likely that, without a good connecting access road being built, residents of Simma will need to regularly trek up and down a steep path to shops and stalls they may want to set up along the main road. Also, if there is no connecting access road in place, few visitors would want to stop and walk up the steep trail to the village. This would seriously affect business and day-to-day life in the settlement. It would also undermine the development and operations of the community-owned and -run campsite/lodge that the settlement is presently building as well as the hotels and homestays that already exist there. This is a problem that a number of villages in the area in addition to Simma also experience.

What is clearly needed is for each settlement within the Makalu Barun area that lies on or close to the planned highway to have connecting access roads to them built. These access roads, no matter how long or short, should form an integral part of the overall construction project for the main road.

The construction of the Koshi Highway falls under the responsibility of the Department of Roads (DoR) of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT). It is a Government of Nepal (GoN) project and is part-funded by the Asian Development

Bank (ADB). The impact that the Arun-3 HEP dam and associated road may have on local communities and their livelihoods is being addressed by the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN). The IBN, amongst other things, is especially interested in ensuring that the impact of the dam and associated highway has minimal impact on local communities and that they in fact provide maximum benefits to them. In this respect, IBN itself is one of the lobbying agents.

In the detailed planning of the highway, attention should be paid to the need for access roads to nearby settlements in the Makalu Barun area to be incorporated into the overall plan and to subsequently be built. The DoR, Sankhuwasabha DDC and IBN would therefore need to be lobbied strongly to ensure that adequate access roads are indeed built. Lobbying would need to focus on the overall developmental and socio-economic impacts and potential benefits to local communities of having access roads built, rather than on just the tourism-related aspects of the highway.

In planning the access roads, attention should be paid to the need for the roads not to impact too heavily on the settlements. The need for local residents to be able to walk safely along pedestrian-only pavements, for example, should be addressed. Also, the removal of any buildings and the loss of productive agricultural land should be avoided if at all possible. The integrity of the landscape around the settlement should also be preserved as far as possible.

The issue of signage along the highway, in particular directional signage to adjacent settlements, should also be addressed (*Activity 6.2*).

Brief description
This TDAP activity would focus primarily on the lobbying of the Sankhuwasabha DDC and DoR to ensure that adequate road access from the highway is provided to affected settlements and communities. It is envisaged that this lobbying would be carried out by IBN and the respective VDCs and the Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center in collaboration with the local settlements and communities and businesses and the regional branch of the DoT. The DNPWC could also lend their weight. Lobbying may also require the drawing up and submission of supportive position papers or proposals to the DDC and DoR that set out the reasons and perceived benefits of having an access road built. Assistance with this lobbying may be forthcoming from a donor-funded intervention that focuses on tourism development in the TDA. Any construction of access roads, those either already planned or as a result of the lobbying, would be the responsibility of the DoR. Funding for the roads would likely come from the overall state budget for the highway and from the ADB or any other external funding, such as international NGOs.
Principal output/s
Position papers/proposals produced. **Access roads** to deserving settlements built. Roads either built or in the process of being built.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).
Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA. **L-9**: Improve access to selected popular tourist attractions within the TDA.
Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Position papers and proposals developed and lobbying undertaken **during Years 1 and 2**; access roads to settlements being built **from Years 2 to 5**; all necessary access roads built by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
IBN in collaboration with **Pathibhara**, **Hatiya** and **Chepuwa VDCs**, **Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center** and **DoT**.
Implementation partners
DoR; Sankhuwasabha DDC; possible IDA-supported intervention; local communities; local businesses; local tourism product owners.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 250,000.
Possible funding sources
GoN/DoR; Sankhuwasabha DDC; WB; ADB; donor agencies; international NGOs.
Other related activities
Inclusion in tourism development plan for Makalu Barun NP (*Activity 1.4*) and the district-level Sankhuwasabha tourism development plan (*Activity 1.5*); establishment of community campsites/lodges and homestays (*Activities 3.4* and *3.5*); heritage protection guidelines and regulations (*Activity 5.3*); development and erection of roadside directional signage (*Activity 6.2*).

ACTIVITY 4.10	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**

Encourage selected upgrades and improvements to be made to Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports

Rationale

Biratnagar is Nepal's fourth largest city and is located in Morang District in eastern Nepal on the Nepal-India border. The city has an airport with an asphalt runaway (1,505 m long and 30 m wide) that is capable of taking fairly large aircraft and helicopters flying from Kathmandu and elsewhere in Nepal. At present, it is a domestic airport that services five airlines flying from and to Kathmandu, Bhojpur, Lamidana, Taplejung, Thamkharka and Tumlingtar. Passengers are primarily government officials, businessmen and women and Nepali and foreign residents and tourists.

There is talk of possibly upgrading Biratnagar Airport to international standard, similar to what is currently being done to Gautam Buddha Airport in the city of Bhairahawa (Rupandehi District) under the Asian Development Bank's South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP). If Biratnagar were to have an international airport (the third in Nepal), then the inflow of visitors from India and other countries in the sub-continent and beyond would certainly increase very significantly indeed. This would clearly be of benefit to the tourism sector in eastern Nepal and for economic development in the region as a whole. However, even if a decision were to be taken to upgrade Biratnagar Airport to international status, it is unlikely to be completed during the lifetime of this TDAP. Nevertheless, some improvements can be made to the airport to better-serve the current arriving and departing passengers and any increase in numbers that may take place over the next five or so years.

Tumlingtar, in comparison to Biratnagar, is a small settlement located on the eastern bank of the Arun River in Khandbari Municipality (Sankhuwasabha District). The settlement also has an airport, much smaller than Biratnagar, with a single asphalt runaway (1,219 m long and 30 m wide) capable of taking small aircraft and helicopters. Scheduled flights from six airlines presently flying from and to Kathmandu and Biratnagar. Passengers are again primarily government officials, businessmen/women and Nepali and foreign residents and tourists, but also Indian businessmen/women and tourists flying up from Biratnagar. Tumlingtar will likely always remain a domestic airport, but, as with Biratnagar Airport, improvements can also be made to the airport to better-serve current arriving and departing travellers. The most important improvements that can take place, however, relate to the navigation and landing systems available at the airport. In the absence of such equipment, inclement weather (low cloud and rain) often affects the arrival and departure of flights with many being cancelled or delayed. This clearly has an impact on the tourism sector in the area.

Under this TDAP, improvements to both airports can be undertaken. With respect to Biratnagar Airport, the improvements envisaged relate more to visitor comfort and convenience than to landing and navigation systems. The establishment of an additional small café in the arrivals hall, the provision of Internet and Wi-Fi connections and the installation of a small tourism information kiosk (***Activity 4.4***) are visualised.

With Tumlingtar Airport, the improvements focus much more on upgrading the navigation and landing systems to allow a more predictable and expanded flight schedule to operate, possibly with flights to and from other airports in eastern Nepal and elsewhere in the country. The construction of one or more hangars for small aircraft and helicopters could be considered, as could one or two helipads. A refueling facility could also be considered, especially for helicopters flying into and out of the mountainous areas to the north (***Activity 4.16***), including to the proposed high-end tourist lodge (***Activity 3.7***). Improvements relating to visitor comfort and convenience are important, but certainly secondary in this instance. They would include a small café facility, especially for departing passengers, and Internet and Wi-Fi connections, as well as a small tourism information kiosk (***Activity 4.4***).

Both airports are administered by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) under the Ministry of Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA). Any improvements or upgrading that takes place would therefore be driven by the CAAN.

Brief description

This activity would be driven by the CAAN in close collaboration with its sister body, the DoT, and possibly as part of the ADB's SATIDP. The involvement of an independent consultant, possibly through a donor-funded intervention, would have merit.

It is likely that the activity would be split into two sub-activities, one for each airport. Clearly, however, there will be some overlap between them, especially where it relates to the sourcing and procurement of any furniture, equipment and materials concerning visitor comfort and convenience – most of the infrastructural and equipment upgrades would relate to Tumlingtar Airport only.

A review and assessment of the needs of each airport would be undertaken and a detailed report with recommendations made. This report, which could cover both airports, would be submitted to the Director General of the CAAN and Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, and possibly also to CAAN board members, for perusal and comment. It would then be up to the CAAN and Ministry to decide what steps would be taken next. Ideally, approval of the recommendations will be forthcoming, funding will be found and the proposed upgrades and improvements implemented.

Should the upgrades and improvements take place as planned, visitors to the TDA would receive a better standard of service from both airports, but especially from Tumlingtar Airport. This will make the region more attractive to tourists and visitors and result in higher levels of economic activity.

Under this activity, however, it is likely that only a limited number of improvements can be made to the airports. Ideally and if necessary, these should be focused mostly on Tumlingtar Airport as it is improvements in this airport which would likely have the most significant and immediate beneficial impact on tourism in the Sankhuwasabha District.

Principal output/s

Proposal documents and selected **upgrades/improvements made to the infrastructure**, **equipment** and **visitor facilities and services** at Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.   **M-6**: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.   **L-10**: Carry out selected improvements to facilities and services at visitor 'gateways' to the TDA.   **L-17**: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.
Priority rating
High priority.
Timing and target dates
Review of infrastructure, equipment and visitor facility and service needs undertaken **during second half of Year 1**; building of infrastructures and facilities **during Years 2 and 3**; sourcing and purchase of equipment **during Year 2**; installation of equipment **during Years 2 and 3**; upgrade of infrastructure, equipment and visitor facilities completed by the **end of 2019**.
Implementation driver/s
MoCTCA and **CAAN** in close collaboration with the **DoT** and with possible assistance of an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
Management of Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports (CAAN); Biratnagar and Khandbari Municipalities; Morang and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; private sector business.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 10,000,000.
Possible funding sources
MoCTCA/CAAN; ADB through SATIDP; IDA-supported intervention; Biratnagar and Khandbari Municipalities; Morang and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; private sector business.
Other related activities
Establishment of high-end tourism product/s in MBNP (*Activity 3.7*); establishment of tourism information kiosks (*Activity 4.4*); construction of helipads in Makalu Barun area (*Activity 4.16*); installation of tourism information boards at airports and other key locations (*Activity 6.1*); establishment of a QR Code-based information system (*Activity 6.4*); establishment of Internet-based register of trekkers entering MBNP (*Activity 6.7*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (*Activity 11.2*).

Utilities and services

ACTIVITY 4.11	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services

Install one or more reserve- or community-run incineration and solid waste disposal facilities at suitable locations within and adjacent to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
Rationale
With the 5,000 to 6,000 visitors that KTWR currently receives and with an expected increase in numbers of visitors in the foreseeable future, there is likely to be an increase in the amount of solid waste that is brought into the area. Much of this waste is plastic, tin and paper packaging, lots of which can already be found beside the Chatara Road that runs along the dyke, on the banks of the Koshi River (a lot of this has come into the reserve from upriver) and in the adjacent fields, fishponds and settlements in the buffer zone. In addition to being unsightly and not good for the image of the reserve, the waste does pose real risks to children, wildlife and the environment in general. Some efforts are made to address what will become a growing problem, but these will likely not be sufficient in the future.   What is needed first and foremost are adequate facilities for the correct disposal of solid waste materials. These then need to be linked to the effective servicing and management of the facilities. They also need to be supported through an information campaign that is directed at both visitors and to local residents on the issue of waste management and disposal. ***Activities 10.1*** and ***10.5*** partly address these needs.   The facilities need not be complex structures at all. They could consist of 4-5 concrete-lined pits or enclosures designed to receive a range of solid waste items (glass, plastics, metals, paper products, mixed) and an adjacent incinerator. Suggested possible locations within the reserve are in the proximity of the proposed day-visitor area and visitor centre (***Activities 3.15*** and ***4.5***) and close to the reserve headquarters in Kusaha. Possible sites within the buffer zone include close to the main reserve entrance near Prakashpur and in the vicinity of the proposed community-owned and -run lodge and campsite (***Activities 3.1*** and ***3.2***), wherever these would eventually be sited. Under this TDAP, a total of four (4) facilities are envisaged, two within the reserve and two within the buffer zone to the east of the reserve. Under the proposed tourism development plan for KTWR (***Activity 1.3***), sites for additional solid waste disposal sites may be identified.

Once built, the operation and maintenance of the waste disposal facilities would need to be carried out by reserve staff and local community bodies or individuals that have been assigned the responsibility by the participating VDCs. A key element to this management will be the recycling of as much of the solid waste as possible, in particular glass and metals, and the environmentally-safe disposal of hazardous materials, such as batteries, electronic equipment, etc.

It will be important for local tourism product owners in the buffer zone, as well as within the reserve itself (**Activity 3.6**), to be persuaded or obliged to regularly use the disposal facilities In this way, the intentional or accidental pollution of the reserve and adjacent settlements, fields, fishponds and environment as a whole by the tourism sector will be is reduced to a minimum.

Overall, the provision of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities will significantly improve the experience of visitors to the reserve and adjacent buffer zone, as well as help to protect the environment from unwanted waste products and eyesores.

The incineration and correct disposal of solid waste is clearly of huge benefit to the local communities themselves, perhaps much more so than for just visitors and tourism service providers. In many ways, such facilities are an integral part of community development rather than tourism development *per se*.

Brief description

This activity, which would be carried out by the reserve and participating VDCs, focuses primarily on: 1) selecting exactly which settlements would host incineration and solid waste disposal facilities; 2) identifying exact sites within the reserve and buffer zone to locate the facilities; 3) acquiring the building materials; 4) building the facilities; 5) identifying and organising caretakers and operators; 6) training individuals to be able to manage the facilities satisfactorily; and 7) promoting the use of the facilities by visitors, tourism product owners and local residents.

The operation of the facilities should be delegated to reserve staff and to one or more willing local community groups (eg. mothers'/women's groups, committees, conservation groups, etc.).

Awareness amongst the local community of littering and waste disposal would be addressed under **Activity 10.1**. Training related to the day-to-day management of the facilities would be undertaken under **Activity 10.5** for interested local residents. The facilities will also need to be well-signposted for visitors (**Activity 6.1**) and indicated in the proposed KTWR guidebook (**Activity 6.5**)

Principal output/s

Up to **4 incineration and solid waste disposal facilities** built and functioning.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Construction of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities **during Year 2**; all facilities fully-installed and operational by the **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

DNPWC/Koshi Tappu WR and **Madhuwan**, **PaschimKasuha** and **Sripurjabdi** VDCs**.**

Implementation partners

Sankhuwasabha DDC; interested local community groups; reserve and local tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 200,000.

Possible funding sources

DNPWC/KTWR; participating VDCs; possible funding from Sankhuwasabha DDC.

Other related activities

Establishment of community lodge/campsites/homestays within Koshi Tappu buffer zone (**Activities 3.1**, **3.2** and **3.5**); establishment of day visitor facility and visitor centre within the reserve (**Activities 3.15** and **4.5**); environmental guidelines (**Activity 5.2**); design and provision of signage (**Activity 6.1**); guidebook for Koshi Tappu WR (**Activity 6.5**); tourism awareness courses for communities (**Activity 10.1**); training course on the correct disposal of waste (**Activity 10.5**).

ACTIVITY 4.12	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services

Install community-run incineration and solid waste disposal facilities at suitable locations within the Makalu Barun area

Rationale

The disposal of solid waste brought in by trekkers and other visitors is already causing problems in the Makalu Barun area, particularly with respect to unsightly pollution along the trail sides and the dangers that some of the waste poses to children,

wildlife and the environment in general. Much of this waste is plastic, tin and paper packaging, lots of which can be found on the trekking trails and in the adjacent fields, streams and rivers, not to mention also within the settlements themselves. The import into the area of beer bottles in particular is resulting in piles of empty bottles gradually increasing in size in and around buildings and settlements. Deeper into the park, larger discarded items can be fund, these being related to trekking and mountaineering expeditions to the area. At present, little effort has been made to address this growing problem, other than simply turning a blind eye to it.

Other than banning or limiting the import of non-biodegradable solid materials, which would be difficult to implement and sustain, what is needed first and foremost are adequate facilities for the correct disposal of solid waste materials. These then need to be linked to the effective servicing and management of the facilities. They also need to be supported through an information campaign that is directed at both visitors and to local residents on the issue of waste management and disposal. *Activities 10.1* and *10.5* partly address these needs.

The facilities need not be complex structures at all. They could consist of 4-5 concrete-lined pits or enclosures designed to receive a range of solid waste items (glass, plastics, metals, paper products, mixed) and an adjacent incinerator. Within the Makalu Barun area, such incineration and solid waste disposal facilities could be installed in several key villages along the trekking trails. Suggested possible locations are Num (site of proposed Makalu Barun tourism information centre), Gadhidanda, Pathibhara, Gola, Barun Dhovan, Hatiya, Hongon, Chyamtang (site of proposed tourism service centre), Chhoyang, Murmidanda, Tashigaon and Narbuchaur – up to 12 facilities in total, but possibly more, or less.

Once built, the operation and maintenance of the waste disposal facilities would need to be carried out by the local community bodies or individuals that have been assigned the responsibility. A key element to this management will be the recycling or processing of as much of the solid waste as possible, in particular glass and metals, and the environmentally-safe disposal of hazardous materials, such as batteries, electronic equipment, etc. With glass bottles, for example, these can be used as innovative building materials, or be crushed and incorporated as an aggregate into cement (viz. *Activity 5.4*).

What will likely be necessary, however, is for the visitors themselves to be persuaded to use the disposal facilities whenever the opportunity arises. Importantly, local tourism product owners would also need persuading to regularly use the disposal facilities as it will be largely at their facilities that much of the solid waste from in-transit visitors will accumulate. In this way, the intentional or accidental pollution of the trailside, villages and environment as a whole by the tourism sector will be is reduced to a minimum.

Overall, the provision of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities at intervals along the trekking trails will significantly improve the comfort of trekkers to the region, as well as help to protect the environment from unwanted waste products and eyesores.

The incineration and correct disposal of solid waste is clearly of huge benefit to the local communities themselves, perhaps much more so than for just the visiting tourists and tourism service providers. In many ways, such facilities are an integral part of community development rather than tourism development *per se*. Despite this, however, it is envisaged that most, if not all, of the waste disposal facilities proposed under this TDAP for Makalu Barun would be funded through the proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions. This can therefore be looked at as a valuable spin-off benefit for communities from tourism development.

There is a good deal of merit in siting the community-run incineration and solid waste disposal facilities in the same villages that also possess safe drinking water stations (*Activity 4.13*). Both types of facilities could be run by the same management group (eg. mothers'/women's group or other). This would also mean that any training that is provided for both services can be done jointly (*Activity 10.5*).

Brief description
This activity, which would be carried out and coordinated by the proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' and VDCs, focuses primarily on: 1) selecting exactly which villages would host incineration and solid waste disposal facilities; 2) identifying strategic sites to locate the facilities; 3) acquiring the building materials; 4) building the facilities; 5) identifying and organising local caretakers and operators; 6) training individuals to be able to manage the facilities satisfactorily; and 7) promoting the use of the facilities by trekkers, tourism product owners and local residents.   The operation of the facilities should be delegated to a willing local community group (eg. mothers'/women's groups), ideally the same group that is responsible for operating the safe drinking water stations.   Awareness amongst the local community of littering and waste disposal would be addressed under *Activity 10.1*. Training related to the day-to-day management of the facilities would be undertaken under *Activity 10.5* as part of a combined waste disposal/safe drinking water training course for interested local residents. The facilities will also need to be well-signposted for trekkers (*Activity 6.1* and *6.3*) and indicated in the proposed MBNP guidebook (*Activity 6.5*)

Principal output/s
Up to **12 incineration and solid waste disposal facilities** built and functioning.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.   **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.	
Priority rating	
Low priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Construction of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities **from Year 2 to Year 5**; all facilities fully-installed and operational by the **end of 2021**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Yafu, **Makalu**, **Pathibhara**, **Hatiya** and **Chepuwa VDCs** in close association with the proposed '**Makalu Barun tourism development committee**' and the **drivers of a proposed IRP** that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions.	
Implementation partners	
Sankhuwasabha DDC; DNPWC/MBNP; interested local community groups; individual community members; tourism product owners.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 600,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by participating VDCs and Sankhuwasabha DDC.	
Other related activities	
Upgrading of trekking trails (***Activities 2.2 to 2.4***); establishment of new trekking trails (***Activities 3.19*** and ***3.20***); establishment of tourism service centre at Chyamtang and tourism information centre in Num (***Activities 4.2*** and ***4.3***); establishment of safe drinking water stations (***Activity 4.13***); environmental guidelines (***Activity 5.2***); feasibility study on controlling the import into and disposal of bottles in the Makalu Barun area (***Activity 5.4***); design and provision of signage (***Activities 6.1*** and ***6.3***); guidebook for Makalu Barun (***Activity 6.5***); tourism awareness courses for communities (***Activity 10.1***); training course on the correct disposal of waste (***Activity 10.5***).	

ACTIVITY 4.13	KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services
Establish community-run ozone purified safe drinking water stations at suitable locations within the Makalu Barun area	
Rationale	

The availability of safe drinking water and other liquid refreshment for visitors to the Makalu Barun area is crucial. At present, trekkers need to purchase and carry purified water and/or commercial drinks contained in plastic or glass bottles or in tins. Drinkable water is sometimes provided by hospitality establishments and is usually then carried by trekkers in personal water containers. The quality of the water provided, however, cannot always be guaranteed. Water to drink can be obtained from trailside springs and streams, but there is no guarantee at all that this water is fit to drink – the best rule to follow is that it is not!

Linked to the provision and carrying of water and other liquids is the issue of what to do with the plastic and glass containers once the contents have been used. This has proved and is continuing to prove to be a major problem in many trekking areas in Nepal, especially Annapurna CA and Langtang and Sagarmatha NPs to mention just three. The disposal of plastic and glass containers is an increasing problem in the Makalu Barun area and will become more so as the number of trekkers and other visitors increase in the future. The disposal of solid waste in Makalu Barun is partly addressed under ***Activities 4.12*** and ***5.4***.

One way of helping to avoid excessive amounts of solid waste, especially plastic bottles, is to provide trekkers with purified and drinkable water that is produced on-site along the trekking trails. This is the approach that has been adopted in some mountain PAs. In Manaslu CA, for example, more than half-a-dozen ozone purified safe drinking water stations have recently been installed in selected villages along the Manaslu Circuit trekking trail to Larke Pass. Operated by individuals drawn from the local villages, purified water is produced on demand and for a fee with the proviso being that only non-disposable hip flasks or similar water containers will be filled. This means that the use of disposable plastic water bottles is significantly reduced, so cutting back on trailside litter and the need to dispose of plastic waste.

Within the Makalu Barun area, such safe drinking water stations could be installed in several key villages along the trekking trails. Suggested possible locations are Num (site of proposed Makalu Barun tourism information centre), Gadhidanda, Pathibhara, Gola, Barun Dhovan, Hatiya, Hongon, Chyamtang (site of proposed tourism service centre), Chhoyang, Murmidanda, Tashigaon and Narbuchaur – up to 12 stations in total, but possibly more, or less.

It is envisaged that most if not all of the safe drinking water stations would be funded under the proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions. Their subsequent operation and maintenance would need to be carried out by the local community bodies or individuals that have been assigned the responsibility.

Overall, the provision of safe drinking water along the trekking trails will significantly improve the comfort of trekkers to the region. What will likely be necessary, however, is for the visitors themselves to be convinced to use the stations on a regular basis, rather than to bring in bottled water from outside as is largely the case now. Persuading trekkers to switch to this supply has proved to be problem in other trekking areas in Nepal.

Although installed primarily for the benefit of visitors to the area, the stations could just as easily provide safe drinking water to local residents and communities should feel free to do this. It would be up to individual villages and communities, however, to decide exactly how this would be arranged and what prices local residents would be required to pay.

There is a good deal of merit in siting the safe drinking water stations in the same villages that also possess community-run incineration and solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*). Both facilities could be run by the same management group (eg. mothers'/women's group or other). This would also mean that any training that is provided for both services can be done jointly (*Activity 10.5*).

Brief description
This activity, which would be carried out and coordinated by the proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' and VDCs, focuses primarily on: 1) selecting exactly which villages would house an ozone purified safe drinking water station; 2) identifying a strategic site to locate the stations; 3) purchasing the required number of purifying units; 4) installing the units; 5) identifying and organising local operators; 6) training individuals to be able to operate the units; and 7) promoting the stations to trekkers. The operation of the stations should be delegated to a willing local community group (eg. mothers'/women's groups or other), ideally the same group that is responsible for the safe drinking water stations, who would sell the ozone purified water to visitors at a reasonable price. Only *bona fide* water bottles would be filled, so helping to cut down on the use of disposable plastic bottles within the region and on potential littering. Training would be undertaken under *Activity 10.5* as part of a combined waste disposal/safe drinking water training course for interested local residents. The stations will also need to be well-signposted for trekkers (*Activity 6.1* and *6.3*)

Principal output/s
Up to **12 safe drinking water stations** installed and operating.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA. **L-13**: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.

Timing and target dates
Installation of safe drinking water stations **from Year 2 to Year 5**; all stations fully-installed and operational by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
Proposed '**Makalu Barun tourism development committee**' in close association with the **drivers of a proposed IRP** that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions.

Implementation partners
Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya and Chepuwa VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC; DNPWC/Makalu Barun NP; interested local community groups; individual community members.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 4,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by Sankhuwasabha DDC and participating VDCs; possible funding from DoT.

Other related activities
Upgrading of trekking trails (*Activities 2.2 to 2.4*); establishment of new trekking trails (*Activities 3.19* and *3.20*); establishment of tourism service centre at Chyamtang and tourism information centre in Num (*Activities 4.2* and *4.3*); establishment of solid waste disposal facilities (*Activity 4.12*); environmental guidelines (*Activity 5.2*); feasibility study on controlling the import into and disposal of bottles in the Makalu Barun area (*Activity 5.4*); design and provision of signage (*Activities 6.1* and *6.3*); training course on the provision of safe drinking water (*Activity 10.5*).

ACTIVITY 4.14	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**
Establish Internet and Wi-Fi capacity and availability within the Makalu Barun area	
Rationale	
Having ready access to the Internet is nowadays virtually standard. The vast majority of tourists around the world now expects and even demands Internet access wherever they find themselves, even in environments where providing that access is both physically and technically difficult. In this regard, Nepal, the Himalayas and the Makalu Barun area are not exceptions. Being able to get online is one of the first questions that prospective tourists and visitors will ask when planning their visit.	

Having access to the Internet, however, does not just benefit tourists from the standpoint of being able to keep in touch and to communicate with family and friends, or of obtaining the latest news. It has other very practical applications as well, especially with regards safety and security.

With regard to the Makalu Barun area, having access to the Internet would have several advantages. It would firstly allow trekkers and other visitors, tour support teams, government officials and residents, etc. to communicate with one another and with people outside of the area through email, various messaging services and the social media. It would also allow people within the area to source and have access to information of almost any type. This includes having access to the network of tourism service and information centres within the TDA (*Activities 4.1 to 4.3*), as well as to the website and Internet-based tourism information portal which would be developed for the TDA under *Activity 11.2*.

Perhaps more importantly and from a safety and security standpoint, however, if the associated systems and online tools were to be developed, access to the Internet could also allow visitors and residents to obtain up-to-date weather forecasts and news of any impending bad weather using QR codes developed under *Activity 6.4* and placed as optical labels on GHT trailside signage (*Activity 6.3*) and other locations in the area. It would also allow an Internet-based register of trekkers and support teams entering into, moving around and exiting the Makalu Barun area to be kept up-to-date (*Activity 6.7*). This would assist considerably in relief and rescue teams being able to locate individuals after any environmental disaster which may have taken place (eg. earthquake, avalanche, landslide, flood, heavy snowfall, etc.). If access to the Internet were provided, many if not all of the mountain huts/shelters proposed under *Activity 4.15* would be in communication with the outside world. Combined with satellite or similar phones, access to the Internet would also help rescue teams during emergency relief and rescue operations, assuming, of course, that the infrastructure providing the Internet and Wi-Fi connections hasn't been lost or damaged.

Nepal already has a good deal of experience with providing Internet access using wireless technologies to remote villages, especially in mountainous areas. The Nepal Wireless Networking Project (NWNP), for example, has already connected more than 140 remote villages in Nepal to the Internet using wireless technologies.

The challenge with the Makalu Barun area, however, especially within the national park, is overcoming the very remote nature of the region with the technology that is available. Access to the area is difficult and there are also very few settlements in the national park. It would be necessary for the DNPWC to become the long-term custodian of any Internet/Wi-Fi-related infrastructures and equipment that have been built and installed.

Brief description

This activity would be undertaken as part of the proposed IRP that focus on upgrading the GHT trail. It would begin with a feasibility study being carried out. This would probably involve an initial broad field survey. The findings, conclusions and recommendations would be summarised in a feasibility report.

Should the recommendations of this report be positive, the proposed IRP would work closely with appropriate technological expertise and in consultation with TAAN, NMA and relevant VDCs in planning in detail the installation of the necessary infrastructure and equipment at strategic locations within the Makalu Barun area. The best locations may not necessarily lie close to the GHT itself. Once the detailed plans have been drawn up, the necessary building materials and equipment will be procured, including power generation equipment, such as solar-panels, batteries, etc. The infrastructures will be built using locally-sourced labour and materials where possible. Equipment will then be brought into the area and installed. Internet service providers would then make the necessary connections. After testing and adjustment, the system will be made available for use.

It is very likely that the DNPWC will need to maintain the relay stations/towers within the national park. It makes sense for the DNPWC to also maintain those stations/towers that have been established within the buffer zone.

Principal output/s

Feasibility study report and recommendations; several **Internet/Wi-Fi relay stations/towers** established at strategic locations within the Makalu Barun area.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Feasibility study carried out **during second half of Year 2**; procurement of necessary building materials and equipment **during first half of Year 3**; building of necessary infrastructure and installation of equipment done during **second half of Year 3**; Internet and Wi-Fi capability fully up-and-running by the **end of 2019**.

Implementation driver/s

Drivers of the **proposed IRP** on upgrading of GHT trail in close association with **DNPWC/MBNP** and possible **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
Internet service provider/s; TAAN; NMA; Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya and Chepuwa VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 5,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; possible donor-funded intervention; TAAN; NMA; Sankhuwasabha DDCs and participating VDCs.

Other related activities
Upgrading of existing trekking trails and development of new ones (*Activities 2.2 to 2.4* and *3.19* and *3.20*); linkages with tourism service and information centres (*Activities 4.1 to 4.3*); construction of mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*); establishment of GHT trailside signage (*Activity 6.3*); development of a QR code-based tourist/visitor information system (*Activity 6.4*); access to downloadable apps relating to the TDA (*Activity 6.6*); development of an Internet-based register of trekkers, mountaineers and support teams (*Activity 6.7*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (*Activity 11.2*).

Visitor safety

ACTIVITY 4.15	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**

Construct several mountain huts/shelters at selected locations along the trekking trails within Makalu Barun National Park

Rationale
Makalu Barun is located in a very geologically-active region of the Himalayas that is subject to frequent landslides and avalanches and occasional earth tremors, earthquakes and glacial lake outbursts. In addition, the climate of the area can be very extreme, especially during the monsoons and winter months. Flash flooding and heavy snowfalls are common. Bad weather can happen at any time and accidents on the trekking trails and on the mountain slopes do occur.
With the obvious environmental and trekking/mountaineering risks that trekkers and mountaineers and their support teams face, there will undoubtedly be times when inclement weather or accidents force trail users and mountaineers to seek shelter until conditions improve or help arrives. At present, very few safe shelters exist with most visitors and support teams having to rely on tents for shelter.
The presence of a number of strategically-located mountain huts or shelters within the national park would certainly help to provide adequate shelter for visitors and support staff during those times when the environmental conditions or the health of trail users are a cause for real concern. These huts/shelters would be fairly basic facilities that would comply with international standards for similar facilities elsewhere in the world. In addition to being weatherproof, they would house bunk beds, mattresses and blankets (for 6-8 people), tables and benches, a stove (for heat and cooking), fuel, lighting (solar-powered or paraffin), first aid kits and an attached pit/chemical toilet.
It is envisaged that these huts/shelters would be found at suitable points along the GHT High Route, especially in the vicinity of Makalu Base Camp along the High Route to the east, along the main Makalu Base Camp Trek trail, along the alternative trekking trail that runs up the Isuwa Khola River and in the upper Isuwa Khola river valley in the vicinity of Isuwa La Pass.
Some of the mountain huts/shelters might be located in close proximity to the helipads established under *Activity 4.16*. If Internet capacity and availability were to be developed along the GHT (*Activity 4.14*), then communications could be established to summon assistance in cases of emergency.
The periodic maintenance and management of the huts/shelters would be the responsibility of either the DNPWC or the Nepal Mountain Association (NMA), or be done jointly.

Brief description
This activity would be driven by one or more members of staff from DNPWC/MBNP and implemented in association with the proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions and the NMA. Consultations with affected VDCs and the Sankhuwasabha DDC would be held as necessary.
This activity would firstly identify those locations within Makalu Barun that would be well-served by mountain huts/shelters. These would be determined through discussions held with individuals who have had extensive local experience of the trails and mountain slopes, such as mountaineering expedition leaders, porters and experienced trekkers and climbers. Under this TDAP, a total of six mountain huts/shelters should perhaps be considered, all to be located within the national park.
Following a design that complies with international standards for such structures, building materials (primarily stone, cement, roofing materials, etc.) would be sourced locally or brought in by mule train or porter, or even by helicopter. Labour would be sourced from nearby communities, or be drawn from the DNPWC, and be supervised by appropriate national park staff. Each hut/shelter would then be equipped with bunk beds, limited bedding, tables and benches, stove, lighting, fuel, first aid kits and rations to be used only in emergencies.

Once completed, each hut/shelter would be certified by the DNPWC and NMA, after which it can become open for use. The day-to-day ongoing maintenance and management of the huts/shelters would be the responsibility of the DNPWC, with the NMA assisting with huts/shelters that are frequently used by mountaineering expeditions.

The existence of these mountain huts/shelters will contribute in some way to improving the safety of trekkers and mountaineers and help promote the Makalu Barun area to future potential visitors.

Principal output/s
Up to **six (6) mountain huts/shelters** established.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.

Timing and target dates
Identification of suitable sites for mountain huts/shelters done **during second half of Year 2**; construction of huts/shelters undertaken **during Years 3 and 4**; all huts/shelters constructed and fully-operational by the **end of 2020**.

Implementation driver/s
DNPWC and **NMA**, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP** that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions.

Implementation partners
Sankhuwasabha DDC; VDCs; local communities; trekking and mountaineering operators.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.

Possible funding sources
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by DNPWC, NMA, Sankhuwasabha DDC and trekking and mountaineering operators.

Other related activities
Included in tourism development plan for MBNP (***Activity 1.4***); upgrading of existing and development of new trekking trails (***Activities 2.2 to 2.4*** and ***3.19*** and ***3.20***); establishment of Internet capacity and availability in Makalu Barun (***Activity 4.14***); construction of emergency response helipads (***Activity 4.16***); development of environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures (***Activity 5.2***); provision of signage along GHT High Route (***Activity 6.3***); establishment of a QR Code-based information system (***Activity 6.4***); establishment of Internet-based register of trekkers (***Activity 6.7***).

ACTIVITY 4.16	**KTA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services**

Construct several emergency response helipads within the Makalu Barun National Park and buffer zone

Rationale
Makalu Barun is located in a very geologically-active region of the Himalayas that is subject to frequent landslides and avalanches and occasional earth tremors and earthquakes. In addition, the climate of the area can be very extreme, especially during the monsoons and winter months. Flash flooding and heavy snowfalls are common. With there being relatively few trail routes and hardly any roads or tracks, the area is also difficult to access by land. Even with the opening of a major road (Koshi Highway) between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and Khandbari and points beyond to the south, access to much of the area will continue to be difficult.

With the obvious environmental risks that residents and visitors constantly face, there will undoubtedly be times when disasters and accidents do occur. Whether or not these are caused by natural processes or are human-related, there will still be a need to bring in emergency aid and to evacuate injured or affected individuals and communities. This is clearly best done from the air using helicopters.

Although helicopters are usually able to access very difficult terrains, they normally need places to land. Suitable helicopter landing places, even if they are just areas of flat ground far enough away from trees and cliffs, already exist in the Makalu. Most though, are likely to be in inconvenient or difficult-to-access places. Other potentially suitable landing places may need some local landscaping to enable helicopters to land and take off safely.

For purposes of visitor safety and for emergency response and relief, it is believed that siting a number of specially-constructed helipads at suitable locations within Makalu Barun will be of benefit to both the tourism sector and to community development and social responsibility. Primarily, the helipads would be used for emergency purposes, but there is no reason why they cannot also be used for bringing in supplies, building materials, tourists, officials and returning residents, or for flying out materials and passengers.

One or more helipads may be built by tourism concessions in the park (viz. *Activity 3.7*). Although primarily for the use of visitors and staff, these private helipads could also be used during emergencies.
Brief description
This activity would be driven by one or more members of staff from DNPWC/MBNP and implemented in association with the proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions and in consultation with the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) of the MoCTCA. Consultations with affected VDCs and local communities would be held as necessary and also with the Sankhuwasabha DDC.   This activity would firstly identify those locations within Makalu Barun that would be well-served by helipads. These may be found at suitable points along the GHT High Route, especially in the vicinity of Makalu Base Camp and along the High Route to the east, along the Makalu Base Camp Trek trail to the south-east and within the buffer zone. Ideally, the helipads should be located in close proximity to the mountain/shelter huts established under *Activity 4.16*, while those within the buffer zone would best be sited close to local settlements. A total of six public helipads should perhaps be considered, four within the national park and two within the buffer zone.   The design of the helipads would need to comply with CAAN regulations. Building materials (primarily stone, cement, cable U-bolts for fastening down helicopters and paint) would be sourced locally or brought in by mule train. Labour would be sourced from nearby communities and be supervised by appropriate national park staff. Once completed, each helipad would need to be certified by the CAAN, after which it can become operational. Ongoing maintenance of the helipads would be the responsibility of the DNPWC and local communities, presumably under the overall oversight of the CAAN.
Principal output/s
Up to **six (6) public helicopter landing pads** established.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.   **L-1**: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.
Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Identification of suitable sites for helipads done **during second half of Year 2**; construction of helipads undertaken **during Years 3 and 4**; all helipads constructed and fully-operational by the **end of 2020**.
Implementation driver/s
DNPWC and **CAAN**, probably in close collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP** that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions.
Implementation partners
Sankhuwasabha DDC; VDCs; local communities; tourism product owners.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.
Possible funding sources
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; some funds could be made available by DNPWC, Sankhuwasabha DDC and relevant VDCs.
Other related activities
Included in tourism development plan for MBNP (*Activity 1.4*); upgrading of existing and development of new trekking trails (*Activities 2.2 to 2.4* and *3.19* and *3.20*); establishment of high-end tourist lodge in Makalu Barun NP (*Activity 3.7*); construction of mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*).

Key Task Area 5 – Environmental Management and Protection

Building standards and regulations

ACTIVITY 5.1	KTA 5 – Environmental Management and Protection
Promote the enforcement of the National Building Code and develop a voluntary building standards code for all tourism-related infrastructures within the TDA	

Rationale

The National Building Code (NBC) for Nepal was first drafted in 1994. It followed lessons learned from the 6.9-magnitude earthquake which struck Udayapur District in eastern Nepal in August 1988 and killed 721 people and damaged or destroyed more than 66,500 buildings. The NBC was approved by the Government of Nepal in 2003 and is a legally-binding document in all of the country's municipalities. Since it was first legally enforced in 2005, however, the lack of resources has meant that monitoring of implementation of the Code has been a big challenge. Some municipalities have done better in adopting and implementing the Code than others, but very few have incorporated the NBC into their building permit process. As a result, overall building standards in Nepal have not improved significantly over the last two decades.

It is important to note, however, that the NBC regulations do not apply to towns and villages which fall under the jurisdiction of VDCs. This effectively means that, in the absence of similar regulations, there is no building code or set of standards and regulations that apply to buildings outside of municipalities and that, theoretically, buildings can be erected in most rural areas without any standards being applied at all. This clearly has very major implications with respect to earthquakes and the potential loss of life and damage done to buildings.

With the general failure to enforce the NBC in most of the country's municipalities and the lack of building regulations in many rural areas in Nepal, it is perhaps not surprising that more than 9,000 people lost their lives and tens of thousands of buildings were destroyed or damaged during the 7.8- and 7.3-magnitude earthquakes that hit the country in April and May 2015.

The lack of compliance with the NBC and associated building permits and the general absence of monitoring and enforcement of the regulations apply across the country and affect all economic sectors, including the tourism sector. Unless a national effort is made to improve the application and enforcement of the NBC, the standard of building in Nepal is unlikely to improve much in coming years. In rural areas in particular, buildings will continue to be generally poorly-built and sub-standard and most will be very susceptible to earth tremors and earthquakes.

Being a major national problem, it is unrealistic to expect all buildings and other structures erected in the TDA in the future and intended primarily to benefit the tourism sector to comply with the NBC and associated regulations. Under this TDAP, however, an effort should be made to lobby and convince the relevant authorities to implement and enforce the NBC much better than it has been in the past and also to draw up a building code that can be applied to those rural areas that are not covered by the NBC. This may mean expanding the existing NBC, or drawing up a second building code that applies to non-municipal areas and which complements the NBC and which also draws on the latest international experience and best practices.

In addition to official building codes and regulations, there is also room for developing and applying within the TDA, or certain areas within it, a voluntary building standards code which could be adopted by the tourism sector itself. Forming part of a 'climate-sensitive', 'environmental-friendly', 'green' and 'safe' tourism product, adherence by tourism players to this voluntary code could be used during marketing and promotion purposes.

Ideally, however, this voluntary code should be adopted by non-tourism players within the TDA as well, especially local communities, VDCs and hopefully DDCs. With the recent earthquakes still very much in peoples' minds, a bottom-up, demand-driven and pilot approach to developing, adopting and enforcing building regulations which ultimately result in lives being saved and damage to property being minimised may actually work.

Brief description

This activity would focus on three main areas: 1) lobbying relevant government authorities for the enforcement of the existing NBC and associated building permits across the country; 2) lobbying relevant government authorities for the development, application and enforcement of building standards regulations for non-municipal and rural areas within Nepal; and 3) promoting the development and voluntary adoption within the TDA of a set or code of national and international best practices in building standards.

The first two focus areas are national-level issues that probably fall outside the remit of this regional-level TDAP. Any lobbying that is carried out at national level needs to be done by the relevant government ministries, departments and other bodies, most likely with strong political support.

The third focus area could be addressed under this TDAP. It would require a driver, preferably the MoCTCA/DoT in collaboration with a strong and respected state agency, such as the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN), working with selected and interested VDCs and DDCs. Assistance from a donor-funded intervention may be possible.

The main aim of this focus area is to draw up a building code that is relevant to the TDA and to persuade players in the tourism sector to voluntarily apply it as a pilot. Assuming that the pilot results in at least some success, it could then be extended to other sectors within the TDA and to areas elsewhere within Nepal.

Principal output/s

Effective lobbying at national level for the full adoption and enforcement of the NBC in all municipalities and VDCs in Nepal; adoption of a **voluntary building standards code** within the TDA; **building standards significantly improved**.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
National, **district** and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA. **L-14**: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes. **L-16**: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.	
Priority rating	
High priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Lobbying for full application of NBC undertaken **from Year 1 onwards**; development of a voluntary building standards code within TDA undertaken **during Year 2**; NBC being more fully-applied and enforced **from Year 2 onwards**; voluntary building standards code being applied **from Year 3 onwards**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Most appropriate lead ministry in collaboration with **other relevant government ministries**; also **MoCTCA/DoT** in collaboration with the **IBN** and with possible assistance from a **building standards expert** through an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
MoFALD; DDCs; VDCs; local communities; tourism industry private sector.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 1,000,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Government of Nepal; IDA-supported intervention; tourism industry private sector.	
Other related activities	
Formulation of tourism development plans for PAs and districts (***Activities 1.3 to 1.5***); building of community lodges and campsites and upmarket concessions (***Activities 3.1 to 3.4*** and ***3.7***); building of outdoor recreational facilities (***Activities 3.16 to 3.18***); building of tourism service and information centres (***Activities 4.1 to 4.3***); construction of mountain huts/shelters (***Activity 4.15***); development of environmental guidelines (***Activity 5.2***).	

Environmental guidelines

ACTIVITY 5.2	KTA 5 – Environmental Management and Protection
Develop a set of environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures and operations within protected areas and elsewhere within the TDA	
Rationale	

Nowadays, there is a very strong focus on and requirement for tourism products and operations around the world to be as 'environmentally-friendly', 'environmentally-green' and 'socially-acceptable' as possible. Nepal is well-suited to this type of product, especially those located in rural and remote areas, but certainly not restricted to them (viz. some exceptionally 'green' hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara).

However, although many operators like to claim that they own and run 'green' operations, the reality is frequently not the case. Lip-service is often paid by tourism product owners to concepts such as *inter alia* ecotourism, environmentally-appropriate tourism, responsible tourism, green tourism, climate change-sensitivity, aestheticism, sustainable technologies, etc. This can and does mislead customers, resulting in quite severe damage being done to the reputation of the tourism industry as a whole, whether or not it actually deserves it.

What is lacking in most instances is a set of easy-to-understand environmental guidelines that can be followed during both the set up/construction and operational phases of the various tourism products and activities. 'Environmental' in this context broadly refers to the natural and man-made environments, and well as to the social and economic environments. In many ways, such a set of environmental guidelines represent a type of 'code of practice' to be adopted and adhered to by tourism product owners and service providers. Many private sector tourism-related associations possess these, including associations in Nepal.

Ideally, however, there should be a set of broad environmental guidelines which should be freely available to all those companies, communities and individuals involved in the tourism industry. These would apply to not just how tourism-related infrastructures and utilities are designed, built and maintained, but also to the day-to-day operations of the various tourism products. Although such guidelines are likely to cover a wide range of subjects, users can select and voluntarily follow those that are most applicable to them.

Subject areas which could be covered include, for example, overall building design, architectural theme or style, aesthetics, building materials and their sources, colour schemes, site layout, landscaping, parking, roads and paths, artificial lighting, use of non-indigenous plants, energy sources, solid waste disposal, recycling, sewage systems, signage, visitor safety and security, building practices, employment practices, degree of local involvement, sourcing of day-to-day supplies, environmental impact mitigation, etc.

Institutions involved in the development of such guidelines could include, for example, DNPWC, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and WWF Nepal and various local NGOs or similar bodies that are concerned with nature conservation and the protection of cultural heritage. Selected and reputable private sector players in the tourism industry would also be involved.

The environmental guidelines which would be drawn up under this activity have application and relevance to a large number of different activities presented under this TDAP (see "*Other related activities*" below). At this stage, application of the guidelines would be on a voluntary and non-obligatory basis with the hope that the various players will willingly take them on board and include them in their operations. However, aspects of the guidelines could very well be incorporated into obligatory building standards and regulations developed and applied under *Activity 5.1*. Some may also have relevance to the heritage protection guidelines and regulations dealt with under *Activity 5.3*.

Brief description

It is envisaged that this activity would be undertaken by an independent consultant working in close collaboration with the MoCTCA/DoT. This consultant would possibly be made available through an IDA-supported intervention.

The activity would firstly source and review all relevant codes of practice and similar environmental guidelines that are presently in use in the tourism sector in Nepal. The review would also identify and highlight international best practice with respect to tourism industry-related environmental guidelines, both regionally (eg. Bhutan, India) and wider afield. Extensive consultations with a range of tourism stakeholders and players in the country, especially in the private sector, would also take place. A draft review report with recommendations would then be put together and submitted to the MoCTCA/DOT.

The review and recommendations would be perused by the MoCTCA/DoT and other participating stakeholders and comments made. These would be addressed as appropriate and a final environmental guidelines document produced. This would comprise two parts: the first would be the finalised review and recommendations document, while the second would be an easy-to-read list of environmental guidelines grouped under appropriate headings intended for consumption by a wide range of players in the tourism sector. This two-part document would also be submitted to the MoCTCA/DoT for approval, most likely by the Joint Secretary of the Planning and Evaluation Development Division.

Once approved, it would then be up to the MoCTCA/DoT to disseminate the guidelines document to as many players as possible within the TDA and elsewhere in Nepal. Feedback from users would be requested and acted on as necessary.

As stated above, a large number of activities under this TDAP would benefit to a greater or lesser extent from the application of such environmental guidelines for the tourism sector.

Principal output/s

Set of **environmental guidelines for the tourism sector** developed; **guidelines being voluntarily followed** by tourism sector players in the TDA and elsewhere in Nepal; **improvement in the quality of tourism product and standards of service** noticeable in the TDA and elsewhere.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National, **district** and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.
L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Environmental guidelines developed **during second half of Year 1**; guidelines produced by the **end of 2017**.

Implementation driver/s

MoCTCA/DoT with possible assistance from an **environmental guidelines expert** through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

DNPWC; ICIMOD; WWF Nepal; TAAN; hospitality associations; relevant specialists; local communities; tourism industry private sector.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 1,500,000.

Possible funding sources

MoCTCA/DoT; IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities
Formulation of tourism development plans for PAs and districts (***Activities 1.3 to 1.5***); improving visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (***Activity 2.1***); building of community lodges and campsites and upmarket concessions (***Activities 3.1 to 3.4*** and ***3.6*** and ***3.7***); development of new tourist attractions (***Activities 3.10 to 3.14***); building of outdoor recreational facilities (***Activities 3.15 to 3.18***); development of tours and tourism activities (***Activities 3.22 to 3.28***); building of tourism service and information centres (***Activities 4.1 to 4.3***); establishment of visitor centres (***Activities 3.17*** and ***4.5***); construction of park/reserve entrance facilities (***Activities 4.6*** and ***4.7***); establishment of incineration and solid waste disposal facilities (***Activities 4.11*** and ***4.12***); construction of mountain huts/shelters (***Activity 4.15***); development and application of building standards (***Activity 5.1***); development and application of heritage protection guidelines and regulations (***Activity 5.3***); development of signage (***Activities 6.1 to 6.3***); formulation of concession agreements (***Activities 9.5 to 9.8***); tourism awareness training (***Activities 10.1 to 10.3***); training course on solid waste management (***Activity 10.5***); training courses for staff and custodians of tourist attractions (***Activity 10.6***).

Heritage protection regulations

ACTIVITY 5.3	**KTA 5 – Environmental Management and Protection**

| ***Promote the enforcement of regulations protecting local heritage sites and traditional buildings and landscapes within the TDA*** ||

Rationale
Much of the architecture in the TDA, especially in rural areas, is very traditional in style and many of the buildings are quite old and historical. A large number of these buildings are wonderful examples of local architecture and should be preserved as much as possible. This not only applies to individual buildings, but also to whole streets and areas within settlements and towns. Taken together, the individual buildings, streets and landscapes contribute significantly to the appeal of the area to tourists and visitors, as well as to local residents.

Unfortunately, in the drive for development and modernisation and in the absence of any real control over the enforcement of building regulations and permits (***Activity 5.1***), many of these old buildings are being pulled down or altered and non-traditional forms of architecture are being adopted and used in their place. In other areas, new buildings are being put up that have no relationship at all with traditional architecture and many of them are clearly out of place with respect to architectural style, colour and construction. As a result, some towns and villages (eg. Khandbari) have an incongruous mix of old and new buildings with many of the new buildings standing in stark and even ugly contrast to traditional ones. This definitely has an adverse impact on the ambience of towns and villages and their appeal to many tourists, visitors and residents.

This gradual loss of traditional buildings and their replacement with ill-fitting ones will eventually result in much of the charm and appeal of traditional hill towns and villages in the TDA being lost. The TDA will soon begin to look like any other region in Nepal or on the sub-continent and its uniqueness will be lost forever. An effort should be made to preserve traditional architecture and landscapes, both of which contribute enormously to the tourism sector. Unfortunately, most of the present-day effort is directed at important public buildings, such as palaces, temples and other religious buildings, and little of it is focused on preserving the smaller and often privately-owned buildings.

The preservation of culture in Nepal largely falls under the jurisdiction of the MoCTCA, in particular the Culture Division and Department of Archaeology (DoA). Legislation and regulations are in place to preserve historical buildings and those of architectural values. To name just some, these include the *Ancient Monument Preservation Act 2013 (1956)* and later amendments (1988), the *Building Act 1998* and the *Town Development Act 2045 (1998)* and amendments. As with the National Building Code (***Activity 5.1***), however, lack of resources has meant that the enforcement of these laws and regulations has not been very effective, especially for those buildings and areas within the country which are not of significant national interest or of perceived value.

Being a national rather than a district or local issue, it would be very unrealistic to expect anywhere near full compliance with the various building preservation regulations that are in place, even in the TDA. Under this TDAP, however, there is an opportunity to lobby and convince the relevant national and especially district authorities in the TDA to implement and enforce regulations governing the preservation of historic buildings, streets and landscapes much better than has been done in the past and to view these assets as being worth preserving for national posterity sake and not just for tourism purposes.

Brief description
This activity would focus on two main areas: 1) lobbying relevant government authorities at national level for the effective enforcement of regulations governing the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes across the country; and 2) working with district and local authorities (municipalities and VDCs) to promote the enforcement of national and district-level regulations in their own administrative areas.

The first focus area, as with the NBC, is a national-level issue that probably falls outside the remit of this regional-level TDAP. Any lobbying that is carried out at national level needs to be done by the relevant government ministries, departments and other bodies, most likely with strong political support.

The second focus area could be addressed under this TDAP. It would require a driver, preferably the MoCTCA/Culture Division/DoA, working through the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) with the Sunsari, Dhankuta and

Sankhuwasabha DDCs and selected VDCs in order to persuade them of the need to take concrete steps to preserve their valuable and often unique architectural and built heritage.

It is envisaged that this activity would be significantly strengthened if it were to be assisted and advised by an independent built heritage preservation expert possibly contracted through a donor-funded intervention. In this way, international best practice and a good degree of impartiality could be brought to bear to help improve the regulation enforcement process and to encourage authorities to be much more conscious of their architectural and built heritage than they are at present.

Principal output/s
Effective lobbying at national level for the full adoption and enforcement of built heritage legislation and regulations throughout Nepal; **built heritage regulations being enforced** in the TDA.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity
National, **district** and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.
L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.

Priority rating
High priority.

Timing and target dates
National lobbying for enforcement of built heritage regulations undertaken **from Year 1 onwards**; promotion of the enforcement of regulations within the TDA undertaken **from Year 1 onwards**; regulations being more fully-applied and enforced **from Year 2 onwards**.

Implementation driver/s
MoCTCA/Culture Division/DoA with possible assistance from a **built heritage preservation expert** through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
MoFALD; DDCs; municipalities and VDCs; state and private museums; local communities; local interest groups; relevant heritage and building specialists; various interested tourism industry private sector players.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.

Possible funding sources
MoCTCA/Culture Division/DoA; IDA-funded intervention; DDCs.

Other related activities
Formulation of tourism development plans for districts (*Activity 1.5*); improving visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (*Activity 2.1*); development of new tourist attractions (*Activity 3.14*); development and application of building standards (*Activity 5.1*); development of environmental guidelines for the tourism sector (*Activity 5.2*); tourism awareness courses for communities, the public-at-large, schools and colleges (*Activities 10.1 to 10.3*); training courses for staff and custodians of tourist attractions (*Activity 10.6*).

Solid waste control

ACTIVITY 5.4	KTA 5 – Environmental Management and Protection

Conduct a feasibility study on how to control the import into and disposal of bottles and other non-biodegradable materials within the Makalu Barun area

Rationale
The disposal of solid waste brought in by trekkers and other visitors is already causing problems in the Makalu Barun area, particularly with respect to unsightly pollution along the trail sides and the dangers that some of the waste poses to children, wildlife and the environment in general. Much of this waste is plastic, tin and paper packaging, lots of which can be found on the trekking trails and in the adjacent fields, streams and rivers, not to mention also within the settlements themselves. The import into the area of beer bottles in particular is resulting in piles of empty bottles gradually increasing in size in and around buildings and settlements. Deeper into the park, larger discarded items can be found, these being related to trekking and mountaineering expeditions to the area. At present, little effort has been made to address this growing problem, other than simply turning a blind eye to it.

Under this TDAP, *Activity 4.12* aims to address the need for installing a number of community-run incineration and solid waste disposal facilities in the Makalu Barun area. Correctly promoted and managed, these would result in much of the solid waste being collected together and stored in centralised depots.

What is needed in addition, however, are a number of strategies and mechanisms which address the initial import into the area of solid packaging material and the disposal, recycling and removal of the solid waste once it has been collected. It may, for instance, be possible to ban the import of glass bottles into the area, but this would probably prove to be both unpopular and difficult to implement and enforce. Bottles could be used for innovative construction. Other possibilities include requiring empty 'south-bound' mule trains to remove solid waste from the area. Again this may prove to be unpopular and unfeasible, especially as the issues of who pays and what to do with the waste material once it has been removed from the area arise. The use of crushed glass as an aggregate for cement could also be considered. Carefully-sited landfills may unavoidably prove to be necessary.

What is certain is that the disposal of solid waste will become a major environmental and social issue in the Makalu Barun area as increasing numbers of visitors are attracted. Some form of plan that can be practically and effectively implemented needs to be put in place sooner rather than later. This activity aims to identify those strategies and mechanisms that can be applied to the management of solid waste in the Makalu Barun area. Such strategies and mechanisms would likely have direct relevance to other PAs in Nepal.

Brief description

This activity would probably be undertaken by a consultant specialising in the disposal of solid waste in protected areas, possibly through a donor-funded intervention. The activity would firstly involve undertaking a feasibility study and identifying appropriate international best practice and the experiences of other PAs in Nepal, in particular Annapurna CA and Sagarmatha NP, with respect to solid waste management in PAs, especially of glass and metals. International technological knowledge and experience in dealing with solid wastes should also be taken into consideration.

One or more field visits to Makalu Barun area would be undertaken to assess the current and future impact of solid waste on the environment and the possibilities of controlling the import of solid packaging materials, removing the solid waste subsequently and of processing, recycling and disposing of the waste on-site.

The feasibility study would be carried out in close consultation with the DNPWC at head office in Kathmandu and will also involve consultations with the management of MBNP and other relevant PAs in Nepal, as well as with appropriate waste disposal practitioners. VDCs and local committees would also be consulted and included in discussions. A report with recommendations would then be produced and submitted to the DNPWC.

The feasibility study and recommendations would be perused by the DNPWC and comments made. After comments have been addressed, the report and recommendations would again be submitted to the DNPWC for approval, possibly from the Secretary of State.

The findings and recommendations of the feasibility study would contribute to the training course on waste management addressed under (*Activity 10.5*).

Once the report is approved, the DNPWC would then need to act on any recommendations that have been made. This may, for instance, include the initiation of a pilot project within Makalu Barun that trials hand-operated glass-crushing machines and the subsequent use of the crushed glass as an aggregate for cement. The compulsory use of empty 'south-bound' mule trains to remove solid waste could also be piloted. Improvements in and enforcement of appropriate regulations may also be recommended. Another recommendation may relate to the obligatory need for all solid waste in the buffer zone and national park to be separated and correctly disposed of by trekking companies, tourism product owners and residents. It may also be possible to set up commercially-run waste disposal enterprises.

The results of this activity would hopefully be of real value to the protection and conservation of the Makalu Barun area in the future. They could also have direct application and benefit to other PAs in Nepal.

Principal output/s

Report and recommendations on the disposal of glass and other non-biodegradable materials within the Makalu Barun area. The activity would hopefully be followed by **several pilot activities**.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.
L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Feasibility study conducted **during first half of Year 2**; report and recommendations produced by the **end of June 2018**; possible pilots initiated by DNPWC **from mid-2018**.

Implementation driver/s

Independent consultant, possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**, in close collaboration with the **DoT**.

Implementation partners

DNPWC/MBNP; proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee'; Num, Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya and Chepuwa VDCs; waste disposal/recycling companies.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 2,000,000.
Possible funding sources
Internally funded through DoT; supported by IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Incorporation into proposed tourism development plan for MBNP (*Activity 1.4*); establishment of community-run incineration and solid waste disposal facilities in Makalu Barun (*Activity 4.13*); development of environmental guidelines (*Activity 5.2*); establishment of proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (*Activity 8.4*); training course on the correct disposal of waste (*Activity 10.5*).

Key Task Area 6 – Visitor Management and Information Provision

Signage

ACTIVITY 6.1	KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision

Design, produce and erect locality-specific tourism information boards at key locations within the TDA

Rationale

Visitors arriving in the TDA from elsewhere Nepal will normally do so by air through the airports at Biratnagar and Tumlingtar or by road along the Mahendra Highway (AH2) via the Koshi Barrage in the west and from the Kakarbhitta border post in the east. They can also enter the region from the west several minor roads along the Sunkoshi River valley and from Gaighat and from the east on a number of minor roads leading from Morang, Illam, Pachthar and Terhathum Districts. SAARC visitors from neighbouring India travel by road via the border posts at Biratnagar and Kakarbhitta and several minor border crossings in Sunsari and Saptari Districts.

As these visitors cross into the TDA, they should ideally be met by large and well-presented tourism information boards that welcome and illustrate to visitors the types of tourism attractions that can be visited and the activities that can be undertaken. In addition to good photographs and attractive regional and local maps, these boards could also provide a certain amount of useful and practical information, such as phone numbers, website and email addresses, addresses, social media sites, etc. of a selection of tourism products, services and activities, many of which could be supported through the use of QR code labels (*Activity 6.4*). All the boards should be specifically branded for the TDA. This branding could, for instance, reflect the particularly unique characteristics of the TDA, such as Mt Makalu, the Arun-3 dam, pilgrimage sites, river floodplains, Ganges river dolphins, birdwatching, rafting, rhododendrons, adventure tourism, cable cars, etc.

Under this TDAP, it is envisaged erecting such boards at suitably prominent locations at Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports (*Activity 4.10*), at the eastern end of the Koshi Barrage and also at a suitable point just east of Itahari on the Mahendra Highway, as well as at prominent locations within Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile and Num. The boards need not necessarily be sited adjacent to the various proposed tourism service and information centres (*Activities 4.1* and *4.3*). Once the new Kimathangka-Khandbari main road is open (probably in 4-5 years' time), another welcoming board could be erected in Kimathangka to serve the expected flow of visitors and travellers from China along the Koshi Highway.

Not a great deal of tourist traffic presently enters the TDA along the minor roads from the districts in far-eastern Nepal. Most visitors travelling westwards into the TDA do so on foot as trekkers along the GHT Cultural Route with some using the High Route. Erecting welcoming boards along these roads is probably not necessary, certainly for the foreseeable future. There is no reason, however, why Terhathum District, for instance, could not erect its own welcoming signage.

In the future, and probably beyond the lifetime of this TDAP, there could well be a second major highway to the TDA from Kathmandu which runs along the Sunkoshi River valley. A similar welcoming board could then be erected near to "Three Rivers" (junction of the Sunkoshi, Arun and Tomar Rivers).

It is probable that the signs would need to be produced in either Nepali or English or both or in another language, this being very dependent on the location of the individual signs and the origin of the visitors that pass by. For entry points along the border with India, for instance, Nepali and even Hindi can be used. At the two airports Nepali and English only could feature, while at Kimathangka on the Tibet border Chinese and perhaps English would feature prominently. At other points within the TDA, Nepali and English would be used.

It is envisaged that the concept, design and development of this signage would form part of the proposed 5-year regional tourism marketing strategy (*Activity 11.1*) with the development being driven by the DoT. The DoT would direct its efforts through the NTB and CAAN and work closely with the Department of Roads (DoR) of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT). With respect to the border crossings, the DoT would also need to work with the Department of Immigration (DoI) of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Brief description

Much of this activity could be undertaken as a single project. It is envisaged that it would form part of the proposed 5-year regional marketing strategy for the TDA and also be incorporated into any district-level tourism developments plans that may be formulated (*Activity 1.5*).

The activity would involve stages that tackled: ♦ concept, design and branding; ♦ selection of sites; ♦ manufacture; and ♦ installation of the signage. The signage for Kimathangka, however, would be developed separately towards the end of the TDAP in order to coincide with the opening of the Kimathangka-Khandbari road – likewise if the new highway from Kathmandu via "Three Rivers" is opened before the end of 2021.

The activity would be driven largely by the DoT through both the NTB and the CAAN and in close collaboration with the DoR and DoI. It is possible that some support could be given through a donor- or IFI-funded intervention.

Maintenance of the signage would be under the overall responsibility of the DoT, but with assistance being given by the respective municipalities and DoI, especially with regard to regular cleaning and minor repairs. In the event that signs are seriously damaged and in need of replacement, the DoT would take on the responsibility. Continued liaison with the DoR would also be necessary throughout.

Towards the end of the TDAP, the signs would probably need updating, especially in light of the expected tourism developments that have taken place within the lifetime of the TDAP. This updating would be undertaken in Year 5 of the TDAP, or form an early activity in the following TDAP, if one is indeed pursued.

Principal output/s	
Several large, branded and attractive **tourism information boards/billboards** installed in **up to 12 selected key locations** within and adjacent to the TDA.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
District and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists. **M-3**: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA. **L-10**: Carry out selected improvements to facilities and services at visitor 'gateways' to the TDA.	
Priority rating	
Low priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Conceptual development of information boards undertaken **during second half of Year 1**; production of boards undertaken **during first half of Year 2**; installation of information boards undertaken **during second half of Year 2**; information boards fully-installed by the **end of 2018**; all boards updated **during first half of Year 5**; updated boards produced and fully installed by the **end of 2021**.	
Implementation driver/s	
DoT/NTB/CAAN with possible support from an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
DoR; Department of Immigration (DoI); Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; district-level tourism development committees; selected municipalities and VDCs; selected participating tourism product owners.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 3,000,000.	
Possible funding sources	
DoT/NTB; possible support from IDA-funded intervention.	
Other related activities	
Inclusion in district-level tourism development plans (*Activity 1.5*); establishment of tourism service and information centres and kiosks (*Activities 4.1 to 4.4*); improvements to Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports (*Activity 4.10*); development of QR codes (*Activity 6.4*); formulation and implementation of a 5-year regional tourism marketing strategy for the TDA (*Activity 11.1*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (*Activity 11.2*).	

ACTIVITY 6.2	**KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision**

Design, produce and erect branded roadside directional signage for selected tourism attractions and products within the TDA

Rationale

With the exception of most trekkers and mountaineers and those visitors travelling by air to and from Biratnagar and Tumlingtar, all of the visitors moving around the TDA will do so by road and in public, private or hired vehicles. At present, very little (if any) signage along the roadsides could be described as being touristic in nature. Frequently, the only way to reach a tourist attraction or destination is either by public transport or tour bus in the company of drivers or guides who know the way, or by constantly asking for directions from people walking or standing on the roadside. Even with relatively well-known attractions or destinations, as with many well-established hotels, sign-posting is virtually absent.

It could be argued that there is no need for signage as 'everyone' knows how to get to places within the region. For the sake of good business and pulling in increasing numbers of visitors to various attractions and products, however, the role that roadside signage can play is obvious. It not only makes it easier for self-guided visitors to find a destination, but it is clearly good for the image of that destination or product and for the overall tourism offer in the TDA.

Furthermore, if the signage which is used is of a consistent style and appearance (ie. brand), it is readily-recognisable to drivers and their passengers. This again helps make travelling around the TDA as a visitor or tourist much easier and less uncertain. All tourism-related signs, therefore, should be branded and instantly recognisable. They could, for instance, consist of yellow writing on a deep-brown background, as is quite a common practice around the world. They could also include one or two very recognisable symbols which denote the nature of the destination being pointed out (eg. temple, pilgrimage site, natural feature, forest, activity, historical building, public park, picnic site, etc.), this again being a worldwide and common practice.

Under this TDAP, it is envisaged erecting such directional signage at many suitable locations on roads within areas of the TDA that are most popular with tourists, pilgrims and visitors. This is likely to be mostly in the southern and central parts of the region where roads and various attractions tend to be more abundant. Each tourist attraction or destination may need a number of

directional signs on their approach roads, these being placed at strategic locations to enable drivers to find their way fairly easily. The main aim should be to not 'lose' the driver at any time. Even a small brown-and-yellow sign featuring a directional arrow, a symbol and possibly also the name would be sufficient in many cases.

It is probable that the signs would need to be produced in both Nepali and English. There would probably be no need for the foreseeable future, however, to use other languages on the signs, if at all. Hindi is very similar to Nepali and Chinese should only be considered if there is a very significant inflow of visitors along the Kimathangka-Khandbari-Biratnagar highway (Koshi Highway) after it has opened and a consequent demand from Chinese visitors for 'better' signage.

The use of QR codes (*Activity 6.4*) on roadside directional signage is not envisioned.

It is envisaged that the concept, design and development of roadside directional signage would form part of the proposed 5-year regional tourism marketing strategy (*Activity 11.1*) with the development of the signs being driven by the DoT. The DoT would direct its efforts through the NTB and work closely with the Department of Roads (DoR) of the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT) as well as with the respective DDCs. The DoT/NTB would also need to liaise and work closely with the custodians or owners of tourism attractions and products that wish to be featured on road signage.

Brief description
This activity could be undertaken as a single project. It is envisaged that it would form part of the proposed 5-year regional marketing strategy for the TDA and also be incorporated into any district-level tourism developments plans that may be formulated (*Activity 1.5*). The activity would involve stages that tackled: ♦ concept, design and branding; ♦ selection of sites; ♦ manufacture; and ♦ installation of the signage. The activity would be driven largely by the DoT through the NTB and in close collaboration with the DoR. It is possible that some support could be given through a donor- or IFI-funded intervention. Maintenance of the signage would be under the overall responsibility of the DoT, but with assistance being given by the respective municipalities and individual tourist attraction custodians and product owners, especially with regard to the regular cleaning and minor repairs that may be needed. In the event that signs are seriously damaged and in need of replacement, the DoT would take on the responsibility. Continued liaison with the DoR would be necessary throughout. Towards the end of the TDAP, additional roadside directional signage may be needed as new tourist attractions, destinations and activities come into being.
Principal output/s
Up to 200 branded directional signs installed at key points along selected roads within the TDA. More than 200 signs are possible.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists. **L-9**: Improve access to selected popular tourist attractions within the TDA. **L-10**: Carry out selected improvements to facilities and services at visitor 'gateways' to the TDA.
Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Conceptual development of roadside directional signage undertaken **during second half of Year 1**; identification of locations for initial signage undertaken **during first half of Year 2**; production of initial signage undertaken **during second half of Year 2**; installation of initial signage undertaken **during Year 3**; initial roadside directional signage fully-installed by the **end of 2019**; any additional roadside directional signage produced and installed **during Year 5**; all additional roadside directional signage fully-installed by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
DoT/NTB with possible support from an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
DoR; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; district-level tourism development committees; selected municipalities and VDCs; custodians of tourist attractions; selected and featured tourism product owners.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 2,500,000.
Possible funding sources
DoT/NTB; possible support from DoR; possible support from IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Inclusion in district-level tourism development plans (*Activity 1.5*); improvements to selected tourist attractions in the TDA (*Activity 2.1*); development of a range of new tourist attractions (*Activities 3.9 to 3.14*); establishment of day-visitor and recreational facilities (*Activities 3.15 to 3.18*); development of range of new tourism activities (*Activities 3.24 to 3.27*);

ACTIVITY 6.3	KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision

Design, produce and erect appropriately-branded trail signage along the GHT High Route and Cultural Trail within the Makalu Barun NP and northern TDA

Rationale

Critical to any trail system or network is signage. Without it, trail users may be hard-pressed to stay on the correct track and to gauge how far they have walked or have still to cover. They will also be a lot less aware of the facilities and features that are found along the trail, as well as the safety awareness and precautions that may be needed. Trekkers will also be much more reliant on the help from local guides, which can clearly be a problem if trekkers and guides become separated for any reason. It can also be argued that, without any signage, the GHT as an internationally-recognised trail doesn't really exist on the ground.

Signage can be categorised into three main types: 1) directional signage; 2) informational signage; and 3) interpretative signage.

Directional signage indicates to trail users specific destinations and the distances or estimated walking times to them. They are critical if trail users, in particular trekkers, are to be pointed along the correct path, especially at the many trail junctions and side-tracks along the GHT and at points that might appear to be ambiguous. Such signage should be clear, simple and absolutely non-ambiguous.

Informational signage provides trekkers and other trail users with additional information, such as simple maps of the local and overall area, GPS references, altitudes, degree of trail difficulty, "dos and don'ts", what facilities are available along the trail, nearest First Aid posts or evacuation points, which trails are closed and when, etc. Much of this information is related to the overall management of trekkers and the trail itself, as well as to the safety of trail users, porters and local residents alike.

Interpretative signage enhances a trekker's experience of the trail and relates mainly to the provision of information about particular points of interest, such as scenery, geology, vegetation, wildlife, ecology, history, culture, etc. Although not critical to directing trekkers along the right trail or to ensuring their safety, such information can provide trekkers with a more informative and rewarding experience of the trail. Some of this type of signage can be quite sophisticated and include photographs and diagrams. Because it is not essential to a trail, interpretative signage is not addressed under this activity.

Depending on the exact purpose, location and context of the sign, directional and informational signage along the GHT should or could feature at least one or several pieces of information. These may include: a numbered location, altitude of sign, GPS reference, compass direction, directional arrows, destination and distance, walking time, degree of difficulty of trail, altitude along the trail, nearest First Aid post, nearest evacuation point/helipad, emergency contact details, colour-coded trail symbols, accommodation facilities, toilet facilities, water supply, etc.

The signage should also be in an appropriate language (ie. Nepali, English and probably Chinese) and be designed to serve users walking either direction along the trails. If Internet and Wi-Fi capacity was also made available within the Makalu Barun area (*Activity 4.14*), then many of the signs along the GHT could include one or more QR code labels (*Activity 6.4*), especially those that link in with URL/websites that provide weather forecasts and other useful information through the regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (*Activity 11.2*). The use of QR codes could help trails users significantly with sourcing interpretative material on the World Wide Web through the Internet.

The tourism component of the UKAID-funded Samarth/Nepal Market Development Project has recently developed a signage system for the GHT and is currently applying it to several areas within Nepal. It would make sense for the TDAP to follow on from what has been done under this project and to also apply the trail signage system to the TDA sections of the GHT High Route and Cultural Route. In doing this, all signage should be GHT-branded with the Makalu Barun sections being appropriately sub-branded.

Under this activity, it would be remiss to ignore the Milke Danda Trail in the south-eastern part of Sankhuwasabha District and the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) Trail which lies in neighbouring Taplejung and Terhathum Districts to the east. The principal attractions along both trails are the rhododendron forests that occur there. These trails also help connect the TDA with far-eastern Nepal and Kanchenjunga along the GHT Cultural Route, so providing an important alternative access route to the TDA and for those trekkers who are unable or don't wish to use the GHT's High Route in the north. Upgrading of these trails has been proposed under *Activity 2.5*. It therefore makes sense to also improve the signage along these trails, including the TMJ which lies outside of the TDA.

In producing and erecting the signage, supporting projects and sponsors should not necessarily be featured on any of the signs that are erected (unless very low-key and in order to satisfy donor visibility requirements), as this tends to date them very quickly. Any future support from donors or sponsors should be required to follow on from the design that has already been adopted and widely applied across the entire GHT network in Nepal. If this is not done, the internationally-recognisable GHT that is being developed will suffer and confusion will likely arise.

The installation of signage along the GHT ties in with a large number of other activities falling under this TDAP (see "*Other related activities*" below). This is largely because the provision of even basic trailside information is critical to the operations and success of many other aspects of the trail and the services that support it. As such, this particular activity is considered one of the core activities within this TDAP.

Brief description

This activity will cover a large geographical area within the northern part of the TDA. As it needs to be closely coordinated with developments and progress with a number of other activities, especially trail upgrades and the development of new trails, the activity will probably need to take place in a number of smaller sub-activities which are focused on individual sections of the GHT rather than as one single huge effort undertaken towards the end of the TDAP's lifetime. One of these sub-activities would focus on the rhododendron TMJ Trail just to the east of the TDA.

It is envisaged that the GHT signage activity will need to be driven and coordinated by an IDA-supported intervention (as was the case with the Samarth/NMDP) in close collaboration with the proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions. Alternatively, the activity could be driven by a joint body made up of the DNPWC and the Sankhuwasabha DDC, but this may lack continuity with the GHT branding and signage support project as a whole and could bog down with the amount of expertise, personnel and work that is required. It may also lack sufficient financial resources. The donor-funded intervention would need to work closely with the DNPWC and Sankhuwasabha DDC, as well as with especially the proposed tourism development committee for Makalu Barun area (*Activity 8.4*), the proposed Joint Sankhuwasabha/Terhathum/Taplejung DDCs task group (*Activity 2.5*), affected VDCs, local settlements and local tourism product owners.

The activity driver/s would firstly need to identify all those sections of the GHT which will benefit from the signage. These sections would include both the High and Cultural Routes of the GHT. The exact design of the signage would then need to be decided upon. This should ideally build and follow on from the progress made with the Samarth/NDMP initiative and address the type of structure (ie. post, cairn, placard, etc.) and materials (wood, metal, plastics, etc.) to be used.

For each section of the GHT to be addressed, three stages would then need to be tackled, namely: 1) undertake a ground survey to determine the exact signage requirements, especially with respect to type, content and quantity, using local knowledge and expertise where possible; 2) produce the signage in appropriate materials, preferably using one reputable manufacturer either based in the TDA or in Kathmandu; and 3) install the signage.

Subsequent maintenance of the signage should be the responsibility of the DNPWC, host VDCs and the Sankhuwasabha DDC. These should also be prepared to carry the costs of maintenance and replacement and possibly updating in the future.

Principal output/s
Fully-integrated trail signage system for the GHT High Route and Cultural Route within the TDA.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity
National, **district** and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

Priority rating
Medium priority.

Timing and target dates
Design of signage undertaken **during first half of Year 2**; production of signage done **during second half of Year 2 and first half of Year 3**; installation of signage done **during Years 3 to 5**; all GHT trail signage in place by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
IDA-funded intervention in close collaboration with the **proposed IRP** that focuses on GHT trail improvements.

Implementation partners
DNPWC/MBNP; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Terhathum and Taplejung DDCs; affected and participating VDCs; local settlements; local tourism product owners; local interest groups; DoT.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 5,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and also IDA-funded intervention; some funds could be made available by DNPWC, Sankhuwasabha, Terhathum and Taplejung DDCs and participating VDCs.

Other related activities
Inclusion in tourism development plan for MBNP (*Activity 1.4*); upgrading of trekking trails along the GHT (*Activities 2.2 to 2.6*); establishment of community campsites and lodges and homestays in the Makalu Barun area (*Activities 3.4* and *3.5*); establishment of day visitor facility overlooking Arun-3 dam wall (*Activity 3.16*); establishment of recreational facilities for tourist in and around Num (*Activities 3.17* and *3.18*); establishment of new trekking trails (*Activities 3.19* and *3.20*); building of park entrance structures (*Activity 4.7*); construction of access link roads to settlements in the Makalu Barun area (*Activity 4.9*); establishment of safe drinking water stations (*Activity 4.13*); construction of mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*); development of locality-specific information boards (*Activity 6.1*); development of QR codes (*Activity 6.4*); development of guidebook for MBNP (*Activity 6.5*); establishment of tourism development committee for the Makalu Barun area (*Activity 8.4*); establishment of association of hotels,

community lodges and campsites and homestays in Makalu Barun area (**Activity 8.5**); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (**Activity 11.2**).

QR codes

ACTIVITY 6.4	KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision

Develop and establish a QR code-based tourist/visitor information system for the TDA

Rationale

The Internet and the use of Wi-Fi technology has radically improved the way in which information is made available and provided to tourists and visitors. Nowadays, much of the information obtained by them about places they might or will be visiting is sourced from the Word Wide Web using the Internet. The only requirement needed to acquire this information is being able to get onto the Internet in the first place, either through telephone or cable connections or using wireless technology. In order to do this, tourists and visitors need to possess or have access to the necessary electronic equipment, such as desktop computers, laptops, smartphones, tablets, iPhones, etc. They also need to be connected to the Internet through a service provider and, in most instances, to possess the required software or apps (self-contained programs or pieces of software designed to fulfil particular purposes and downloaded onto wireless computing mobile devices).

Many of the visitors to the TDA are trekkers and mountaineers and light-travelling people for whom carrying around a desktop computer or laptop, or even a tablet, is impractical. It is likely, however, that the majority of these and other visitors carry small portable electronic devices that function as a computer, communication device and digital camera, such as an iPhone or other smartphone.

A quick and very convenient method for accessing the Internet using these devices is through the use of QR codes. These "quick response" codes are two-dimensional barcodes consisting of small squares with black and white patterns that appear in an increasing variety of places, such as in magazine and newspaper ads and on posters, packaging, etc. A QR code is used to encode some sort of information, such as text or a URL (a Uniform Resource Identifier, which is the generic term for all types of names and addresses that refer to sites on the World Wide Web). QR codes can be read by smartphones equipped with cameras and a QR code reader. Free QR code readers can usually be found in the various app stores for different phone platforms (eg. Windows Phone, Blackberry, Apple iPhone, etc.).

One of the many advantages of QR codes with respect to tourism is that they cut back very significantly on the need to produce large amounts of printed material, such as guidebooks, brochures, pamphlets, posters, informative displays, etc., especially in and around tourist attractions such as museums, monuments, temples, churches, etc. where such material can prove to be an imposition on the site itself. By accessing specially-developed URLs, users are able to access information that would be difficult and expensive to reproduce and to present and maintain on-site. Importantly, URLs can be produced in whatever language that is needed (Nepali, Hindi, English, Chinese, German, Japanese, etc.) and are comparatively much cheaper than printed material.

Within the TDA, the use of QR codes could revolutionise the presentation and distribution of information. Providing URLs already exist or can be developed, QR labels could be very cheaply produced and placed in a wide variety of locations, such as within tourism service centres, tourism information centres and kiosks (**Activities 4.1 to 4.4**), in and around various tourist attractions, within and around outdoor visitor areas and visitor centres (**Activities 3.15 to 3.18** and **4.5**), in hotels, lodges, campsites, restaurants, shops, etc. Very importantly, QR code labels could also be placed on signage, especially along the various GHT trekking routes (**Activity 6.3**) and at entrance points to PAs (**Activities 4.6** and **4.7**) and at key locations within the PAs, such as community campsites/lodges (**Activities 3.1**, **3.2** and **3.4**), mountain huts/shelters and helipads (**Activities 4.15** and **4.16**), etc.

In addition to providing interesting information on the sites being visited and providing that a URL has been set up, QR codes can also provide quick access to information of a safety and security nature. For example, a QR code that would link directly to the current website (http://www.mfd.gov.np/) of the Meteorological Forecasting Division of the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology could give trekkers and mountaineers access to up-to-date and fairly detailed forecasts of winds and temperatures at four different altitudes and general weather for the mountainous areas of Nepal in the Western, Central and Eastern Regions. This would make it possible for trail users and residents to obtain up-to-date weather forecasts as often as possible and would go a long way to helping ensure the safety of mountain users and residents alike.

With the simple aiming of a smartphone at a QR code label and the click of a button, therefore, a great number of tourists, visitors and residents alike can all get immediate access to the World Wide Web through the regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal developed under **Activity 11.2**.

Brief description

This activity is very easy to carry out, but it would need to be driven and promoted amongst potential players and beneficiaries throughout the TDA and at central level. This could be done by the DoT/NTB with advice and assistance being given by an IT specialist possibly through a donor-funded intervention. Working together, a whole range of possible players and beneficiaries within the TDA could be approached and persuaded to adopt QR code technology. The approach could include producing a small pamphlet that explains in simple terms what QR codes are all about and how they could be of benefit to users. This pamphlet could be printed or emailed out to potentially interested players.

The activity would rely primarily on there being a URL or website in existence in the first place which can be accessed through the Internet. Generating QR codes associated with these URLs/websites is a very simple process and can be done on-line and for free. Once generated, and possibly also customised, QR codes can then be downloaded or emailed and printed onto or reproduced on just about any surface. They could, for instance, be printed onto paper and included in pamphlets, brochures, booklets, notifications, posters, informative displays, etc., or be reproduced on weather-resistant plastic labels or plates and then mounted on walls, windows, signage, etc. Once in position they can then be used by anyone with smartphones equipped with a digital camera and a downloaded QR code reader app.

It would be important to ensure as much as possible that the host URL/website retains the same address. If this changes for any reason, then the associated QR code will be out of date and won't work.

Providing associated URLs already exist or can be developed, it would be possible to develop QR codes and labels for just about any purpose. The application of QR codes within the TDA is almost limitless

Principal output/s

Extensive network of QR codes in use throughout the TDA, but especially relating to tourism attractions, products, services and activities.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National, **district** and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.

M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.

M-4: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA.

M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.

L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

QR codes and associated websites developed **from Year 1 through to Year 5**; numerous QR codes in operation by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

DoT/NTB in close collaboration with one or more **IT specialists**, possibly supported by an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

DNPWC; custodians of tourist attractions; tourism product owners; communities; VDCs; DDCs; Meteorological Forecasting Division; many others.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Initially a donor-funded intervention; DoT/NTB; custodians of tourist attractions; numerous private sector sources.

Other related activities

As stated above, QR code technology can be used for numerous purposes. The key activities under this TDAP related in one way or another to QR codes are as follows, but others clearly exist: establishment of community campsites/lodges (*Activities 3.1*, *3.2* and *3.4*); establishment of day-visitor and outdoor recreational facilities (*Activities 3.15 to 3.18*); establishment of tourism service centres, tourism information centres and kiosks (*Activities 4.1 to 4.4*); establishment of entrance facilities to PAs (*Activities 4.6* and *4.7*); establishment of Internet capacity and availability within the Makalu Barun area (*Activity 4.14*); establishment of mountain huts/shelters and helipads (*Activities 4.15* and *4.16*); development of GHT signage (*Activity 6.3*); development of guidebooks (*Activities 6.5* and *6.6*); establishment of interactive and updatable Internet-based register of trekkers, mountaineers and support teams (*Activity 6.7*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activity 11.2*).

Interpretative material

ACTIVITY 6.5	**KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision**

Develop small guide booklets and other informative material for Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Makalu Barun National Park and buffer zone

Rationale

Many visitors to PAs in Nepal and around the world want to know more about the park or reserve they are visiting. This would be no different with respect to KTWR and MBNP in the TDA. At present, information on both PAs can be obtained via the Internet from a number of different websites dealing with nature conservation, trekking, mountaineering and travel in general. No authoritative or comprehensive informative guide for visitors to either PA exists. Furthermore, other than what appears in

promotional material for nearby visitor accommodation facilities (eg. Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp), no other printed information in the form of maps and checklist is currently available for visitors.

In order to enhance visits to the two PAs by tourists and day-visitors, a small range of interpretative literature should be produced and printed. For each PA this could include a small guide booklet, a tourist map, one of more checklists of animals that can be seen in the park or reserve and an accommodation guide.

The guide booklet could be A5 in size and number around 24 pages and consist of sections dealing with *inter alia* the history of and background to the PA, small map, descriptions of its geology, vegetation and fauna, expanded sections on birds and mammals, cultural and historical context and attractions, available accommodation and other facilities, activities that visitors can undertake, park/reserve rules and regulations, useful contact details, etc. The guide booklet would be well-endowed with a selection of quality photographs and maybe some diagrams. If deemed appropriate, small paid-for adverts can also be inserted in the booklet. The sale of this advertising space could help to cover the cost of production.

A separate full-colour visitor map could also be produced for each PA, but especially KTWR. These maps could best be A3 in size with a large map featured on one side and various other information (and adverts?) on the other.

For each PA, a series of checklists could be produced which lists all the bird, mammal and butterfly and possibly even the plant species that have been recorded in the park or reserve. Bird checklists for KTWR, for instance, would help to enhance the visits of birdwatchers and support the further development of bird-watching tours to the reserve (*Activity 3.23*).

For each PA, a small accommodation guide could also be produced. These might best be produced in pamphlet form which can be relatively easily and cheaply updated. It would probably be best to produce these accommodation guides at a later date rather than earlier.

QR codes (*Activity 6.4*) could be included on any of the above printed material (including within any adverts), but the need for those codes to link in with existing and long-lived URL/website addresses needs to be taken into consideration.

All of the interpretative material that is produced for the two PAs should be appropriately branded, probably with the DNPWC's logo and possibly with sub-brands for each of the PAs. The logos of participating bodies should also feature.

A variety of organisations, bodies and individuals could be approached and involved in producing this interpretative material, including *inter alia* the DNPWC, Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), Bird Watching Club of Nepal, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), WWF Nepal, local communities and residents, wildlife specialists and authors, historians, etc.

The wealth of national and regional field guides that already exist for birds and butterflies and other groups of animals and plants can also be referred to when drawing up the guide booklets and checklists.

The language used would be important. English and Nepali versions would need to be produced, but other language versions, such as in Chinese, would also need to be considered.

Many if not all of the above examples of interpretative material could also be adapted and made available on-line, or as individual apps. This would likely be of value to visitors who don't want to be shouldered with too much printed material. Using apps would also help in making the interpretative material available in different languages, arguably much cheaper than printed various language versions. Access within the PAs to the Internet, however, would be required (*Activity 4.14*).

Brief description

Being the primary body responsible for the conservation, management and development of the KTWR and MBNP, this activity would best be driven by the DNPWC, most likely involving the relevant specialists at head office in Kathmandu and within the two PAs. It may be possible for the DNPWC to also be assisted by one or more specialists working through a donor-funded intervention.

The activity would firstly involve the DNPWC identifying the type of PA-focused interpretative material to be developed and the subject matter to be addressed. Individual specialists who would be tasked with developing the individual publications would then be identified and brought onboard. Individual publications would then be designed, making allowance for paid-for adverts to be included if deemed desirable or necessary. Drafts of the material would be produced and submitted to the DNPWC and other relevant specialist bodies for comment. Once comments have been received, they would be addressed as necessary and the final drafts made ready for production. After publication, electronic versions of the material would be produced as appropriate and made available through the DNPWC and/or other websites and as paid-for apps.

The DNPWC would need to put some thought into how the publications would be distributed. All would be available for free or for sale in the reserve, but others (eg. guide booklet) should be available through other outlets, eg. tourism service and information centres, other PAs and bookstores locally and elsewhere in Nepal.

Once produced, the interpretative material should contribute quite significantly to enhancing the visits of nature and wildlife enthusiasts, as well as trekkers and mountaineers. It would also provide useful material for day-visitors and local residents. The material can also be used in any environmental education activities undertaken by the DNPWC and/or local schools.

Principal output/s

Range of **printed and electronic informative material** produced for KTWR and MBNP.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.

Timing and target dates
Various interpretative materials developed and produced **from Year 2 through to Year 4**; range of material produced and possibly also in production by the **end of 2020**.

Implementation driver/s
DNPWC with possible support specialist support through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
DoT/NTB; BCN; Bird Watching Club of Nepal; local birdwatching clubs; WWT; WWF Nepal; range of individual specialists (wildlife, history, culture, etc.); local residents; interest groups.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 2,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Possible IDA-funded intervention; DNPWC; DoT/NTB; international and local NGOs; Sunsari and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; interest groups; private benefactors.

Other related activities
Establishment of day-visitor facility and visitor centre in KTWR (***Activities 3.15*** and ***4.5***); encourage tour operators to expand excursions to tourist attractions (***Activity 3.22***); further development of bird-watching tours to KTWR (***Activity 3.23***); establishment of Internet capacity and availability within the Makalu Barun area (***Activity 4.14***); development and inclusion of QR codes (***Activity 6.4***); development of interpretative material for other aspects of the TDA (***Activity 6.6***); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (***Activity 11.2***).

ACTIVITY 6.6	KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision
Develop a range of small guide booklets on various aspects of the TDA	

Rationale

Many visitors around the world want to know more about the area they are visiting, the TDA being no exception. At present, information on a wide variety of subject matter can be obtained from the range of available travel guides, from tour guides accompanying visitors, from numerous websites and occasionally from the actual tourist attraction or site being visited.

With respect to the TDA, however, there is a scarcity of interpretative material that is specifically focused on subject matter for which the area is presently known for or is attractive to visitors, or which the TDA could be attractive in the future. Subject areas include *inter alia* history, religious and cultural sites, traditional architecture, birds and other animals, plant life, rhododendron forests, local agriculture, local cuisine, local craft-making, folklore, etc.

There is therefore room for a range of small guide booklets or brochures to be produced. Each of these could deal with specific subjects, or be presented in the form of a self-guided auto or walking trail-guide that covers arrange of different attractions and interests. For example, guides could be produced for the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) rhododendron route, mountain bike trails, pilgrimage sites and routes of the TDA, butterflies of the TDA, tea estates of eastern Nepal, cultivation of mountain crops, local agricultural implements and machinery, local architectural heritage, recipes for local cuisine, songs and stories, etc.

Each guide booklet could be A5 in size and, depending on the subject matter and detailed included, number around 24-36 pages They would probably include a good number of quality photographs as well as maps and diagrams. If deemed appropriate, small paid-for adverts can also be included in the booklet. The sale of advertising space could help to cover the cost of production.

QR codes (***Activity 6.4***) could be included in some or all of the guide booklets (including within any adverts), but the need for those codes to link in with existing and long-lived URL/website addresses needs to be taken into consideration.

It would be good for the promotion of the region as a specific tourist destination area within Nepal if the booklets which are produced could be appropriately branded. Such a brand could be developed as part of the proposed regional tourism marketing strategy (***Activity 11.1***).

A variety of organisations, bodies and individuals could be approached and involved in producing the booklets. These include *inter alia* the DNPWC, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), WWF Nepal, local communities and residents, religious organisations, agricultural research centres and colleges, agricultural production companies, herbalists, traditional medicine practitioners, specialists, authors, historians, etc.

The wealth of national and regional field guides that already exist can also be referred to when drawing up the TDA-focused guide booklets.

The language used would be important. English and Nepali versions would need to be produced, but other language versions, such as in Chinese, would also need to be considered.

All of the booklets could also be adapted and made available on-line, or as individual apps. This would likely be of value to visitors who don't want to be shouldered with too much printed material. Using apps would also help in making the interpretative material available in different languages, arguably much cheaper than printed various language versions. Access to the Internet, however, would be required.

Brief description

Bearing in mind the sheer diversity of subject matter within the TDA for which small guide booklets could be produced, this activity would best be driven by the DoT/NTB, most likely involving relevant national and local specialists wherever appropriate. It may be possible for the DoT/NTB to also be assisted by one or more specialists working through an IDA-supported intervention.

The activity would firstly involve the DoT/NTB, together with a small panel of local and national interested individuals, identifying and deciding upon the subject matter to be tackled. Individual specialists who would be tasked with developing the individual publications would then be identified and brought onboard. Individual booklets would then be designed, making allowance for the inclusion of any paid-for adverts to be included if deemed desirable or necessary. Drafts of the booklets would be produced and submitted to the DoT/NTB and other relevant specialists for comment. Once comments have been received, they would be addressed as necessary and the final drafts made ready for production. After publication, electronic versions of the booklets could be produced as appropriate and made available as apps that could be purchased on-line.

The DoT/NTB would need to put some thought into how the booklets would be distributed. All should be made available for sale at various outlets in the TDA and nationally.

Once produced, the guide booklets should contribute quite significantly to enhancing the visit of nature and wildlife enthusiasts, trekkers, pilgrims and other types of tourists and visitors, as well as helping to inform and educate local residents. The booklets could also be used in local schools, or during any activities organised by local interest groups.

Principal output/s

Small range of **printed and electronic guide booklets** produced on various subjects relating to the TDA.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National, **district** and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Various interpretative materials developed and produced **from Year 2 through to Year 5**; range of material produced and possibly also in production by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

DoT/NTB with possible support specialist support through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

DNPWC; NTNC; BCN; Bird Watching Club of Nepal; local birdwatching clubs; Nepalese and/or international botanical societies; WWF Nepal; DDCs; VDCs/municipalities; local committees; religious organisations; range of individual specialists (wildlife, history, culture, religion, agriculture, traditional medicine, etc.); local residents; interest groups.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Possible IDA-funded intervention; DoT/NTB; international and local NGOs and interest groups; Sunsari, Dhankuta, Sankhuwasabha and Terhathum DDCs; private benefactors.

Other related activities

Improve visitor experience at selected tourism attractions in the TDA (**Activity 2.1**); upgrading of Milke Danda Trail and Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) rhododendron route (**Activity 2.5**); encouraging the development of health and MICE tourism (**Activities 3.8** and **3.9**); development of a range of tourism attractions and unique tourism products based on locally-produced foods and materials and intangible assets in the TDA (**Activities 3.14** and **3.15**); development of tours to tea estates (**Activity 3.25**); development and inclusion of QR codes (**Activity 6.4**); development of interpretative material for KTWR and MBNP (**Activity 6.5**); organisation of paid-for tours to local tourist attractions (**Activity 8.2**); formulation of a regional marketing strategy (**Activity 11.1**); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (**Activity 11.2**).

Visitor management and safety

ACTIVITY 6.7	KTA 6 – Visitor management and Information Provision

Establish an Internet-based register of trekkers, mountaineers and support teams entering the Makalu Barun area

Rationale

The two earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks experienced in Nepal in April and May 2015 clearly demonstrated the need to plan for and be able to effectively respond to environmental disasters. This response includes being able to quickly track down and locate where individual trekkers and mountaineers and their support team members are post-event in order to determine whether or not they are safe or in need of emergency assistance and to respond accordingly. In instances where individuals have perished, knowing with a certain amount of accuracy where their last known position was would help those recovery teams tasked with retrieving bodies.

At present, the Government of Nepal requires all trekkers to obtain a Trekking Registration Certificate (TRC) from the Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) and to go on trekking expeditions in various parts of the country only through registered trekking agencies. This is done with a view of ensuring the safety and security of trekkers, upgrading the service standard and of improving the management of sustainable mountain tourism development in Nepal. In obtaining TRCs, a record of the trekkers is kept by TAAN which incorporates their personal details, trekking routes, duration of trek, etc. Although this record provides an indication of where in the country individual trekkers have applied to go and over what period, it does not provide any indication as to exactly where these trekkers are at any one time. This is important when trekkers and support teams need to be located after any environmental disaster has taken place. Some trekkers, for instance, and for whatever reason, may not have actually travelled to the area they applied to trek in – searching for people who are not in an area is a waste of valuable time and resources for emergency response teams.

What is needed with respect to the Makalu Barun area is for a simple register and database of trekkers and support teams and their locations to be developed which can be updated on at least a daily basis. Any tourist (trekker and mountaineer) and support team members entering the Makalu Barun buffer zone and national park should be required to register with the DNPWC/MBNP management, either in advance or on entry. They should then be obligated to update their locations as frequently as possible and certainly on a daily basis, ideally at those locations where they will be spending the night (eg. settlements, community campsites, lodges, homestays, remote campsites, Makalu Base Camp, etc.) and at buffer zone and park entrance points (*Activity 4.7*), mountain huts/shelters (*Activity 4.15*) and helipads (*Activity 4.16*). If Internet and Wi-Fi capacity is made available within the Makalu Barun area (*Activity 4.14*), especially along the main trails, this could be done very easily and quickly over the Internet. Updating of the database could be made even simpler using QR coded-labels (*Activity 6.4*) posted at strategic locations and on all trailside signage (*Activity 6.3*).

In this way, an accurate idea can be obtained of exactly where visitors and support teams are at any one time. This information can then be used if necessary to help direct emergency response teams. The up-to-date information could also be used in instances where individual trekkers and support staff need to be contacted in personal emergencies.

The register/database could be housed with either the DNPWC/MBNP or with TAAN. In either case, there is clearly an opportunity to expand the system across other trekking/mountaineering areas and PAs within Nepal. With whomever the register/database is housed, however, the focus must always be on being able to update the information as frequently as possible in a field situation and to make that information quickly and easily accessible to those bodies responsible for responding to emergencies.

Even today, no one knows exactly how many people died when the village of Langtang was destroyed in a massive landslide triggered by the April 2015 earthquake. More than 270 are now known to have died, but upwards of 70 are still listed as 'missing'. Some of those listed as 'missing' may not have in fact been in Langtang at all. With a register/database as outlined above, this uncertainty, especially for the relatives and friends of the missing, could be reduced to a minimum.

Brief description

This activity will firstly involve the DNPWC, TAAN and NMA establishing a small working group, to design and develop the register and associated database. This group may possibly be facilitated with information technology (IT) technical assistance through a donor-funded intervention with the activity itself forming part of the proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions.

The working group would *inter alia*: ♦ briefly review the current pros and cons of the TAAN-driven TRC; ♦ identify similar register/database systems in operation elsewhere in Nepal and around the world; ♦ procure and/or develop/adapt the most appropriate system to best-suit the Makalu Barun/Nepal situation; ♦ decide on the institution to host and be responsible for maintaining the register/database; and ♦ train relevant DNPWC/TAAN/NMA personnel to maintain and monitor the system.

At all stages, progress with the development of Internet and Wi-Fi capacity within Makalu Barun (*Activity 4.14*) and a QR coding system (*Activity 6.5*) would be taken into consideration in order to ensure that the register/database which is developed can be effectively implemented on the ground using Wi-Fi technology.

If the Makalu Barun register/database proves to be a successful pilot, it could be rolled out across other trekking/mountaineering areas and PAs within Nepal. It would go a long way to helping to ensure the safety and security of mountain users and improve the capacity of emergency response teams when required.

Principal output/s	
Interactive Internet-based register and database of Makalu Barun trekkers, mountaineers and support teams.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).	
Focal level of activity	
National and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA. **M-4**: Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA. **L-1**: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.	
Priority rating	
Medium priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Register and database designed and set up **during first half of Year 3**; register/database fully up-and-running by the **end of June 2019**.	
Implementation driver/s	
DNPWC in close association with **TAAN** and a possible **IDA-supported intervention** and in collaboration with the **drivers of a proposed IRP**.	
Implementation partners	
NMA; Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya and Chepuwa VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 1,500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Primarily through a proposed IRP that focuses on GHT trail improvements and extensions; possible IDA-funded intervention; DNPWC; TAAN; NMA.	
Other related activities	
Included in tourism development plan for MBNP (***Activity 1.4***); upgrading of existing trekking trails and development of new ones (***Activities 2.2 to 2.4*** and ***3.19*** and ***3.20***); establishment of community campsites/lodges and homestays (***Activity 3.4*** and ***3.5***); building of park entrance structures (***Activity 4.7***); establishment of Internet and Wi-Fi capability (***Activity 4.14***); construction of mountain huts/shelters (***Activity 4.15***); establishment of GHT trailside signage (***Activity 6.3***); development of a QR code-based tourist/visitor information system (***Activity 6.4***).	

Key Task Area 7 – Investment and Funding

Financing facilities

ACTIVITY 7.1	KTA 7 – Investment and Funding

Establish and administer a Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Financing Facility for existing tourism entrepreneurs in the TDA

Rationale

High interest rates charged by commercial banks and the need to provide those banks with significant collateral are arguably amongst the biggest constraints which existing businesses within the tourism sector face when wanting to further develop their products and to exploit any new business opportunities that might arise. Another problem that tourism-related businesses face is that banks generally view tourism as being a particularly fickle and risky sector which takes a long time to repay loans and to generate profits.

It is not surprising, therefore, that few commercial bank loans are granted within the tourism sector. Unless funds can be found from elsewhere, such as from family and friends or possibly from non-reputable and risky sources, many tourism-related businesses have to put on hold any plans they may have for expanding, regardless of the merits of those plans. This is clearly not good for the individuals or businesses involved or indeed for the ability to expand local economic activity and improve livelihoods all round.

In order to help boost the development of tourism within the TDA, what is needed is an opportunity for tourism businesses to have access to 'soft loans'. Soft loans would offer, for example, a below-market rate of interest, interest holidays, extended grace periods and long repayment periods. Soft loans are normally granted by governments to initiatives and projects that they think are worthwhile. Countries themselves can sometimes be provided with soft loans, in particular by International Financing Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Soft loans undoubtedly come with increased risk for the lenders. However, if the lender is not solely concerned primarily with making profits, as with most commercial banks, then many good ideas that tourism businesses may have to expand their operations can actually be realised. Clearly this would be of benefit to the businesses themselves, the people they employ, the families that are supported, the communities they live in and indirectly support and the local and wider economies that they contribute to.

Under this 5-year TDAP, a Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Financing Facility is envisaged that would offer low interest and soft loans, perhaps combined with discretionary grants for selected entrepreneurs, of up to NPR 2.5 million (approximately US$ 25,000) to existing tourism product owners and operators and other eligible applicants within the TDA. Businesses that would be supported under the Facility include existing medium- and small-sized hotels and resorts, guesthouses, homestays, community lodges and campsites, a variety of different community- and privately-owned tourist attractions, various tour operators, non-tourism-based business enterprises and institutions that wish to enter the tourism sector (eg. tea estates, agricultural plantations, etc.), craft-makers, textile makers, *tongba* producers, honey producers, etc.

If the level of available funds within the Facility was set at NPR 160 million (US$ 1.5 million), then at least 60 individual loans and associated grants could be offered. These loans/grants would have the potential for making a very significant and beneficial impact on the development and diversification of the tourism product in the TDA by assisting existing entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

It is envisaged that the SME Financing Facility would be set up and funded by the Government of Nepal as one of the Investment-Ready Projects (IRPs) within this TDAP (see **Section 3.10** (Part 1) and **Annex 2** below). Government funding could, for instance, be provided through the MoCTCA's Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (TIDP), or from other state sources, such as the IBN.

Ideally, either the World Bank (WB) or the Asian Development Bank (ADB), perhaps through the South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP), or another IFI or international NGO (eg. UNDP) could be in a position to also contribute to the Facility. Whether or not this is possible would have to be pursued by the MoCTCA in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance.

The Facility could either be a completely new entity, or, preferably, form part of an existing government-funding structure. Either way, if the Facility is set up it is foreseen that it would be administered by a small body made up of representatives from the MoCTCA (DoT and NTB), MoFALD, MoFSC and IBN. These four Nepalese government institutions would all be key stakeholders in the proposed body set up to coordinate the implementation of the overall TDAP (**Chapter 4** (Part 1)). The body would also have representation from any IFI or other international development agency (IDA) that is a contributor to the Facility.

The Facility would be advertised within the TDA and applications for loans and possible discretionary grants requested. Applicants would submit their applications and proposals to the Facility's administrative body via the Internet or through written submissions. These would then be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the administrative body. There is no reason why an individual business could not apply for more than one loan/grant, either at the same time for different 'products' they are operating, or over the full period of the TDAP.

In approving the loans/grants, there would clearly be a need to set a number of criteria and ground rules to ensure the funds that have been provided are not just simply frittered away or mishandled. It would be up to the administrators of the Facility to ensure as best they can that the borrowers are properly vetted and that the loans/grants which are provided are being spent wisely. Monitoring of the approved loans/grants would be done on a regular basis.

The SME Financing Facility would come online during the first year of the TDAP (2017) and extend throughout the TDAP's 5-year implementation period.

The establishment and operation of the SME Financing Facility would have significant benefit for many of the other activities implemented under this TDAP and help them with delivering their own expected and tangible results on the ground. The many TDAP activities that could benefit from the Facility are listed in "*Other related activities*" below.

The SME Financing Facility would complement very well the state- and donor-funded Grants Fund proposed under **Activity 7.2**. The latter would provide grants to potential and emerging entrepreneurs wishing to establish small, very small and micro initiatives and enterprises within the tourism sector in the TDA as well as to state bodies (eg. DDCs, VDCs) wishing to improve existing or develop new public tourist attractions and infrastructures. The Grants Fund would be set up and administered by the MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC and IBN in partnership with one or more involved donor agencies and/or IFIs and be implemented through the coordinating body proposed to help implement this TDAP (**Section 4.3.3** (Part 1)).

With more than 60 existing SMEs being assisted through the proposed SME Financing Facility over a five-year period (2017-2021) and with a further 125 to 250 new and emerging small, very small and micro enterprises and more than 50 public attractions potentially being supported through the Grants Fund over a four-year period (2018-2021), between 235 and 360-plus existing and new tourism-related enterprises and public attractions and infrastructures within the TDA could benefit from the two financing mechanisms.

Although this number does seem fairly large for the TDA on its own, if the two financing mechanisms also addressed the needs of the proposed 'Western Nepal Tourism Development Programme', or 'WNTDP' (see **Section 4.2** (Part 1)) and/or other tourism development-related programmes in the country, there is clearly an opportunity to spread the impact of the mechanisms and this TDAP much broader than just the Eastern Nepal TDA. If this were to be the case, then there may be justification for increasing the figures quite substantially.

Brief description

This activity would form one of the proposed IRPs to be implemented under this TDAP. Once the IRP has been set up and funding for it secured, implementation of the SME Financing Facility activity and IRP could begin.

The activity, which would need to be planned in more detail by the four government institutions involved (MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC and the IBN), would likely include the following:

This activity, which would need to be planned in more detail by the donor-funded intervention itself, would likely include the following: ♦ drawing up some form of advertisement for the SME Financing Facility; ♦ advertising the Facility and requesting applications for loans through the proposed TDA webpage on the NTB website (**Activity 11.2**) and through the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, DDC and VDC offices in the TDA, as well as through the district- and local-level tourism development committees; ♦ receiving loan applications through the Internet and post or as required; ♦ convening and briefing a loan evaluation committee; ♦ evaluating loan applications received using set criteria; ♦ following up on loan applications for clarity if required; ♦ deciding on the approval of loans; ♦ informing all loan applicants of the outcome of their applications; ♦ allocating the loans; ♦ monitoring the progress and performance of the supported businesses; and ♦ compiling annual reports on the performance of the SME Financing Facility.

Administration of the SME Financing Facility could be undertaken in close collaboration with the administration of the proposed Grants Fund with loan and grant evaluations being done jointly. This would help with coordinating the efforts of both funding mechanisms, capitalising on mutual interests and maximising the impact of the overall support that is provided.

Principal output/s

NPR 160 million/US$ 1.48 million **SME Financing Facility** established and administered as a state-funded IRP.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-2: Establish a strong link between tourism-related plans at national, regional, district and local levels.
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
S-8: Provide finance mechanisms to financially support the development of tourism within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.
L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

SME Financing Facility IRP established **during first half of Year 1**; SME Funding Facility operational from the **beginning of July 2017**; loans given **from halfway through Year 1 to Year 5**; minimum of 60 soft loans awarded to established entrepreneurs by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

MoCTCA in close association with the **MoFALD**, **MoFSC** and **IBN** through the drivers of a **proposed SME Financing Facility IRP**.

Implementation partners

TIDP; SATIDP; interested commercial banks; private sector tourism product owners; custodians of tourist attractions; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; VDCs; communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 8,000,000 (5% administrative costs of NPR 160,000,000 SME Financing Facility).

Possible funding sources

Funding through the proposed IRP; SATIDP; TIDP; other state-funded community development programmes; WB; ADB; other IFIs; international NGOs; interested commercial banks.

Other related activities

Improvements in existing tourist attractions around the TDA (*Activity 2.1*); establishment of homestays (*Activity 3.5*); development of selected tourism niches and unique tourism products (*Activities 3.8* and *3.9*); development of a range of new tourist attractions (*Activity 3.14*); establishment of Num as a recreational and tourist centre or hub (*Activities 3.17* and *3.18*); development of rafting and powerboat tours and water-based activities (*Activities 3.24*, *3.26* and *3.27*); establishment and administration of donor-funded Grants Fund (*Activity 7.2*); development of paid-for tours to local attractions (*Activity 8.2*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activity 11.2*).

ACTIVITY 7.2	KTA 7 – Investment and Funding

Establish and administer a Grants Fund for emerging tourism players and public tourist attractions and infrastructures in the TDA

Rationale

Lack of access to funding and high interest rates are arguably the biggest constraints which existing and potential businesses and entrepreneurs, as well as communities, face when wanting to exploit the business opportunities offered by the tourism sector. This is particular so for those individuals and communities living in rural areas who, despite living in areas with good tourism resources and having ideas with real merit, may not have sufficient capital to translate those ideas into reality. Frequently, when approaching commercial banks for loans, individuals and communities do not have the necessary past business experience in the sector or in business in general or the required security to offer the banks as collateral.

Furthermore, many banks view tourism as being a particularly fickle and risky sector that can take a long time to generate profits, especially when compared with the relatively immediate and tangible returns offered by the agricultural sector. It is therefore not surprising that few loans are granted, the result being that the development of tourism in those areas where tourism represents a genuinely good business option to pursue is held back. Individuals and communities have to continue to rely on traditional sources of income, such as those offered by agriculture, even if these do not pay particularly well. As a result, improvements in the standard of living are not forthcoming and social and economic development within the community suffers.

What is sorely needed in many cases is for an amount of 'seed money' to be made available to potential and emerging entrepreneurs to enable them to at least start up an enterprise and to be given the chance to develop it into a going concern. Such seed money could be made available as a soft loan, but even the vast majority of soft loans require some form of guarantee to banks. Also, those taking out the loans still face the immediate prospect of having to pay back the loan plus interest on a regular instalment basis. This can still be very daunting for a potential or emerging entrepreneur with little capital or business savvy or experience of the sector but with a workable idea.

Providing small grants that do not need to be paid back, on the other hand, is clearly the best way for entrepreneurs to begin to transform their ideas into actions and to set up a tourism enterprise that can eventually earn them an income, no matter how small that enterprise may be. Even a small tourism operation, such as a homestay or a textile or craft-making operation, can make a very real difference to the livelihoods of individuals, families and communities, especially in remote areas where economic opportunities are very limited.

Under this 5-year TDAP, it is envisaged that a Grants Fund be set up using donor and/or IFI funding. In this way, reliance on state funding would be minimal, although there is no reason why the state could not contribute to the Fund as well. The Fund would offer individual grants of up to US$ 2,500, or possibly even US$ 5,000, to emerging entrepreneurs, custodians of existing and potential tourist attractions and other eligible applicants within the TDA. These would largely be made up of potential small, very small and micro businesses and community-run tourist attractions.

It is envisaged that the Grants Fund would also provide funding to DDCs, VDCs and municipalities in order to improve existing public tourist attractions and infrastructures or to develop new ones. Examples include, for instance, the establishment of a formal viewing area and associated retail stalls, toilet facilities, parking, etc. overlooking the Koshi Barrage, improvements to visitor facilities at Namaste Jharna, development of visitor parks in Bhedetar and Hile, development of tourism information outlets, provision of signage, etc. Such facilities are not commercial *per se* and don't belong to any single entrepreneur or group of

entrepreneurs – they are public facilities owned and managed by the district authorities. Grants for public tourist attractions and infrastructures would differ from case to case.

It is suggested that the Grants Fund have a total funding capacity of NPR 200 million (US$ 1.85 million). Of this, one third could be set aside for newly-emerging entrepreneurs and two thirds for supporting improvements to existing public tourist attractions and infrastructures and the development of new ones. In this way, between 125 and 250 individual emerging entrepreneurs and at least 50 public attractions and infrastructures could be supported. Together, these grants would have the potential for making a very significant and beneficial impact on the development of tourism in the region, especially in economically-challenged areas and those areas where obtaining loans for tourism-related initiatives is difficult.

It is envisaged that the Grants Fund would be set up as part of a donor/IFI-supported intervention that focuses on the tourism sector within the TDA (See *Section 4.3.3* (Part 1)). The Fund would be administered by a small body made up of representatives from the MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC and IBN and the participating donor of IFI. The four Nepalese government institutions would all be key stakeholders in the proposed body set up to coordinate the implementation of the overall TDAP (*Chapter 4* (Part 1)). There is no real reason why more than one donor agency or IFI could not contribute to the Grants Fund.

The Fund would be advertised within the TDA and applications for grants requested. Applicants would submit their applications and proposals to the Fund's administrative body via the Internet or through written submissions. These would then be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the administrative body. There is no reason why one enterprise could not apply for more than one grant, either at the same time for different 'products', or over the full period of the TDAP.

In awarding the grants, there would clearly be a need to set a number of criteria and ground rules to ensure the money that has been provided is not just simply frittered away or mishandled. It would be up to the administrators of the Fund to ensure as best they can that the applicants are properly vetted and that the grants which are awarded are spent wisely and with the best possible chance of achieving a financially-successful product. Any proof of an applicant's ability to self-fund at least some of their enterprise would be looked on favourably. Monitoring of the allocated grants would be done on a fairly regular basis.

The Grants Fund would complement very well the state-funded SME Financing Facility proposed under *Activity 7.1*. The latter would provide soft loans to those existing small- and medium-sized tourism enterprises in the TDA which wish to improve or expand their products or services. The SME Financing Facility would also be set up and administered by the MoCTCA in partnership with the MoFALD, MoFSC and IBN, probably as one of the proposed investment-ready projects (IRPs) (see *Section 3.10* (Part 1) and *Annex 2* below).

The establishment and operation of the Grants Fund would have significant benefit for many of the other activities implemented under this TDAP and help them with delivering their own expected and tangible results on the ground. The many TDAP activities that could benefit from the Fund are listed in "*Other related activities*" below.

The donor-funded support proposed to help implement this TDAP (*Section 4.3.3* (Part 1)) would likely only come on line a year or so into the plan. The Grants Fund, which would be supported largely through donor funding, would therefore cover only four years of the TDAP's implementation (ie. 2018-2021). The SME Financing Facility on the other hand could come online a year earlier (2017) and extend throughout the TDAP's 5-year implementation period.

With between 125 and 250 new and emerging small, very small and micro enterprises and more than 50 public tourist attractions and infrastructures potentially being supported through the Grants Fund over a four-year period and with a further more than 60 existing SMEs being assisted through the proposed SME Financing Facility over a five-year period, between 235 and 360-plus existing and new tourism-related enterprises and public attractions and infrastructures within the TDA could benefit from the two financing mechanisms.

Although this number does seem fairly large for the TDA on its own, if the two financing mechanisms also addressed the needs of the proposed 'Western Nepal Tourism Development Programme', or 'WNTDP' (see *Section 4.2* (Part 1)) and/or other tourism development-related programmes in the country, there is clearly an opportunity to spread the impact of the mechanisms and this TDAP much broader than just the Eastern Nepal TDA. If this were to be the case, then there may be justification for increasing the figures quite substantially.

Brief description

The setting up of the proposed Grants Fund would form part of the design and establishment of a donor/IFI-funded intervention intended to benefit the tourism sector in the TDA (and possibly also the Western Region TDA). Once the donor/IFI-funded intervention commences in Year 2, the Fund could begin to function.

This activity, which would need to be planned in more detail by the donor-funded intervention itself, would likely include the following: ♦ drawing up of an advertisement for the Grants Fund; ♦ advertising the Fund and requesting grant applications through the proposed TDA webpage on the NTB website (*Activity 11.2*) and the social media and through the DDC and VDC offices in the TDA, as well as through the district- and local-level tourism development committees; ♦ receiving grant applications through the Internet and post; ♦ convening and briefing a grant evaluation committee; ♦ evaluating grant applications received using set criteria; ♦ following up on grant applications for clarity if required; ♦ deciding on the award of grants; ♦ informing all applicants of the outcome of their applications; ♦ awarding and administering grants over time; ♦ monitoring the progress and performance of the supported enterprises; and ♦ compiling annual reports on the performance of the Grants Fund.

Administration of the Grants Fund could be undertaken in close collaboration with the administration of the proposed SME Financing Facility with evaluations being done jointly. This would help with coordinating the efforts of both funding mechanisms, capitalising on mutual interests and maximising the impact of the overall support that is provided.

Principal output/s
NPR 200 million (US$ 1.85 million) **Grants Fund** established and administered as part of a donor/IFI-funded intervention.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity
National, **district** and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-2: Establish a strong link between tourism-related plans at national, regional, district and local levels.
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
S-8: Provide finance mechanisms to financially support the development of tourism within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.
L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.
L-11: Financially support the further development of existing tourism-related SMEs within the TDA.
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA

Priority rating
High priority.

Timing and target dates
Grants Fund designed and established **during Year 1**; Grants Fund operational from the **beginning of Year 2**; grants awarded **from Years 2 to 5**; between 175-300 grants awarded by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
IDA-funded intervention.

Implementation partners
MoCTCA; MoFALD; MoFSC; IBN.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 10,000,000 (5% administrative costs of NPR 200,000,000 Grants Fund).

Possible funding sources
IDA-funded intervention; donor agencies; IFIs.

Other related activities
Improvements in existing tourist attractions around the TDA (**Activity 2.1**); establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (**Activities 3.1 to 3.5**); development of selected tourism niches and unique tourism products (**Activities 3.8** and **3.9**); development of a range of new tourist attractions (**Activities 3.10 to 3.14**); establishment of Num as a recreational and tourist centre or hub (**Activities 3.17** and **3.18**); establishment of day-visitor hiking and cycling/mountain-biking trails and provision of bicycles (**Activities 3.21** and **3.28**); development of rafting and powerboat tours and water-based activities (**Activities 3.24**, **3.26** and **3.27**); establishment of state-funded SME Financing Facility (**Activity 7.1**); development of paid-for tours to local attractions (**Activity 8.2**); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (**Activity 11.2**).

Community tourism trusts and social funds

ACTIVITY 7.3	**KTA 7 – Investment and Funding**
Facilitate the establishment of community cooperatives linked to community-owned and-run tourism operations	

Rationale
Under this TDAP, a number of community-owned tourism products are proposed to be developed. These include lodges and campsites in the vicinity of KTWR, "Three Rivers" and the Makalu Barun area, as well as with other forms of community-owned tourism product more broadly across the TDA. It is envisaged that the day-to-day operations of these community-owned tourism products will be carried out by the communities themselves, or that they will be contracted out to appropriate private sector companies to run on the community's behalf.
Whichever model is adopted, there is a need for some form of community structure to be set up that oversees the management and performance of the tourism product which is being run. This structure is often in the form of a committee or cooperative made up of elected representatives from the community. The committee or cooperative often appoints one or more individuals from outside of the community to assist them.
In those instances where the committee is overseeing a commercial venture, such as a lodge or campsite, the formation of a legal entity in the form of a registered cooperative is normally required. This means that the cooperative has a legal business standing and benefits from a number of advantages of effectively being a registered company. This in turn has benefits for any private sector business partners it may have.

Having a cooperative made up of a number of elected representatives, quite often around 10-12 individuals, means that clear responsibility and accountability exists for any revenues received and for any spending that the cooperative does. It also helps to avoid any misappropriation of funds or careless or inappropriate expenditure.

This activity aims to support communities in setting up such cooperatives in order for them to better manage their community-owned tourism products and to ensure that they become financially viable and successful enterprises in the long-term. In this way, the tourism product through the cooperative contributes to the economic and social development of the community and helps to improve the livelihoods of local community members.

Some if not all of the community tourism task groups referred to in *Activities 3.1* through to *3.4* and responsible for helping set up the community-owned lodges and campsites could form the basis of the cooperatives that are to be established.

Brief description

This activity is primarily advisory in nature and would be carried out on behalf of participating communities by one or more appropriately-experienced advisors sourced from a relevant NGO or through a donor-funded intervention. The advisor/s would be guided and supervised by either the DoT/NTB, or by a donor-funded intervention. IBN may be able to assist in the supervision.

Using both Nepali and international best practice with respect to community cooperatives (*sahakari*) and complying with the requirements of Nepali law where relevant, the advisor would work with community members involved in each community-owned tourism product to establish a cooperative and an associated fund to receive incomes and manage expenditures. The advisor/s would also work with any relevant tourism development committees and local/district authorities as well as those relevant NGOs that are working in the area.

The establishment of the cooperatives would go hand-in-hand with the development of the proposed community lodges and campsites (*Activities 3.1 to 3.4*) and any other community-owned tourism products that are established during the lifetime of this TDAP.

The activity would end once the community cooperatives and associated funds have been established and the cooperative bodies themselves are confident they can handle their management and administration. At this stage it is not possible to say how many such cooperatives would be established over the TDAP, but upwards or 10 could be realistically expected.

Principal output/s

Upwards of 10 tourism-related community cooperatives established within the TDA.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.
S-8: Provide finance mechanisms to financially support the development of tourism within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-12: Financially support the development of new small, very small and micro enterprises within the TDA, especially in remote, rural and economically-disadvantaged areas.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Setting up of initial (4-6) tourism-related community cooperatives and associated funds undertaken **during Years 1 and 2**; further cooperatives/funds established **during Years 3 to 5**; upwards of 10 tourism-related community cooperatives/funds established by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

DoT/NTB with the assistance of an **independent advisor** possibly working through an **IDA-supported intervention**, or alternatively a **suitable NGO**.

Implementation partners

Relevant NGOs; community-owned tourism products (eg. lodges, campsites); custodians of selected tourist attractions; district-level tourism development committees; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 500,000.

Possible funding sources

DoT/NTB; IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities

Establishment of community lodges and campsites (*Activities 3.1 to 3.4*); development of unique tourism products based on locally-produced foods and materials and intangible assets (*Activity 3.9*); conversion and transfer of accommodation, catering and recreational facilities in and around Num to the local community and private sector (*Activity 3.18*); establishment of workers' or

community funds for a tea estate and research centre in Dhankuta District (*Activity 7.4*); formulation of MoUs between communities and their partners (*Activity 9.8*).

ACTIVITY 7.4	KTA 7 – Investment and Funding

Promote the establishment of visitor-supported workers' or community funds and associated trusts at the Guranse Tea Estate near Hile and the Agricultural Research Centre in Pakhribas

Rationale

Both the Guranse Tea Estate near Hile and the Agricultural Research Centre (under the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC)) in Pakhribas (both in Dhankuta District) are already proving to be attractive places for visitors to the area. Although their locations and core businesses as well as their scenic locations are of obvious interest to visitors, the general lack of things to do in the area contributes towards visitors requesting local hotels and restaurants to visit them. At present, these two tourist attractions do not go out of their way to host visitors, but they rarely turn away any that do arrive.

Guranse Tea Estate is tentatively considering the building of several small cottages for overnight visitors at suitable sites within the plantation and the establishment of small day-visitor area where visitors can relax, while the research centre is certainly open to hiring out facilities for conferences, seminars, meetings, etc. It also rents out its limited guesthouse accommodation if it's vacant. Whether or not either of them decides to pursue tourism in a more formal way remains to be seen, but *Activity 3.25* under this TDAP is focused on encouraging them and others to do so.

Regardless of this, however, there is an opportunity even now for both the tea estate and the research centre to use its attractions and present tourism links with local hotels to boost the social responsibility component of each of the institutions. This area of Nepal, in common with many areas around the country, suffers from the impact that the major flow of working-age men to the Middle East and elsewhere has had on families and communities left behind. This movement of a substantial and key economically-active portion of the local population has had a number of serious socio-economic consequences, not least of which is the general lack of money in the area and the inability of affected families, now led primarily by the women, to make even a semi-descent living. It can also lead to family break-ups and numerous other social issues.

Although neither the tea estate nor the research centre asks visitors for entrance fees to their facilities, if visitors were asked to make contributions into some sort of workers' or community fund set up to help alleviate local socio-economic problems, it is fairly certain that the great majority of visitors would willingly give voluntary contributions.

If the estate and research centre do eventually establish a more formal and structured approach to handlings visitors, such as advertising and providing guided tours or accommodation facilities, a percentage of the revenues raised could be directed at supporting these funds.

This activity, therefore, would focus on firstly explaining to the tea estate and research centre the concept behind such a fund, then hopefully persuading them to pursue the idea. If they prove agreeable, the activity would then help them set the funds up, if indeed help is needed. Ideally, associated trusts should also be set up to administer the monies that accrue to the funds. These trusts would be similar to those established under *Activity 7.3*.

The activity would also work with local hotels, resorts, restaurants and other tourism-related operations to persuade them to support the tea estate and research centre by providing visitors (*Activity 8.2*) and also to support the concept of the workers' or community fund as well. The involvement of the Dhankuta hotel association as well as the Dhankuta Municipality could also be sought.

Brief description

This activity would be undertaken primarily by the NTB, perhaps with the assistance of an advisor contracted through a possible donor-funded intervention. Dhankuta Municipality may also be able to assist.

The activity would likely take place in the following largely consecutive stages: ♦ draw up an initial concept of the visitor-supported workers' or community fund and associated trust; ♦ introduce and explain the concept to the estate and research centre; ♦ if they are amenable, draw up more detailed proposals; ♦ submit the proposals to the estate and research centre for discussion; ♦ following positive decisions, establish the funds and associated trusts; ♦ launch the funds and trusts; and ♦ liaise with and garner support from local tourism product owners and associations.

The subsequent administration and management of the funds and trusts would be the responsibility of the tea estate and the research centre.

Should this concept prove to be successful, there is no reason why this activity could not be repeated, if appropriate, for other similar agricultural plantations and institutions elsewhere in the TDA. NTB, together with the advisor and in consultation with the Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs and their respective tourism development committees and hotel associations, could identify enterprises which may also be willing to adopt and develop the concept for themselves.

Principal output/s

Two (2) visitor-supported workers' or community funds and associated trusts established and up-and-running in Dhankuta Municipality.

Targeted zone/s

Central Zone (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA.   **L-15**: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.
Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Development of the workers or community fund and trust concept and discussions with the host enterprises undertaken **during first half of Year 1**; funds and associated trusts established **during the second half of Year 1**; workers' or community funds and trusts up-and-running by the **end of 2017**.
Implementation driver/s
NTB with possible assistance of an **independent advisor** maybe through an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
Tea estate company head office and plantation management; agricultural research centre management; Dhankuta hotel association and chamber of commerce and industry; local tourism product owners (hotels, resorts, guesthouses, etc.); Dhankuta DDC.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 250,000.
Possible funding sources
NTB; possible IDA-funded intervention; tea estate company; agricultural research centre management.
Other related activities
Support the development of a range of selected tourist attractions throughout the TDA (***Activity 3.14***); encouragement of tour operators to develop site-seeing excursions within the TDA (***Activity 3.22***); encourage tea estates in the region to develop tours and day-visitor and overnight facilities for visitors (***Activity 3.25***); establishment of community trusts (***Activity 7.3***); encouragement of local hotels in and around Hile to liaise with and organise paid-for tours to local attractions (***Activity 8.2***); promotion of tourism products through the TDA website (***Activity 11.3***).

Key Task Area 8 – Partners and Relationships

Linkages

ACTIVITY 8.1	KTA 8 – Partners and Relationships

Encourage a mechanism whereby the NTB, local authorities and private sector tourism operators run tourism service centres and tourism information centres and kiosks in an effective and sustainable manner

Rationale

It is relatively easy to build, furnish and equip tourism information centres and other outlets, especially if the initial establishment capital expenditure has been found. There are many examples around the world of such centres being established. Many of these, however, have proved to be largely cosmetic in that, although the outlet exists as a building, the service that is provided to tourists and visitors is very sub-standard. This is often a reflection of lack of operational funding, the manner in which the centre is managed and the relationship that exists between the local authority and the tourism private sector. Many local authorities don't have sufficient human and financial resources to run the outlets effectively. With the more successful ones, however, the private sector plays a strong role, both in providing informative material and helping to manage the outlet, but also in providing sufficient funds to pay for the service. In situations where public money is in short supply and directed at other needy sectors, as in the TDA, there is definitely a need to involve the private sector, perhaps as a PPP, or through a business concession or MoU.

A number of tourism service centres, information centres and kiosks are proposed under this TDAP. Their establishment is addressed under **Activities 4.1** to **4.4**. As with all such tourist service facilities, it will be how they are managed that will determine their success. It will be necessary, however, to address management and financing issues as these facilities are being planned and not as an 'afterthought' once they've been established.

Brief description

This activity would begin by researching into and drawing up a concept document on how successful tourism information outlets elsewhere around the world are set up, managed and financed. The activity would involve consulting with the NTB, local authorities (DDCs, municipalities), private sector tourism players (associations, product owners, etc.) and participating communities (VDCs, committees, etc.) in the targeted areas (ie. Biratnagar Airport, Itahari, Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile, Basantapur, Tumlingtar, Khandbari, Num, Hongon and Chyamtang) to discuss the most suitable model for running such outlets, especially looking at how information for the centre/kiosk is provided by product owners and the industry as a whole, how information is to be disseminated to visitors (desk staff, brochures, Internet, QR codes, sale of apps, etc.), what services would be provided to visitors and what mechanisms could be established to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the centre.

A document that summarises the main findings of the consultations and recommends the most appropriate model for each centre/kiosk would be produced. Identified players would then be encouraged to adopt the most appropriate management/financing model. These may actually differ from one to the other centre depending on local conditions, but some sort of partnership or PPP between a state body (ie. DDC, municipality) and the tourism private sector is envisaged. These partnerships would need to be formalised through the drafting and signing of appropriate MoUs (viz. **Activity 9.8**).

Principal output/s

Concept document on best practice in the management and financial sustainability of tourism information centres produced; **Sustainable Management of Tourism Service and Information Centres in the TDA proposal** produced; more than **10 sustainable tourism information outlets** in operation.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-5: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.
S-6: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-2: Provide a network of tourism service and information centres and kiosks within the TDA.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Management/financing mechanisms will be developed as and when the individual tourism information outlets are planned from **Year 1 onwards**; all outlets established under the TDAP well-managed and financed by the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

NTB would have overall responsibility with assistance from an **independent consultant**, possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; relevant municipalities; CAAN; local hotel and tourism associations; tourism private sector product owners; community-owned/-managed tourism products.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,000,000.

Possible funding sources
DoT and NTB, possibly assisted through IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities
Establishment of tourism service centres in Itahari and Chyamtang (*Activities 4.1* and *4.2*); establishment of tourism information centres in four centres in TDA (*Activity 4.3*); establishment of tourism information kiosks (*Activity 4.4*); appropriate MoUs drafted under *Activity 9.8*.

ACTIVITY 8.2	**KTA 8 – Partners and Relationships**

Encourage local hotels in and around Hile to liaise with and organise paid-for tours to local attractions

Rationale
Visitors to the TDA often complain of the lack of things to do. This is especially applicable to the area around Hile where visitors are frequently at a loss at what to do during their visit. Through largely personal contact and as a favour to hotel/resort owners, the nearby Guranse Tea Estate and the Pakhribas Agricultural Research Centre often accept small groups of visitors. This is done very much on an *ad hoc* basis with the sites themselves not charging any entrance fees. Although both these sites are open to receiving visitors, it must be recognised that their core businesses are agricultural production and agricultural research respectively and not tourism. If tourism is to become more formal, there will likely need to be approval from their head offices to allow visitors to be received and to be attended to more frequently and on an organised basis.   Local hotels/resorts clearly have a vested interest in arranging such tours and being paid for them and the sites themselves can benefit from the charging of entrance fees. There therefore needs to be a much more formal link established between the tourism sector and these sites for both partners to benefit. The onus is largely on the hotels/resorts to pursue such linkages, but the site owners/managers themselves also need to be persuaded to enter into more formal 'partnerships'.   By becoming much more involved in hosting visitors, the two sites in question do have the opportunity for helping to address some of the more pressing socio-economic problems experienced locally. These are related to the breakup of families caused by high numbers of workers migrating to the Middle East and elsewhere to work and inequality relating to women and other disadvantaged group. Community social funds which are funded through tourism activities could be set up to address these social issues. This concept is addressed under *Activity 7.4*.

Brief description
This activity, which focuses primarily on promoting linkages and facilitating their establishment, would be undertaken primarily by the Dhankuta DDC, perhaps assisted by the local hotel and tourism association and chamber of commerce and industry and the NTB, whose task it would be to bring the hotel/resorts and possible tour destination parties together. Outside assistance in the form of an advisor could also be used. Separate meetings would be held with the management of the tea estate and research centre. Meetings may also need to be held in their respective head offices back in Kathmandu in order to obtain the go-ahead from senior management and owners. The DoT could also provide advice. Assuming that a green light has been received, a Memorandum of Understanding would be drawn up between the parties that describe the working relationship that has been established. In many ways this would be similar to the MoUs developed under *Activity 9.8*.   This activity could also be applied to other potential visitor/tourist sites and hotels within the TDA, especially around Dharan and Khandbari.

Principal output/s
Promotional campaign and at least two and preferably more **Memoranda of Understanding** drawn up between individual hotels/resorts and the tea estate, agricultural research centre and other sites of touristic interest.

Targeted zone/s
Central Zone (Dhankuta District).

Focal level of activity
Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.   **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.   **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.   **L-7**: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.   **L-8**: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.

L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.	
Priority rating	
Low priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Negotiations take place and MoUs developed **during Year 1**; first two MoUs in operation by **end of 2018**; several other MoUs developed and in operation elsewhere within the TDA by the **end of 2019**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Dhankuta DDC with possible assistance of an **independent advisor** maybe through an **IDA-supported intervention**; also **Sunsari and Sankhuwasabha DDCs**.	
Implementation partners	
Local tourism product owners (hotels, resorts, etc.); district tourism development committees; local and district hotel and tourism associations; district chambers of commerce and industry; interested communities.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 250,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Largely from entities running the touristic sites (ie. tea estate, research centre, etc.); private sector (ie. hotels, resorts, homestays, tour companies, etc.); proposed SME Financing Facility; proposed Grants Fund.	
Other related activities	
Development of small guide booklets (***Activity 6.6***); development funds could be sourced through the SME Financing Facility (***Activity 7.1***) and Grants Fund (***Activity 7.2***); establishment of associated social funds (***Activity 7.4***); development of MoUs (***Activity 9.8***).	

ACTIVITY 8.3	**KTA 8 – Partners and Relationships**
Encourage the possible development of twinning agreements between selected towns, villages and interest groups within the TDA and similar ones within foreign countries	
Rationale	
Twinning agreements are common around the world. They usually involve villages, towns or cities in developed, under-developed and undeveloped countries which share something in common with each other. Twinning agreements do much to improve understanding and cooperation between the 'twins' which often results in a lot of goodwill and mutually-beneficial activities taking part between partners, in particular exchange visits. They are also excellent at fundraising, especially for community projects in disadvantaged areas. The agreements can also be used for tourism promotional purposes.	
Within the TDA it is likely that a number of opportunities for twinning exist in the TDA. For example, the Guranse Tea Estate near Hile still uses 19th century machinery in its factory that was made by 'Marshalls of Gainsborough' in the UK. An opportunity therefore arises for the tea estate to establish contact and establish a semi-formal link with the current owners or inheritors of that company, and/or with historical societies in the UK that are interested in such agricultural technologies. Such a link could result in increased visitation to the factory by British tourists and/or the establishment of a social fund to help tea estate workers, who are mostly women looking after their families on their own because their menfolk have left to work in the Middle East.	
Linking one or more pilgrimage sites within the TDA with religious sites or organisations in India, for instance, could be another example of a twinning arrangement, as could the twinning of specific agricultural areas in India with well-known agricultural colleges and research stations in the TDA.	
Brief description	
This activity would firstly set out to identify possible twinning arrangements within the TDA and external to Nepal (eg. Guranse Tea Estate and the modern-day owners of Marshalls of Gainsborough relating to the 19th century machinery that still operates in the tea factory). It would consult with potentially interested local stakeholders, assist in drawing up concept/proposal documents as required and facilitate initial approaches to possible international partners. The regional marketing website established under ***Activity 11.2*** could be used to promote the concept of twinning worldwide and to attract and draw together potential twinning partners.	
If the approach is successful, the activity would then help with establishing and formalising the twinning linkages (eg. MoUs, brochures, "Friends of so-and-so" groups, website, online discussion forum, activity proposals, etc.) and facilitating the initial interactions (ie. inter-communications, promotional presentations/videos, exchange visits, establishment of fundraising, etc.).	
This is an open-ended activity that would probably need to be divided into several Sub-Activities, each relating to a single twinning arrangement.	
Principal output/s	
Promotional campaign and aim to establish **at least five (5) twinning arrangements** (formal or informal).	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
International and **local** levels.	

Strategic objectives addressed
S-7: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. **M-6**: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area. **M-7**: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.
Priority rating
Low priority.
Timing and target dates
Twinning arrangements could be pursued and developed any time **during Years 1 to 5**; several established twinning arrangements working well by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs possibly assisted by one or more hired or volunteer **independent consultant/s**.
Implementation partners
Interested VDCs; possibly donor-funded technical assistance; interested private sector businesses; NTB may be able to help with promoting established twinning arrangements.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 500,000.
Possible funding sources
Self-funded largely; possible IDA support for facilitation
Other related activities
Development of range of selected tourism attractions in the TDA (**Activity 3.14**); encouragement of tea estates to develop tours and visitor facilities (**Activity 3.25**); establishment of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal (**Activity 11.2**).

Committees and associations

ACTIVITY **8.4**	KTA 8 – Partners and Relationships

Establish a tourism development committee for the Makalu Barun area with membership drawn from relevant VDCs	
Rationale	
The area covered by MBNP and the associated buffer zone area with the TDA contains no fewer than 10 VDCs. In some areas in Nepal (eg. Manaslu Conservation Area) each VDC has a 'tourism management committee' that serves the interest of each VDC with respect to tourism. With Makalu Barun, where the density of communities is much less and where tourism is still at an early stage of development, it would make sense to establish one single tourism development committee for the whole area. This committee would comprise one representative from each interested/active VDC (presently numbering around six) all working together in helping address the tourism development needs of the whole area in a coordinated and integrated manner. The desirability of having a single such committee has been expressed by a number of secretaries of VDCs in the buffer zone. The 'tourism development committee for Makalu Barun' would liaise and work closely with DNPWC, Sankhuwasabha DDC, the Department of Water Affairs (with respect to the Arun-3 HEP dam) and the private sector and represent 'the community' on all matters to do with tourism in the area. It may be best to co-opt one or more representatives from the DNPWC/MBNP onto the committee, rather than simply liaise with the park.	
Brief description	
This activity would firstly set out to consult with all VDCs within the Makalu Barun area, initially to gauge more broadly interest in the concept of a joint tourism development committee and then to draw up a concept document of how such a committee could be set up, its constitution, what its mandate is, how it would work and, importantly, how it would be funded. This would then be presented to all the VDCs for discussion and consensus on the way to move forward. The activity would facilitate the actual establishment of the committee, hopefully with representation from all VDCs in the area (but most likely just the active ones), and assist it with its operations until the committee feels it is able to carry on by itself.	
Some amount of training of members may be required (**Activity 10.10**). It is envisaged that the committee would need to meet fairly frequently to begin with (eg. quarterly) and then maybe six-monthly or possibly annually. This will clearly depend, however, on how committed and active the committee is and also how successful its activities are proving to be.	
Principal output/s	
One single **'tourism development committee'** for the Makalu Barun area (ie. national park and buffer zone only) supported by a **'constitution'** or document that outlines its *modus operandi*.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).	
Focal level of activity	
Local level.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
S-4: Promote the establishment of private sector and community tourism-related associations and committees.	

S-7: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.	
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.	
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.	
L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.	

Priority rating
Medium priority.

Timing and target dates
Tourism development committee established **during Year 1** and fully up-and-running by **end of 2017**.

Implementation driver/s
DNPWC/MBNP would be the principal driver, assisted if necessary by an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
All VDCs within the Makalu Barun area interested in being involved; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Committee; Department of Water Affairs; private sector tourism product owners; interested communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 250,000.

Possible funding sources
Primarily through VDCs with perhaps some contribution from Sankhuwasabha DDC; possible funding from DoT/NTB; possible initial support through an IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities
Capacity-building for tourism development committees (***Activity 10.10***).

ACTIVITY 8.5	KTA 8 – Partners and Relationships

Establish an association of hotels, community lodges and campsites and homestays in the Makalu Barun area

Rationale
At present, the private sector tourism product owners in the Makalu Barun area operate almost entirely as independent entities, all of whom, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the remoteness of the area, competing with one another. Many face and share common problems and issues, but they have very little unified voice with which to lobby the DNPWC, MoCTCA/DoT/NTB, Sankhuwasabha DDC or even their respective VDCs. All could certainly benefit from a united position on issues and from concerted joint efforts to influence policy and actions by those working within or affecting the tourism sector in the area. In addition, an association would provide a focal point with which any external body or bodies can interact. Members of the association could also benefit from the unified marketing and promotion of Makalu Barun as a specific tourist destination and, as members, they could also benefit from any joint training that may be offered, sharing both costs and experience. Working through an association is also a good way of raising and maintaining standards with respect to the quality of product and service being provided.
Many (most?) product owners in the Makalu Barun area are not currently members of the several national tourism associations that exist (eg. Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO), Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN)). This is mainly because few of them see any real benefit in being a paying member of an association that is largely focused on the established tourist areas of Nepal, such as the 'Golden Triangle' and which is not interested in an area that is still to feature prominently on the tourist map.
The association envisaged under this activity would include the owners/operators of lodges, hotels, guesthouses and homestays, as well as community lodges and campsites. It could also include those trekking and tour operators that use the region, most of these being Kathmandu-based companies. Ideally, the association should include most if not all of the tourism products that currently operate in the region. There is no reason why it could also not include the proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (***Activity 8.4***). Some training in how to run an association may be necessary (***Activity 10.4***).

Brief description
This activity would firstly set out to determine the overall interest amongst existing hotel/homestay product owners in the Makalu Barun area in having such an association. This scoping exercise would be supported by a concept document and presentation that has been put together that highlights the pros and cons and best practices of such associations in similar remote areas around the world.
If interest proves to be there, a detailed proposal document on the association's establishment (objectives, structure, *modus operandi*, membership, funding mechanism, etc.) would be developed and presented, face-to-face and in printed form, to all potential association members for individual comment. After comments are received and addressed, the proposal would be finalised. Steps would then be taken to establish the association and assist it with its functioning during the early stage until such a time that members feel they can run it themselves. Possible linkages with and/or membership of national-level associations, eg. HAN, NATO, TAAN, and the benefits (or not) of such affiliation would be discussed amongst local hotel/homestay product owners.

Principal output/s
Concept document; proposal document and presentation; established and fully up-and-running '**Makalu Barun Association of Hotels and Homestays**'.

Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).	
Focal level of activity	
District and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
S-4: Promote the establishment of private sector and community tourism-related associations and committees.	
S-7: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.	
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.	
L-1: Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA.	
L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.	
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.	
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.	
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.	
L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.	
Priority rating	
Low priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Development of association takes place **during Year 2**; association established and functioning well by the **end of 2018**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Proposed **'Makalu Barun tourism development committee'** once it has been established with assistance from an **Independent consultant**, possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
Individual local tourism product owners (lodges, hotels, homestays, community facilities); possibly HAN, NATO and TAAN; DNPWC.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 250,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Self-funded by interested local tourism product owners; possible IDA support; possible funding from DoT/NTB; VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC.	
Other related activities	
Establishment of proposed 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' (***Activity 8.4***); capacity-building for tourism association (***Activity 10.4***).	

Partnership agreements

ACTIVITY 8.6	KTA 8 – Partners and Relationships
Review the existing agreement between DNPWC and communities living in the Buffer Zone around Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve	
Rationale	
Although not related directly to tourism, the relationship between KTWR and the local communities living in the adjacent buffer zone is crucial, not only to the long-term viability of the reserve as a wildlife and nature conservation area but also to the day-to-day existence of the communities which have to live alongside the reserve. This in turn very much affects the ability of tourism in the area to realise its potential and become a significant economic sector in a local and district context. It is apparent that many in the community presently feel negative towards and disadvantaged by the present buffer zone agreement (established as far back as 1976 when the situation was very different to now), particularly as they suffer on an ongoing basis the depredations and economic consequences of wild animals damaging their crops.	
At present, the Buffer Zone Committee receives 30-50% of revenues from the reserve (derived from entrance fees, elephant rides and fines). How this money is spent is subject to approval being granted by the DNPWC with it usually being directed at conservation-related developments and activities. Buffer zone residents, therefore, are quite restricted in what they are allowed to do in the buffer zone and feel they get very little real benefit from the reserve.	
Should DNPWC wish to conserve/preserve the reserve in the long-term, there is a real need to improve the relationship between itself and local communities in order to avoid increased conflicts in the future. By reviewing and then most likely drawing up a new and updated/improved agreement, there is a real opportunity for the DNPWC, KTWR and the adjacent communities to establish a much fairer and more mutually-beneficial relationship and working agreement. This would be of benefit not just to the reserve and DNPWC as a whole but also to socio-economic development in the area around the reserve and within the district and to the TDA as a whole.	
Brief description	
This activity would firstly review the current buffer zone agreement with the aim of making recommendations to amend it in order to better suit the current socio-economic environment that exists in and around KTWR. The review would include close	

consultations with affected local communities and VDCs and other interest groups. Several stakeholder consultancy forums/public meetings would be held. Policy towards in-park PPP concessions (*Activity 1.1*) would also be taken into consideration, as would the proposed tourism development plan/management plan for KTWR (*Activity 1.3*). A proposed new agreement would then be drafted and presented to stakeholders for comment and improvement and consensus sought. All feedback would be addressed and a final agreement drawn up and submitted to key partners for final perusal, approval and signature. The agreement would then be put into practice by both DNPWC/KTWR and the local communities through their respective VDCs and community leaders.

Principal output/s

Signed improved **Buffer Zone Agreement** between DNPWC and relevant local communities.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-7: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
S-9: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Review and formulation undertaken **during Years 1 and 2**; final agreement signed by **end of 2018**.

Implementation driver/s

DNPWC/KTWR would drive this, preferably with the assistance of an **independent advisor or consultant** possibly through an **IDA-funded intervention**.

Implementation partners

Sunsari DDC within the TDA; Udayapur and Saptari DDCs to the west of the Koshi River; all relevant VDCs that fall adjacent to the reserve and which presently fall within the Buffer Zone; key community leaders and representatives; community members; relevant NGOs; other interest groups.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 1,500,000.

Possible funding sources

DNPWC, possibly with funding support through an IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities

Policy towards concessions within PAs (*Activity 1.1*); tourism development plan for KTWR (*Activity 1.3*); community tourism product development within buffer zone (*Activities 3.1*, *3.2* and *3.5*); development of day-visitor facility within KTWR (*Activity 3.15*).

Key Task Area 9 – Concessions and Agreements

Investment portfolios

ACTIVITY 9.1	KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements

Draw up tourism investment portfolios for Koshi Tappu WR and Makalu Barun NP	
Rationale	
It is envisaged that the development of tourism in KTWR and MBNP will form part of overall tourism development plans that will be formulated for the PAs (viz. *Activities 1.3* and *1.4*). In order to take a much more proactive approach to translating the plans into action, it would be worthwhile for DNPWC to consider putting together a brief investment portfolio for each of the PAs. This would provide *inter alia* a brief description of the PA, its current state of tourism development and use by tourists and its tourism potential, a broad outline of the tourism facilities, services and activities required and a description of the investment opportunity being offered. It would also include the main DNPWC contact details.
The portfolio document, which would be in printed and electronic (ie. online) format, would be used in conjunction with the public tenders that would be launched under *Activities 9.3* and *9.4*. The document could also be distributed to interested potential private sector investors outside of any public tendering process on the understanding that any *ad hoc* individual approaches made to the DNPWC must be accompanied or be followed up by detailed proposals that are appropriate to the PA concerned and are in keeping with the requirements of the DNPWC. Arguably the most important requirement for prospective investors to be aware of is the need for legally-binding concession agreements (viz. *Activity 9.5*) that set out the terms of the agreement and the rights and obligations of both the DNPWC/PA and the private sector concessionaire.
Brief description
This activity would involve drawing up an easy-to-read and attractive full-colour brochure (8-12 pages) that would be available in printed and electronic/online format. It would feature not only descriptive text and maps but also a number of photographs that depict the scenery, wildlife, historical and cultural attractions, existing infrastructures, staff, etc. These brochures will be important for those potential investors who are unfamiliar with the PA or geographical area. Although English and Nepali versions would be produced, the brochures could also be produced in other languages, depending on the investor market being targeted.
Principal output/s
Two investment portfolios, one for KTWR and the other for MBNP, both in printed and electronic/online format. Different language versions may also be produced.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.
S-2: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-5: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes.
Priority rating
High priority.
Timing and target dates
Investment portfolio document developed during **first half of Year 1**; delivered by the **end of June 2017**.
Implementation driver/s
Primarily **DNPWC** and management of Koshi Tappu WR and Makalu Barun NP, probably with the assistance of a **commercial brochure designer**.
Implementation partners
Activity possibly advised by an independent advisor through an IDA-supported intervention.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,000,000.
Possible funding sources
DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Formulation of tourism development plans for KTWR and MBNP (*Activities 1.3* and *1.4*); establishment of upmarket tented camp and high-end tourist lodge in PAs (*Activities 3.6* and *3.7*); drawing up and launching of public tenders (*Activities 9.3* and *9.4*).

Public tendering

ACTIVITY 9.2	KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements

Draw up a standard national/international tender document for use by DNPWC in attracting potential private sector investors in protected areas

Rationale

There are a number of advantages of using a public tender-based approach to tourism investment and development in PAs. These include *inter alia*: ♦ it is a proactive approach to PA-based tourism development rather than simply reacting to *ad hoc* proposals received from interested potential investors; ♦ it forms part of a planned approach to tourism development that is under the full control of the DNPWC; ♦ it is an open, transparent and accountable process; ♦ it can be easily targeted internationally; ♦ the tender document describes exactly what product the DNPWC wants (viz. tourism investment portfolio under *Activity 9.1*) and what it expects from the product investor/operator; ♦ it provides a provisional outline of the concession agreement that would be signed; ♦ it provides a good degree of competition amongst investors; ♦ it aims to secure the best product and operator for the PA; ♦ proposals received are subject to objective assessment; ♦ etc.

The opportunity for developing such a tender document and an associated tendering procedure and piloting it arises under this TDAP. The document and procedure can then be applied to other PAs under the jurisdiction of the DNPWC (and also under the jurisdiction of the NTNC if needed). The development of a standard tender document would likely run in parallel to the formulation of a policy on private sector concessions carried out under *Activity 1.1*.

Brief description

This activity will firstly review the tendering procedure and associated documents that the DNPWC may already have in place. It will also study the tendering procedure normally required by the Government of Nepal. After applying international and national best practice and taking into consideration the needs of the DNPWC and PAs in general in Nepal, a standard or template tendering document will be drafted. The procedure to be followed during tenders will also be described in detail, addressing issues such as *inter alia* the format of technical and financial proposals, how to submit proposals, submission deadlines, composition of evaluation committee, the evaluation and scoring of bids received, selection of winning bids, announcement of winners, etc. Both the proposed tender document and the tendering procedure would be reviewed by the DNPWC. After all concerns have been addressed, a final tender document template together with an agreed tendering procedure will be produced. This will be subsequently used as the basis for pilots in subsequent activities that focus on the Eastern Region TDA (ie. *Activities 9.3* and *9.4*).

Principal output/s

Standard/template DNPWC tender document and tendering procedure for tourism developments in PAs.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-5: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.
S-6: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Standard tender document developed during **first half of Year 1**; delivered by the **end of June 2017**.

Implementation driver/s

Primarily **DNPWC**, probably with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Advice from an appropriate NGO and/or the private sector may be sought, but in a non-partisan manner

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 500,000.

Possible funding sources

DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities

Formulation of DNPWC policy on private sector concessions in PAs (*Activity 1.1*); production of tourism investment portfolio for PAs in the TDA (*Activity 9.1*); drawing up and launching of public tenders (*Activities 9.3* and *9.4*); formulation of model concession agreement for PAs (*Activity 9.5*).

ACTIVITY 9.3	**KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements**

Draw up and launch a national/international tender for the establishment of an upmarket tented camp at a suitable location within Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Rationale

The many benefits of having an upmarket tented camp (possibly two) within KTWR have been outlined under ***Activity 4.6***. In order to establish such a camp, it is first necessary to advertise the DNPWC's wish to attract a suitable private sector investor/operator interested in establishing such a facility there on a concession basis for a period of 10-15 years, or whatever period is deemed to be the most appropriate. Arguably the best way of doing this is to launch an international public tender that is targeted at potentially interested investors both in Nepal and outside of the country, evaluate the proposal or bids that have been received and to select what is considered by the DNPWC to be the best or most appropriate proposal and potential future partner.

Using the standard public tender document and tendering procedure developed under ***Activity 9.2***, the public tender for the KTWR tented camp would be launched as a pilot. The experience and results of this pilot, combined with those of a similar exercise carried out for an up-market lodge in MBNP (viz. ***Activity 9.4***), would be used to inform future tenders for private sector concessions in other DNPWC-managed PAs.

There is a possibility that <u>two</u> tented camps may be established in KTWR during the 5-year implementation period of the TDAP. The decision on whether or not to have a second such facility will need to be made by DNPWC at a later date, preferably 3-4 years after the first facility has been fully established.

Brief description

This activity will take the standard tender document that was drawn up under ***Activity 9.2*** and adapt it fully to suit the needs of the proposed tented camp concession in KTWR. Using the tendering procedure that was also developed under ***Activity 9.2*** and accompanied by an investment portfolio developed for the reserve under ***Activity 9.1***, the tender would be launched. Interested and prospective investors and/or operators would be given several months to put together their proposals and to submit them before the stipulated deadline. In the meantime, an evaluation committee would be put together by DNPWC.

Following the closing date for submissions and a public opening of proposal bids, the evaluation committee would assess and score each proposal as objectively as possible and according to technical and financial criteria. Once the winning proposal has been selected, DNPWC would offer the opportunity to the potential investor to enter into negotiations. Using the standard concession agreement (viz. ***Activity 9.6***) as an initial working basis and after a period of negotiations, agreement would be reached between the DNPWC and private sector partner, the concession agreement would be signed and the tendering process would come to an end.

Principal output/s

Public tender document for the KTWR tented camp and a **completed tendering process**.

Targeted zone/s

Southern Zone (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-9: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Tendering process carried out during **second half of Year 1**; whole process completed by the **end of 2017**.

Implementation driver/s

Primarily **DNPWC**, probably with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Advice from an appropriate NGO and/or the private sector may be sought, but in a non-partisan manner.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 150,000.

Possible funding sources

DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities

Establishment of upmarket tented camp in KTWR (*Activities 3.6*); production of tourism investment portfolio for PAs in the TDA (*Activity 9.1*); drawing up of standard tender document for use by DNPWC (*Activity 9.2*); formulation of model concession agreement for PAs (*Activity 9.5*); formulation of concession agreement for upmarket tented camp in KTWR (*Activity 9.6*).

ACTIVITY 9.4	KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements

Draw up and launch a national/international tender for the establishment of a high-end tourist lodge at a suitable location within Makalu Barun National Park

Rationale

The many benefits of having a high-end tourist lodge within MBNP have been outlined under *Activity 3.7*. In order to establish such a lodge, it is first necessary to advertise the DNPWC's wish to attract a suitable private sector investor/operator interested in establishing such a facility there on a concession basis for a period of 15-20 years, or whatever period is deemed to be the most appropriate. Arguably the best way of doing this is to launch an international public tender that is targeted at potentially interested investors both in Nepal and outside of the country, evaluate the proposal or bids that have been received and to select what is considered by the DNPWC to be the best or most appropriate proposal and potential future partner.

Using the standard public tender document and tendering procedure developed under *Activity 9.2*, the public tender for the MBNP tourist lodge would be launched as a pilot. The experience and results of this pilot, combined with those of a similar exercise carried out for a tented camp in KTWR (viz. *Activity 9.3*), would be used to inform future tenders for private sector concessions in other DNPWC-managed PAs.

At this stage, the establishment of only one high-end tourist lodge is envisaged for Makalu Barun, certainly within the 5-year period of implementation of this TDAP.

Brief description

This activity will take the standard tender document that was drawn up under *Activity 9.2* and adapt it fully to suit the needs of the proposed tourist lodge in MBNP. Using the tendering procedure that was also developed under *Activity 9.2* and accompanied by an investment portfolio for the park developed under *Activity 9.1*, the tender would be launched. Interested and prospective investors and/or operators would be given several months to put together their proposals and to submit them before the stipulated deadline. In the meantime, an evaluation committee would be put together by DNPWC.

Following the closing date for submissions and a public opening of proposal bids, the evaluation committee would assess and score each proposal as objectively as possible and according to technical and financial criteria. Once the winning proposal has been selected, DNPWC would offer the opportunity to the potential investor to enter into negotiations. Using the standard concession agreement (viz. *Activity 9.6*) as a working basis and after a period of negotiations, agreement would be reached between the DNPWC and private sector partner, the concession agreement signed and the tendering process would come to an end.

Principal output/s

Public tender document for the MBNP high-end tourist lodge and a **completed tendering process**.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity

National level.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-9: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.
L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.
L-4: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Tendering process carried out during **second half of Year 1**; whole process completed by the **end of 2017**.

Implementation driver/s

Primarily **DNPWC**, probably with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Advice from an appropriate NGO and/or the private sector may be sought, but in a non-partisan manner.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 150,000.

Possible funding sources

DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention.
Other related activities
Establishment of high-end tourist lodge in MBNP (***Activities 3.7***); production of tourism investment portfolio for PAs in the TDA (***Activity 9.1***); drawing up of standard tender document for use by DNPWC (***Activity 9.2***); formulation of model concession agreement for PAs (***Activity 9.5***); formulation of concession agreement for high-end tourist lodge in MBNP (***Activity 9.7***).

Concession agreements

ACTIVITY 9.5	**KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements**

Draw up a model concession agreement for private sector-owned and -managed tourism operations within protected areas under the jurisdiction of the DNPWC

Rationale
At the core of any PPP within a state protected area should be a legally-binding contract or agreement. The main purpose of this concession agreement is to stipulate, in writing, the exact details of the PPP business arrangement. This includes not only the length of the concession and the financial details relating to it but especially the roles and responsibilities of both the Grantor (ie. DNPWC) and the Grantee (ie. private sector partner or concessionaire). Such a written agreement will provide a legal framework around which business can be conducted in a fair and mutually-beneficial manner and clear guidance on what to do and how to resolve issues or conflicts when they arise. Another aim is encourage confidence in the Grantee to continue to invest monies and effort into its operations in a state-run area in order to develop and maintain a profitable business that is of benefit to both the Grantee itself and to the state, as well as to local communities.
One way of boosting confidence and encouraging full commitment of the Grantee is to offer an attractively-long concession period (eg. 10-20 years or longer). The length of concession would depend on a variety of factors, not least being the type of facility to be developed, the amount being invested and the perceived break-even point and overall financial viability of the product. Providing the Grantee operates their PA-based facility according to expectations and in accordance with the concession agreement, there should be no reason for DNPWC to terminate the agreement. At the end of the initial period, Grantees should also be given the opportunity to extend the concession if they wish, subject to any mutually-agreeable changes being made to the contract.
With respect to the local community living in or around the PA, the concession agreement is an ideal way on ensuring that it is fully included in a three-way 'partnership in conservation' and that the Grantee does not evade its responsibilities to local communities and socio-economic development, especially in remote and disadvantaged areas.
The model concession agreement that is drawn up would be designed to be applicable to most if not all tourism- and/or business-related operations within PAs (eg. tented camps, lodges, mountaineering agreements, mobile operators, hunting, etc.), though it would clearly need to be amended appropriately to suit each enterprise. The model agreement could be used for purely private sector concessions (PPPs) as outlined above, as well as for those that involve business agreements between DNPWC and local communities living in the PA or its buffer zone.
Brief description
This activity will first briefly review any PPP concession agreements that the DNPWC may already have had or which are current, focusing primarily on the difficulties that these may have been experiencing and how they can be addressed. International and national best practice will then be brought to bear, consultations with DNPWC and others held and the specific needs of the DNPWC and PAs in Nepal in general taken into consideration during the drafting of a model concession agreement. This model agreement will address *inter alia*: ♦ statement of agreement between parties, including the length of the concession period; ♦ definitions and terms used; ♦ description of exactly what the concession is directed at; ♦ fees to be paid; ♦ rights and obligations of the Grantee; ♦ rights and obligations of the Grantor; ♦ general terms of the concession, including those relating to extensions/renewals and termination; and ♦ signatories and signatures. Appendices to the concession agreement would include: ♦ site plan and description; ♦ Grantee's business plan (if needed); ♦ payment schedule; and ♦ other site-specific conditions.
Once the draft has been discussed with DNPWC, amended as necessary and then approved, the model concession agreement would be used as an illustrative example in any public tendering for PPPs in PAs. With respect to this TDAP, it would be used during the tendering processes for KTWR and MBNP (viz. ***Activities 9.3*** and ***9.4***) and as a basis for drafting the specific concession agreements that result from those tenders (***Activities 9.6*** and ***9.7***). In a reduced and simplified version it would also be used to assist in putting together Memoranda of Understanding between the DNPWC and the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) (***Activity 9.8***) and between private sector tourism operators and communities outside of PAs within the TDA (***Activity 9.9***).
Principal output/s
Model concession agreement for PPP tourism operations in DNPWC-managed PAs in the TDA and elsewhere in Nepal.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
National level.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA.
S-5: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.

S-6: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.	
Priority rating	
High priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Model concession agreement developed during **first half of Year 1**; delivered by the **end of June 2017**	
Implementation driver/s	
Primarily **DNPWC**, probably with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**	
Implementation partners	
Advice from an appropriate NGO and/or the private sector may be sought, but in a non-partisan manner	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 1,500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention	
Other related activities	
Formulation of DNPWC policy on private sector concessions in PAs (***Activity 1.1***); formulation of concession agreements for upmarket tented camp and high-end tourist lodge in KTWR and MBNP (***Activities 9.6 and 9.7***).	

ACTIVITY 9.6	KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements

Draw up, negotiate and sign a concession agreement for the upmarket tented camp in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Rationale

Following the launch of the public tender for an upmarket tented camp in KTWR (***Activity 9.3***), it will be necessary to begin drafting an appropriate concession agreement which will subsequently be used during negotiations by both the DNPWC and the winning bidder or prospective Grantee. This contract document will be based on the model concession agreement developed under ***Activity 9.5*** and will be for the concession period advertised in the tender document (ie. 10-15 years). It will be used as a working document and basis for negotiations and be updated as these proceed. Once the negotiations have concluded and the concession agreement has been finalised and signed, it becomes the principal and legally-binding tool for guiding the development and future operations of the tented camp in the reserve.

The Grantee's relationship with the local communities living in the adjacent buffer zone, especially with respect to employment and business opportunities and social responsibility, will be embodied in the concession agreement, so ensuring that a true three-way 'partnership in conservation' is established.

In addition to guiding the Grantee's operations within the reserve, its relationship with neighbouring communities and the overall business partnership with the DNPWC, the concession agreement will also be used to help resolve any issues and/or conflicts that may arise during the initial period of the concession. The concession agreement can also be monitored on a regular basis (say quarterly or 6-monthly) to ensure that both parties are complying with its terms.

Once the initial period of concession is over, and assuming that the agreement has not been terminated by either side before then, the Grantee should be given the opportunity to renew the concession. The terms of this renewed concession may differ from those governing the initial term.

It should be stated here that at no time does the DNPWC lose authority over the tourism facility or the reserve. Through the concession agreement the DNPWC will have the legal right to force the Grantee to either comply with terms of the agreement or risk having the agreement terminated and being ejected from the reserve. At the same time, however, the Grantee will have the legal right to ensure that the reserve complies with its own obligations towards natural resource protection and its working relationship with the Grantee.

Brief description

This activity will take the model concession agreement that was developed under ***Activity 9.5*** and amend it according to the specific needs of the privately-owned and -managed tented camp facility within KTWR. Development of the agreement will take place over a series of face-to-face negotiations between the DNPWC and the future private sector partner. It is likely that negotiations will not be concluded in a single session. This is actually a good thing in that it does give time for the prospective partners to fully-consider aspects or clauses within the draft agreement and to discuss them with other individuals within the DNPWC and company who do not form part of the negotiating team. It is important not to hurry the negotiations as the strength of the agreement will be reflected largely by the care that is taken in drawing it up.

Once the draft has reached a state where both parties are happy with what has been negotiated, a brief written statement, or MoU, can be signed by both parties stating that they have reached agreement. The final version of the concession agreement can be drawn up and then signed at a ceremony soon after. At that ceremony, the private sector partner would be expected to make the first payment according to the payment schedule and the contract will become a legally-binding document for both parties, the Grantor (DNPWC) and the Grantee (operator).

This activity effectively ends once the contract has been signed and sealed. The day-to-day management and monitoring of the concession then becomes the full responsibility of the DNPWC and the Grantee.

Principal output/s

Signed concession agreement for an upmarket tented camp in KTWR.	
Targeted zone/s	
Southern Zone (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
National and **local** levels.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA. **S-9**: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA. **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.	
Priority rating	
High priority.	
Timing and target dates	
Drafting of concession agreement and negotiations takes place during **second half of Year 1 and into early-Year 2**; signing of concession agreement by **end of March 2018**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Primarily **DNPWC**, probably with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
Advice from an appropriate NGO may be sought, but in a non-partisan manner; input from local communities will also be sought.	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention; private sector prospective Grantee will also carry some of the costs.	
Other related activities	
Establishment of upmarket tented camp in KTWR (***Activity 3.6***); drawing up and launching of public tender (***Activity 9.3***); formulation of model concession agreement for PAs (***Activity 9.5***).	

ACTIVITY 9.7	**KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements**
Draw up, negotiate and sign a concession agreement for the high-end tourist lodge in Makalu Barun National Park	
Rationale	

Following the launch of the public tender for a high-end tourist lodge in MBNP (***Activity 9.4***), it will be necessary to begin drafting an appropriate concession agreement which will subsequently be used during negotiations by both the DNPWC and the winning bidder or prospective Grantee. This contract document will be based on the model concession agreement developed under ***Activity 9.5*** and will be for the concession period advertised in the tender document (ie. 15-20 years). It will be used as a working document and basis for negotiations and be updated as these proceed. Once the negotiations have concluded and the concession agreement has been finalised and signed, it becomes the principal and legally-binding tool for guiding the development and future operations of the tourist lodge in the park.

The Grantee's relationship with the local communities living within the national park and its buffer zone, especially with respect to employment and business opportunities and social responsibility, will be embodied in the concession agreement, so ensuring that a true three-way 'partnership in conservation' is established.

In addition to guiding the Grantee's operations within the national park, its relationship with local communities and the overall business partnership with the DNPWC, the concession agreement will also be used to help resolve any issues and/or conflicts that may arise during the initial period of the concession. The concession agreement can also be monitored on a regular basis (say quarterly or 6-monthly) to ensure that both parties are complying with its terms.

Once the initial period of concession is over, and assuming that the agreement has not been terminated for whatever reason by either side before then, the Grantee should be given the opportunity to renew the concession. The terms of this renewed concession may differ from those governing the initial term.

It should be stated here that at no time does the DNPWC lose authority over the tourism facility or the national park. Through the concession agreement the DNPWC will have the legal right to force the Grantee to either comply with terms of the agreement or risk having the agreement terminated and being ejected from the park. At the same time, however, the Grantee will have the legal right to ensure that the park complies with its own obligations towards natural resource protection and its working relationship with the Grantee.

Brief description	

This activity will take the model concession agreement that was developed under ***Activity 9.5*** and amend it according to the specific needs of the privately-owned and -managed high-end tourist lodge within MBNP. Development of the agreement will take place over a series of face-to-face negotiations between the DNPWC and the future private sector partner. It is likely that

negotiations will not be concluded in a single session. This is actually a good thing in that it does give time for the prospective partners to fully-consider aspects or clauses within the draft agreement and to discuss them with other individuals within the DNPWC and company who do not form part of the negotiating team. It is important not to hurry the negotiations as the strength of the agreement will be reflected largely by the care that is taken in drawing it up.

Once the draft has reached a state where both parties are happy with what has been negotiated, a brief written statement, or MoU, can be signed by both parties stating that they have reached agreement. The final version of the concession agreement can be drawn up and then signed at a ceremony soon after. At that ceremony, the private sector partner would be expected to make the first payment according to the payment schedule and the contract will become a legally-binding document for both parties, the Grantor (DNPWC) and the Grantee (operator).

This activity effectively ends once the contract has been signed and sealed. The day-to-day management and monitoring of the concession then becomes the full responsibility of the DNPWC and the Grantee.

Principal output/s
Signed concession agreement for a high-end tourist lodge in MBNP.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District).

Focal level of activity
National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA. **S-9**: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA. **L-3**: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets. **L-4**: Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA.

Priority rating
High priority.

Timing and target dates
Drafting of concession agreement and negotiations takes place during **second half of Year 1 and into first half of Year 2**; signing of concession agreement by **end of June 2018**.

Implementation driver/s
Primarily **DNPWC**, probably with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
Advice from an appropriate NGO may be sought, but in a non-partisan manner; input from local communities will also be sought.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 750,000.

Possible funding sources
DNPWC primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention; private sector prospective Grantee will also carry some of the costs.

Other related activities
Establishment of high-end tourist lodge in MBNP (**Activity 3.7**); drawing up and launching of public tender (**Activity 9.4**); formulation of model concession agreement for PAs (**Activity 9.5**).

ACTIVITY 9.8	**KTA 9 – Concessions and Agreements**

Advise on and facilitate where needed the drawing up of Memoranda of Understanding between communities, district authorities and private sector tourism operators

Rationale
Concession agreements addressed under **Activities 9.5**, **9.6** and **9.7** are ideally suited to the formalisation of business partnerships between the DNPWC (in this case the two PAs within the TDA) and private sector investors/operators. Outside of the PAs and in their buffer zones, as well as elsewhere in the TDA, however, the concept of contracts between communities, district authorities and private sector investors/operators can also be applied and used to formalise business partnerships.

There is a real risk, for instance, that communities can be unfairly exploited by private sector operators. This is especially the case with those communities located in more remote areas and with those that do not possess the necessary business acumen and experience. Under the TDAP, the development of community-owned and -managed lodges and campsites as well as homestays is being pursued (**Activities 3.1 to 3.5**). All these community-related facilities will at some time or other need to work with established private sector operators, especially those bringing customers into the TDA or moving them around within the region. With the primary aim of such operators being to maximise profit, community-run tourism facilities can be at a disadvantage when working with them.

There may also be a need to establish formal business relationships and contracts between district authorities and the private sector, such as, for instance, the joint running of a tourism information centre or kiosk. Under the TDAP, a number of such outlets

are to be established (viz. *Activities 4.1 to 4.4*). These would all need some form of formal working agreement to be put in place to ensure that they run efficiently and effectively and on a financially-sustainable basis.

The purpose of this activity is to encourage communities and district authorities to enter into a formal business arrangement with the private sector, this being set down in some form of contract agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). These legal-binding documents need not be very complicated and should be tailored to the nature and size of the operation in question. They should, however, cover all the main issues that are addressed in the concession agreements described for PPPs in PAs.

Such agreements or MoUs will not only help protect the community and its business, as well as state investment and involvement in tourism information outlets, but also the private sector operator in that his/her tourism product would receive preferential favour and treatment from the community or promotion through information outlets that are owned by district authorities. This is clearly good for generating business and profit.

The development of these MoUs should be facilitated by the NTB in its role as facilitator for tourism product diversification and development in the country. Realistically, however, and especially as NTB does not have any branch offices in the TDA, assistance with the MoUs would need to be provided by the appropriate DDC, or a suitable locally-based NGO (eg. tourism development committees), or through expertise provided through a donor-funded intervention. It is important, however, to ensure that the concept and use of MoUs is firmly embedded within one or more appropriate institutions, especially at district level, and that it becomes wide practice.

Brief description
This activity will focus largely on providing advice and assistance to those community lodges and campsites, as well as any homestays, which may be established under the TDAP (***Activities 3.1 to 3.5***) and to district authorities. This advice and assistance could also be extended to existing or other emerging community-run tourism facilities and initiatives in the region. Using the model concession agreement developed under ***Activity 9.5*** as a basis and in close consultation with participating local communities and authorities, tailor-made and simplified concession agreements or MoUs would be drawn up. It is possible that non-partisan assistance may then be given, on request, to both the community and the private sector parties in negotiating and finalising the agreement between them. The aim of any assistance given should be to help create a fair, formal and mutually-beneficial business working relationship between the two parties.
Principal output/s
Up to **20 Memoranda of Understanding** between communities and district authorities and the private sector for community-run and -managed tourism facilities and tourism service and information outlets in the TDA.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed
S-3: Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA. **S-5**: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations. **S-6**: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. **L-15**: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
MoUs developed as and when needed probably from **Year 2 onwards**; at least 20 MoUs in operation by the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
Probably the **DDCs** with the assistance of an **independent advisor** and possibly through an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
Community-owned and -managed tourism entities; local NGOs; tourism development committees; relevant authorities; relevant private sector operators.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,500,000.
Possible funding sources
DDCs primarily with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention; community-owned -managed tourism entity and private sector partners will also carry some of the costs.
Other related activities
Establishment of community-owned and -managed tourism facilities (***Activities 3.1 to 3.5***); establishment of tourism service and information outlets (***Activities 4.1 to 4.4***); establishment of community trusts (***Activity 7.3***); development of model concession agreement (***Activity 9.5***).

Key Task Area 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training

Tourism awareness

ACTIVITY 10.1	KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training

Design and present one or more tourism awareness courses for selected communities and for district authorities within the TDA

Rationale

Within the TDA, there is currently a general lack of awareness amongst parties involved in the tourism sector, including communities, local organisations and entrepreneurs, about tourism and the expectations of tourists. This lack of awareness, knowledge and skills is reflected in activities undertaken, or not, at local level in that, either there is a lack of initiatives from concerned parties in addressing the needs of the tourism market and market actors, or the activities which are ongoing do not meet tourist and market expectations. This in turn results in a lack of progress in the development in the sector, few job opportunities arising and limited levels of business and income generation.

This applies in particular to small-scale entrepreneurs, such as lodge, hotel and restaurant owners, who are not able to improve their products and services as well as to local development agencies not being able to identify required destination activities, facilities and infrastructures. Furthermore, the lack of awareness amongst the general population living within the destination areas, especially with respect to littering, affects the level of attraction of the destination to tourists and other visitors. The issue of tourism awareness within the public-cat-large is dealt with under *Activity 10.2*.

This particular activity is intended to provide a basic introduction to tourism, the various components of the tourism industry and the expectation of the tourists. The participants of tourism awareness courses would come from key players such as hotels, restaurants, tourism development committees, tourism-related associations, custodians of tourist attractions, relevant NGOs and those persons within VDCs, DDCs and municipalities who are responsible for or have a focus on tourism.

Upon receiving the basic awareness trainings, entrepreneurs will have a better idea on how to improve or expand their business and services and tourism planners and administrators and NGOs will have a clearer understanding and picture of the new activities, products and infrastructures to be built. Entrepreneurs could then proceed to advanced trainings related to skills acquisition and into specifics such as food and beverage, lodge, restaurant management training, etc. (*Activities 10.3* and *10.6*). For the tourism administrators and planners also more advanced training related to tourism destination planning and management could be provided (*Activity 10.9*) following the basic awareness training.

There are several tourism colleges within Dharan, as well as the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) and others in Kathmandu, which can play a key role in developing a tourism awareness curriculum and associated manuals and materials. The SNV/UKAID-funded Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme (GHTDP) has also developed manuals for basic and skills building courses for tourism entrepreneurs (eg. lodge/hotel management, cooking, First Aid, guide training, etc.), all of which could be adapted for tourism awareness courses. Local colleges, hotel or tourism-related associations, DDCs and tourism offices in the TDA could all work together to adapt the above-mentioned curricula to better suit them for tourism awareness courses in a local context and to deliver trainings.

With tourism awareness courses, during which knowledge is built up but where specific skills are usually not developed, participants are normally not expecting to pay for the courses. It would therefore be best if tourism development committees and associations organise and pay for such awareness courses for their staff and members.

Overall, significantly raising the awareness of tourism amongst key stakeholders and players within the TDA should result in improved products and services for visitors, so increasing income and revenues for SMEs and the region as a whole.

Brief description

This activity will firstly involve adapting the training curriculum and manuals developed during the GHTDP and other curricula and manuals to suit the local context, need and market situation. This will be done largely by local tourism colleges in collaboration with the proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training.

The duration of the basic awareness course could range from 3-5 days, depending on the level of interest, and would include, for example: ♦ an introduction to the basics of tourism; ♦ existing and potential source markets/customers; ♦ expectations on services and products; ♦ providing hospitality; ♦ ensuring good sanitation and hygiene; ♦ destination management; ♦ managing visitors and tourists; etc. Course participants could also share their own experiences and ideas on improvement of the sector.

Participants would include interested and key SMEs from the destination areas, tourism development committees, VDC/DDC/municipality focal persons, tourism-related associations, district CCIs, custodians of tourist attractions, local NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), clubs, etc.

The first batch of courses could be given for communities, authorities, entrepreneurs, etc. from the Koshi Tappu and Makalu Barun areas of the TDA. Depending on interest and demand, the courses can be repeated for other areas of the TDA or at a later date during the implementation of the TDAP.

Principal output/s

More than **500 participants** (at least 150 individuals from each district) significantly more aware of tourism.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity
District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed
L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.

Priority rating
High priority.

Timing and target dates
Awareness courses selected, adapted or developed **during first quarter of Year 1**; courses presented **during second half of Year 1 and through Year 2**; courses repeated **during second half of Year 4**; up to 400 participants receive tourism awareness training by **end of 2020**.

Implementation driver/s
Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with **tourism colleges/schools** in Dharan and with assistance through possible **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
District/local tourism development committees; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; district CCIs; interested VDCs; communities; custodians of tourist attractions; hotel associations; CBOs; NGOs.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 2,500,000.

Possible funding sources
Proposed IRP; IDA-funded intervention; district CCIs; hotel associations; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.

Other related activities
Formulation of district-level tourism development plans (*Activity 1.5*); improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (*Activity 2.1*); establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (*Activities 3.1 to 3.5*); development of unique tourism products (*Activity 3.9*); development of a range of selected new tourist attractions (*Activity 3.14*); development of environmental guidelines (*Activity 5.2*); establishment of community trusts linked to community-owned &-run tourism operations (*Activity 7.3*); establishment of tourism development committee for Makalu Barun area (*Activity 8.4*); launch of tourism awareness campaign for the public-at-large (*Activity 10.2*); tourism skills training courses (*Activity 10.3*); capacity-building for staff of custodians of tourist attractions (*Activity 10.5*); accredited tourism-related courses (*Activity 10.6*); tourism planning capacity-building for DDCs and local tourism development committees (*Activity 10.9*); promotion of tourism awareness training through TDA website (*Activity 11.2*).

ACTIVITY 10.2	**KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training**

Develop and launch a tourism awareness campaign for the public-at-large in the TDA
Rationale
Many of the tourism products currently operating within the TDA have been initiated by a limited number of individuals and enterprises. The overall awareness of tourism amongst the public-at-large is low and, consequently, their understanding of and participation in the tourism sector is very limited. This lack of public awareness about tourism is affecting the development of the sector within the TDA, in particular the infrastructure, new products and services and the level of hospitality shown and given to tourists and other visitors.
If tourism awareness amongst the public were to be raised significantly, then engagement with and participation in the tourism sector by the public-at-large could be improved considerably. This would certainly assist in promoting the development of new tourism products and improving existing ones and, overall, helping to develop Eastern Nepal as a significant and popular tourism destination area.
A public tourism awareness campaign would complement the tourism awareness courses provided for selected communities and district authorities under *Activity 10.1*. It is envisaged that many of the various communication messages embodied in the awareness training courses could be adopted in the public tourism awareness campaign and communicated to the public-at-large through media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines, the Internet and various social networking sites. In addition, the various district tourism development committees, hotel associations and chambers of commerce and industry (CCIs) as well as local tourism training-related establishments could promote the concept of tourism to the public-at-large through their own activities directed at communities, interest groups, schools, colleges and other public events. Furthermore, the participation of the Cottage and Small Industries Development Board (CSIDB) and the Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI) would be useful.
The possibility of including tourism as a subject within primary and/or secondary school curricula could also be considered. This would represent a much more long-term approach to educating the young and future adult members of the public about tourism, the role it can play in local socio-economic development and possible future job, career and business opportunities.
Brief description

This activity would firstly involve adapting the tourism awareness courses developed under *Activity 10.1* to better suit delivery to a wider public audience through broadcasting, publication, public lectures and events and the Internet. This would be done largely by the proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with the NTB and involving where appropriate various tourism development committees, hotel associations, chambers of commerce and industry and local tourism colleges and local offices or representatives of the FNCSI and CSIDB. Some technical assistance support may be provided through a donor-funded intervention.

It is envisaged that the public awareness campaign would be undertaken twice during the lifetime of the 5-year TDAP, each campaign lasting for approximately six (6) months. The campaign would address and communicate information on, for instance: ♦ what is tourism; ♦ what are tourists; ♦ what are the basic needs of tourism; ♦ what do tourists want; ♦ how to interact with tourists; ♦ how to provide services for tourists; ♦ how to benefit from tourism; ♦ etc. This information could all be transmitted to public audiences in attractive, innovative and effective ways using a range of different communication tools and activities.

Efforts should also be made to embed the campaign, or at the very least the key elements of the campaign, into the day-to-day activities of the local DDCs, municipalities, tourism committees, hotel and business associations and CCIs. Local media could also be encouraged to include tourism awareness into some of their programmes.

Principal output/s
Various **tourism awareness public activities and** events conducted and **materials produced**. Significant number of members of the public within the TDA more aware of tourism.
Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity
Regional level.
Strategic objectives addressed
L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.
Priority rating
Medium priority.
Timing and target dates
Public awareness campaign designed and developed **during second half of Year 1**; public awareness campaign conducted **during first half of Year 2**; public awareness campaign repeated **during first half of Year 4**; general and ongoing public awareness undertaken up to the **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s
Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with **NTB** and with assistance through possible an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners
District/local tourism development committees; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; district CCIs; CSIDB; FNCSI; public news media; social media; education authorities.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 3,000,000.
Possible funding sources
Proposed IRP; IDA-funded intervention; NTB; district CCIs; tourism-related associations; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.
Other related activities
Formulation of district-level tourism development plans (*Activity 1.5*); development of environmental guidelines (*Activity 5.2*); tourism awareness course for communities and district authorities (*Activity 10.1*); tourism skills training courses (*Activity 10.3*); capacity-building for staff of custodians of tourist attractions (*Activity 10.5*); training courses for tour and trekking guides (*Activity 10.7*); promotion of tourism awareness training through TDA website (*Activity 11.2*).

Tourism-related training

ACTIVITY 10.3	**KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training**
Design and deliver basic, intermediate and advanced tourism training courses to interested tourism product owners and staff in the TDA	
Rationale	
Many of the tourism enterprises operating within the TDA have started business with a basic idea and a degree of local knowledge and experience. Many of these businesses or SMEs are small family-run enterprises that cater primarily for local travellers who have generally not expected much in terms of products and services and their standards of delivery. Most owners and employees within these small businesses have not received any relevant training in tourism. Some of these tourism enterprises, however, have received training or employ trained staff, but are in need of further skills development in order to help cater to the demands of increasingly discerning customers and clients from elsewhere in Nepal and from India and third countries.	

A number of the bigger tourism enterprises have hired trained staff or have had existing staff trained in Kathmandu, such as through the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM), or through the several tourism training establishments in Dharan and Biratnagar.

Because of the general lack of awareness within the TDA of what tourism is about (see *Activities 10.1* and *10.2*), however, many tourism SMEs are unable to improve their products and services because they are not aware of the types of skills that are required to do so. This has resulted in low levels of visitor satisfaction and low levels of visitor income and growth. For example, many of the visitors to the Bhedetar and Hile areas in the TDA originate from hot and humid areas in the lowland areas of neighbouring India and in the Terai region of Nepal. These visitors are looking for a cooler climate and a holiday experience that includes good accommodation, food and beverages, as well as local excursions and activities. Through the lack of skills and experience in delivery quality products and services, visitors' expectations are generally not being met. Consequently, the tourism potential of the area is not being realised and the sector as a whole is not developing.

Depending on the size and nature of the tourism business being undertaken, there is a great need for proper, standardised and quality training for all levels of staff involved. This training should be directed at a whole range of industry-related aspects, such as visitor reception skills, house-keeping, food preparation, cooking, food and beverage service, food safety management, waitering, sanitation, waste management, communications skills, emergency response, etc. If significant improvements could be made in these and other hospitality-related areas, then higher quality products and services would result that would lead to increased levels of visitor satisfaction, increased visitation rates and higher levels of income and growth.

Under the TDAP, such training could be provided. However, it is important to ensure that a mechanism is developed that ensures that the training continues long after the plan has been implemented. This would require producing and supporting local trainers and experts and establishing a system whereby the various tourism SMEs and emerging entrepreneurs and employees have access to such training.

Brief description

This activity will firstly involve adopting and adapting where necessary the training curriculum, courses and manuals that have been developed by the tourism colleges in Dharan and Biratnagar and NATHM to suit the local context, need and market situation. The curriculum and courses need to take into consideration the local resources available and constraints that are faced, as well as the target markets and their expectations. The activity should devise and provide the skills necessary to upgrade the standards of the products and services provided by SMEs whilst maintaining their local knowledge and maximizing the use of local resources. This will all be done largely in consultation with the tourism colleges in Dharan, NATHM and can be based on their standard curriculum as well the one designed by DHTDP/SNV/UKAID targeting the rural SMEs.

The duration of the training courses could range from basic (3-5 days) through more advanced (2-3 weeks) to longer courses, depending on the level of interest from tourism product owners. Participants would include primarily management and staff from interested SMEs and community-owned and -run tourism enterprises within the destination areas, especially those that have been supported through the TDAP with other aspects of their development.

Evaluation of the training provided will be undertaken from two years into the programme, after which the training given will be modified and improved where possible and then delivered.

These trainings should result in a significant improvement in the products and services provided by SMEs (eg. hotels/lodges, restaurants, camps, homestays, etc.) and their staff (management, reception, cooks, waiters, housekeeping, etc.).

Principal output/s

More than **500 participants** (at least 200 individuals from each of Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts and 100 from Sankhuwasabha District) significantly better trained in many aspects of tourism service delivery.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Training courses selected, adapted or developed **during first half of Year 1**; courses presented **during second half of Year 1 and through Year 2**; training evaluated and courses improved **during Year 3**; improved training courses presented **during Years 4 and 5**; up to 500 participants receive tourism training by **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with **tourism colleges/schools** in Dharan, Itahari and Biratnagar and with assistance through a possible **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Tourism-related associations; district CCIs; district/local tourism development committees; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; interested municipalities and VDCs; community and private sector tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 5,000,000.
Possible funding sources
Proposed IRP; IDA-funded intervention; NTB; tourism-related associations; district CCIs; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism product owners.
Other related activities
Improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (***Activity 2.1***); establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (***Activities 3.1 to 3.5***); development of up-market private sector concessions (***Activities 3.6*** and ***3.7***); development of selected tourism niches and unique tourism products (***Activities 3.8*** and ***3.9***); development of a range of selected new tourist attractions (***Activity 3.14***); development of tourism activities (***Activities 3.24 to 3.27***); establishment of community cooperatives linked to community-owned &-run tourism operations (***Activity 7.3***); capacity-building for staff of custodians of tourist attractions (***Activity 10.5***); accredited tourism-related courses (***Activity 10.6***); promotion of tourism training through TDA website (***Activity 11.2***).

ACTIVITY 10.4	**KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training**

Design and deliver basic courses on waste management, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene to interested communities in the Koshi Tappu and Makalu Barun areas and elsewhere in the TDA
Rationale
At present, there is no effective mechanism for waste management in most areas within the TDA frequented by tourists and visitors and sanitation and hygiene levels are generally not ideal. In protected areas, such as KTWR in particular, reserve staff have managed to keep control on waste management within the core area to some extent, but pressure from the local population is significant especially in the buffer zone areas where there is much less control of waste management and where the absence of effective waste disposal is a problem. Outside of PAs in general, the issue of waste management is even more critical, especially where increased visitor activity and numbers of visitors could be experienced in the future. The same can generally be said for sanitation and hygiene.
If no proper mechanisms are in place for the effective management of waste and ensuring good levels of sanitation and hygiene, this will have a significant adverse effect on the environment and the attractiveness of the TDA to tourists and visitors. With awareness of tourism within the TDA being at a low level and with environmental consciousness amongst most residents and many visitors being equally poor, there is a real danger of uncontrolled waste disposal damaging the natural and man-made resources on which the regional tourism industry relies.
There is a need, therefore, for a range of audiences within the TDA to acquire the knowledge and skills to effectively handle waste and to improve sanitation and hygiene levels, especially where they relate to the provision of tourism-related services. Short courses on waste management, sanitation and hygiene do exist, but these will need to be selected and adapted or even designed from scratch to better-suit the context that exists locally within the TDA. Where possible, environmental guidelines (***Activity 5.2***) should be incorporated into the training courses. Such courses can be given to a wide range of audiences within the TDA, such as selected municipality and VDC personnel, women's groups, youth groups, schools, other community groups and local clubs, custodians of tourist attractions, tourism product and SME staff, etc.
Any courses given, however, need to be followed up with or linked to practical help in establishing and installing necessary infrastructures (eg. simple waste disposal and recycling facilities (***Activities 4.11***, ***4.12*** and ***5.4***), improved toilet and washing facilities, safe drinking water stations (***Activity 4.13***), etc.) and setting up simple day-to-day management regimes. In addition to the infrastructures and equipment, simple action plans should be developed by the training course participants themselves to implement good waste management and sanitation practices effectively in their own communities and for their own tourism products.
The courses and follow-up mechanisms need to be embedded ideally within the VDCs and DDCs to ensure that such training continues after implementation of the TDAP has ended.
Brief description
This activity will firstly involve identifying, adopting and adapting where necessary any appropriate courses and manuals on waste management, sanitation and hygiene and provision of safe drinking water to suit the local context, need and market situation. The courses and any manuals that are produced (in Nepali) need to take into consideration the local resources available and constraints that are faced, as well as the target markets and their expectations. This will be done largely by appropriate experts in collaboration with local authorities, especially DDCs and VDCs.
The duration of each course may only be for one day or less and they could/should be presented consecutively. Participants would include individuals from interested communities, community groups, SMEs, community-owned and -run tourism enterprises, as well as VDCs, DDCs, tourism-related associations and selected staff from MBNP and KTWR.
Evaluation of the courses provided will be undertaken from two years into the programme, after which the courses given will be modified and improved where necessary and then delivered.
Overall, the courses and associated manuals should help to improve on-the-ground waste management, disposal and recycling, sanitation and hygiene and the provision of safe drinking water.
Principal output/s

More than **1,000 participants** (at least 300 individuals from each district) significantly more aware of and trained in waste disposal, sanitation and hygiene and provision of safe drinking water.

Targeted zone/s
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity
District and **local** level.

Strategic objectives addressed
L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.
L-13: Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA.
L-14: Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating
Medium priority.

Timing and target dates
Courses selected, adapted or developed **during first half of Year 1**; courses presented **during second half of Year 1 and through Year 2**; courses evaluated and improved **during Year 3**; further and refresher courses presented **during Years 4 and 5**; up to 1,000 participants receive waste management, sanitation and safe drinking water courses by **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with relevant **NGOs** and **specialists** with assistance through a possible **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
VDCs; DDCs; DNPWC; buffer zone committees; tourism development committees; communities; community tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 3,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Proposed IRP; IDA; interested VDCs; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs.

Other related activities
Improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (**Activity 2.1**); establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (**Activities 3.1 to 3.5**); development of selected tourism niches and unique tourism products (**Activities 3.8** and **3.9**); development of visitor parks and cable-car services (**Activities 3.10 to 3.13**); development of a range of selected new tourist attractions (**Activity 3.14**); development of day-visitor and outdoor recreational facilities (**Activities 3.15 to 3.18**); development of tourism activities (**Activities 3.24**, **3.26** and **3.27**); development of visitor centre (**Activity 4.5**); installation of incineration and waste disposal facilities (**Activities 4.11** and **4.12**); provision of safe drinking water stations (**Activity 4.13**); development of environmental guidelines (**Activity 5.2**); control and disposal of solid waste (**Activity 5.4**); tourism awareness courses and campaigns (**Activities 10.1** and **10.2**); capacity-building for staff of custodians of tourist attractions (**Activity 10.5**); promotion of tourism training through TDA website (**Activity 11.2**).

ACTIVITY 10.5	**KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training**

Build up the capacity of staff and custodians of selected tourist attractions in the TDA in order to improve the experiences of visitors and manage tourists better
Rationale
There are a number of tourist attractions within the TDA that presently attract large number of visitors, especially pilgrims and tourists from India. These attractions include *inter alia* religious pilgrimage sites, major viewing points, historical sites, urban and rural public recreational parks, etc. One of the main issues regarding these current tourism attractions is the quality of the experience of those visitors visiting the sites, especially with respect to available comfort and infrastructural facilities at the tourist sites (eg. toilets, shelter, information, etc.). This issue is addressed under ***Activity 2.1***.
Another issue, however, is the standard of service that the custodians of these tourist attractions provide to visitors and how they manage them. In most instances, visitors are left to their own devices to make what they will of their visit and interaction with the custodians is often very minimal. This does help to enhance the visits of pilgrims, tourists and other visitors.
Overall, there is a lack of awareness amongst most custodians of what tourism is and what tourists (or visitors) expect and very likely an associated lack of necessary skills in managing tourists. Admittedly, some do not see pilgrims as tourists and there is a feeling, shared in other parts of the world, that pilgrimages to religious sites should not be seen as a form of tourism. Nevertheless, pilgrims are visitors and, as such, they should be provided with at least a satisfactory level of welcome, attention and treatment by custodians and hosting communities alike. Helping address the poor level of tourism awareness amongst the custodians of tourist attractions and their hosting communities is tackled under ***Activity 10.1***.
Providing the various tourist attraction custodians with appropriate knowledge and skills to better manage and interact with tourists and visitors will be tackled under this activity. In many ways, custodians are being viewed no differently to the owners,

managers and staff of tourism-related private sector and community businesses with respect to their interaction with tourists and visitors, the great majority of whom have at least a reasonable set of expectations that they would like to see being satisfied during their visits. Some of these expectations relate to the interactions that they have with those individuals and communities associated with the tourist attractions.

Once a better standard of service is provided to visitors, it is more likely that repeat visits to tourist attractions take place and that through word-of-mouth other visitors will be attracted to the sites. This can only be of benefit to the sites themselves and to the local communities which often rely on the sites for their socio-economic well-being.

Brief description

This activity will begin with an assessment amongst custodians of the knowledge and skills training necessary for a number of selected tourist attractions within the TDA. Once the individual tourism attraction site training needs are known, appropriate training courses will be designed. This will be done through the proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training working in close collaboration with local tourism colleges, such as in Dharan.

The courses, some of which will contain elements from tourism awareness courses provided under **Activity 10.1**, will not only aim to improve skills amongst custodians, but also to promote the establishment or strengthening of linkages and partnerships between the individual destinations and key partners, such as VDCs and municipalities, DDCs, tourism development committees, tourism-related associations, private sector tour companies, transport companies, etc. as well as to market and promote the attraction overall.

The courses will then be delivered to interested custodians of selected tourist attractions. Wherever possible, the sites and courses would be combined to maximise the use of resources and to encourage interaction between participants.

Part of the course should include one or more study visits to well-established and well-developed and -run tourist attractions elsewhere in Nepal (eg. Lumbini, Chitwan, Annapurna Conservation Area, etc.) in order for participants to witness firsthand how successful and popular tourist attractions are run and to share the experience and expertise in managing a destination.

It is envisaged that this training would be conducted as a pilot early on during the implementation of the TDAP targeting a selection of established tourist attractions. The impact of the training would then be evaluated. Training would then be repeated halfway through the TDAP and again towards the end for additional existing and newly-established tourist attractions, drawing on the experience and lessons learn from the earlier phases of training. In this way, the impact of the training can be spread as widely as possible amongst tourist attractions within the TDA.

Principal output/s

More than **250 participants** (at least 100 individuals from each of Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts and 50 from Sankhuwasabha District) from public tourist attractions trained in tourist and visitor management and other skills.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA.
L-15: Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA.
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Training courses designed **during first half of Year 1**; courses presented **during second half of Year 1 and through Year 2**; courses evaluated **during second half of Year 2**; courses repeated **during Years 3 and 5**; more than 250 participants receive training in tourist attraction visitor management and other skills by **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with **tourism colleges/schools** in Dharan, Itahari and Biratnagar and with assistance through a possible **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Tourist attraction custodians; VDCs and municipalities; DDCs; tourism development communities

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,500,000.

Possible funding sources

Proposed IRP; IDA; NTB; DDCs

Other related activities

Improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions (**Activity 2.1**); development of a range of selected new tourist attractions (**Activity 3.14**); improvement of access roads to tourism attractions (**Activity 4.8**); enforcement of building standards and regulations (**Activity 5.1**); development of environmental guidelines (**Activity 5.2**); enforcement of regulations governing protection of natural heritage and landscapes (**Activity 5.3**); installation of directional/information signage for selected tourism attractions (**Activity 6.2**); production of guidebooks and informative material (**Activity 6.6**); tourism awareness courses (**Activity**

10.1); courses on waste management, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation & hygiene (*Activity 10.4*); promotion of tourism training through TDA website (*Activity 11.2*).

ACTIVITY 10.6	**KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training**

Provide support for interested entrepreneurs and players to enable them to take more comprehensive and accredited tourism-related courses in regional tourism management colleges and training institutions

Rationale

Activity 10.3 especially, as well *Activity 10.4*, target tourism-related SMEs that are owned and run by private sector or community operators with the aim of improving skills across a broad range of different tourism business and management fields. The training provided would cover basic, intermediate and more advanced skills and should result in tourism operations being much better run and of a much higher quality of standards and service than exists at present.

This activity, however, aims to help satisfy the need or desire by those tourism product owners keen on investing more in developing and improving their products and services even further, most likely with the aim of attracting more high-end customers and greater flows of revenue. It would provide incentives (eg. full or part scholarships) and facilitation support to existing and new tourism-related entrepreneurs to enable them to take advanced, comprehensive and accredited tourism courses (diplomas, degrees, etc.) in tourism colleges and training institutions within the TDA (eg. Dharan, Biratnagar), elsewhere in the country (eg. Kathmandu, Pokhara) and in neighbouring India (eg. Bangalore, Mumbai, Gwalior).

Efforts will also be made to build linkages and relationships between tourism product owners in the TDA and tourism training establishments and to provide information to prospective participants on the institutions and courses that are available as well as to help make the courses accessible to interested enterprises.

The need to attract high-end markets, and therefore the need to develop high standards of products and services (ie. accommodation, facilities, food, beverages, service, etc.), has been reiterated by district offices as well as many entrepreneurs within the TDA. Achieving high standards can be achieved through employing staff members who have received comprehensive and accredited training courses from established training institutions, both within the TDA and outside of it.

Through the TDAP, opportunities also exist to help improve and enhance the standard of the courses and trainers available in local tourism training institutions within the TDA. This could be done by ensuring that training experts brought in from outside of the region work closely with their local counterparts, helping to develop high quality courses that apply international standards but which also take into consideration the local contexts, constraints and challenges.

Brief description

This activity will firstly identify those private sector and community-owned or -run tourism SMEs/enterprises keen on receiving advanced and accredited tourism education and training and assessing the types of skills and courses required. The activity will also identify relevant local, national and international tourism-related education and training institutions that can provide the required training and highlight those courses that are likely to be most relevant to the TDA.

The courses identified and selected for support would likely include a small range of diplomas and degrees at Bachelors and Masters levels varying in length from 6 months to one year and longer. Participants would mostly be made up of individuals drawn from the management cadres of private sector- and community-run tourism SMEs/enterprises.

For each potential participant, decisions will be taken on the level of support to be given under the TDAP, especially with respect to the full- or part-award of scholarships. Financial contributions from the beneficiary SME/enterprise, especially if they are private sector, will be sought where possible or appropriate. Full scholarships would likely only be awarded to potential participants from particularly promising community-owned or -run enterprises.

The completion of these courses by a relatively large number of tourism industry practitioners (at least 50) should result in the medium- and long-term in a significant improvement in the standards of tourism products and services provided by private sector and community operators within the TDA. It should also result in more high-end tourists and visitors being attracted to the region.

It is recognised, however, that providing such education and training to individuals does come with the risk that some individuals will move on from the TDA and take their newly-learned knowledge and skills elsewhere. If this is to other locations within Nepal, then at least the country as a whole will have benefited from the support given through the TDAP.

Principal output/s

More than **50 participants** (at least 20 individuals from each of Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts and 10 from Sankhuwasabha District) from private sector and community tourism products received advanced and accredited training and qualifications.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

Local level.

Strategic objectives addressed

L-3: Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets.

L-11: Financially support the further development of existing tourism-related SMEs within the TDA.

L-12: Financially support the development of new small, very small and micro enterprises within the TDA, especially in remote, rural and economically-disadvantaged areas.
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating
Low priority.

Timing and target dates
Identification of interested SMEs/enterprises and tourism training institutions undertaken **during Year 2**; accredited training undertaken **from Year 3 through to Year 5**; at least 50 individuals received accredited qualifications by **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s
Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with **tourism colleges/schools** in Dharan, Itahari and Biratnagar and with assistance through a possible **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners
Tourism-related associations; CCIs; tourism development committees; DDCs; municipalities; VDCs; community/private sector tourism product owners.

Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 5,000,000.

Possible funding sources
Proposed IRP; IDA; NTB; tourism-related associations; CCIs; DDCs; private sector/community tourism product owners.

Other related activities
Establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (*Activities 3.1 to 3.5*); development of up-market private sector concessions (*Activities 3.6* and *3.7*); development of selected tourism niches and unique tourism products (*Activities 3.8* and *3.9*); basic, intermediate and advanced tourism training courses (*Activity 10.3*); training courses for tour and trekking guides (*Activity 10.7*); promotion of tourism training through TDA website (*Activity 11.2*).

ACTIVITY 10.7	**KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training**

Design and deliver training courses for tour and trekking guides

Rationale

There is evidence of a growing number of Indian as well as western visitors interested in exploring the area and experiencing a variety of outdoor activities, such as trekking, mountain-biking, paragliding, rafting, pilgrimages, etc. There is, however, a lack of trained guides locally to help deliver such services. In Hile, for example, some tourism operations have not been able to deliver on requests from customers for trekking and outdoor experiences simply because the guides necessary are not available.

The great majority of tour and trekking guides in Nepal are trained and qualified, though clearly many visitors themselves inadvertently or knowingly hire guides who are probably not qualified. Most guides in Nepal have been trained at the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) through training courses lasting up to 10 weeks and organised jointly with TAAN. NATHM presently offers courses for three types of guides, namely:

1) Tourist Guide – 10-week course; participant required to be a graduate in any discipline; cost = NPR 20,000
2) Trekking Guide – 5-week course; participant required to have 2-years' experience from registered trekking agency; cost = NPR 6,000
3) Trekking Porter Guide – 15-day course; participant required to have basic communication in one international language and experience of working in trekking field as a porter; cost = NPR 3,000.

Training provided through the NATHM generally covers such issues as *inter alia* tourism, culture, people of Nepal, religion, history, geography, flora and fauna, health hygiene and sanitation, first aid, communication in English, trekking and mountaineering, campsite management, rock climbing theory, mountaineering gear handling, etc.

In addition to the NATHM, the Mountain Academy of Nepal (MAN) also provides training, but primarily in the mountaineering fields. The 15 courses presently offered cover the subjects: basic mountaineering; advance mountaineering; adventure; outdoor yeti climbing and rock climbing; meteorology, environment and cultural; mountaineering instructor; flora and fauna; mountaineering guide; mountaineering portering; mountaineering cooking; mountain rescue; First Aid and herbal treatments, meditation and yoga; languages; and graduate course in mountaineering. The courses last from 2-24 weeks.

Recently, the UKAID-funded Samarth/NMDP has been working closely with TAAN and NATTA to initiate internationally-recognised training for guides.

This activity would work closely with NATHM, MAN and other training institutions as well as TAAN, NMA, NATTA and NATO at national and local level in helping make the various courses accessible to interested local candidates, especially those from the more rural and remote areas of the TDA and those areas that presently suffer from a severe shortage of guides.

Helping to expand the cadre of local and locally-available guides will assist tourism operations within the TDA being able to provide more activities, better experience and higher levels of satisfaction to customers and to increase levels of income to SMEs and local communities. This in turn will help bolster local economies.

Brief description

This activity will firstly identify what types of guides are in short supply within the TDA and where. Working with TAAN, NATTA, NATO and NMA, as well as with local tourism product operations, it will then identify and engage with the most appropriate training institutions, eg. NATHM, MAN, etc.

Trainings would most likely take place in Kathmandu with participants being called to the area from the TDA to benefit from both local and international trainers and training courses and modules.

Following the training, after which participants will be licensed to pursue various careers in guiding, the activity will endeavour to introduce the newly-qualified guides to trekking, mountaineering, tour agencies and hotel associations in order to help identify employment opportunities and secure jobs.

Principal output/s

More than **150 individuals** (at least 50 individuals from each district) newly-qualified as guides.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA
M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists
L-2: Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA
L-17: Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Training courses and institutions selected **during first half of Year 1**; Participants selected **during second half of Year 1 and through Year 2**; training conducted **during Year 3**; training courses repeated **during Year 5**; more than 150 participants receive guide training by **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training in collaboration with **TAAN, NATTA**, **NATO** and **NMA** with possible assistance through an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Tour/trekking/mountaineering guides; community/private sector tourism product owners; Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM), Mountain Academy Nepal (MAN), communities.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 3,000,000.

Possible funding sources

Proposed IRP; IDA; tourism-related associations; course fees from private sector/community tourism product owners.

Other related activities

Establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (*Activities 3.1*, *3.4* and *3.5*); development of up-market private sector concessions (*Activities 3.6* and *3.7*); development of selected tourism niches and unique tourism products (*Activities 3.8* and *3.9*); development of new tourist attractions (*Activity 3.14*); development of short and longer site seeing excursions and new tours (*Activities 3.22 to 3.26*); capacity-building for staff of custodians of tourist attractions (*Activity 10.5*); promotion of tourism training through TDA website (*Activity 11.2*).

ACTIVITY 10.8   KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training

Design and deliver a range of training courses for community members wishing to grow or rear produce for tourism operations or to manufacture crafts and souvenirs

Rationale

The TDA is well-known for its high value and unique local agriculture and herbal and animal products such as tea, cardamom, *rudraksha* beads, *yarchagumba*, *tongba* and other products. Some of these are traded at high values both within Nepal and internationally, especially with China, and some are used for domestic purposes, such as straw mats, baskets, textiles, etc. All of these are of interest to many tourists.

Local souvenirs, crafts and products can generate income and employment for local farmers, much of it as a sideline business. They can also enhance the attraction of an area to tourists and other visitors. In addition to the products themselves, town and village markets, such as the weekly bazaar in Khandbari where farmers from various areas showcase products such as organic vegetables, herbs, rafts and souvenirs, are also tourist attractions in their own right. Such markets, almost festivals, are common throughout the TDA and provide income opportunities for local farmers and residents and an added and uniquely local activity of tourists.

There is a need and potential to encourage existing and emerging small producers to expand or produce a range of crafts and other local products that can be sold to tourists and visitors. Specialised trainings will help farmers and residents to acquire additional practical and business skills to use local resources to grow or manufacture and then market and sell value-added

products that are in demand or could be in demand from visitors, thereby supplementing household incomes and improving their quality of life.

The Cottage and Small Industries Development Board (CSIDB) and the Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI) can both play a role in identifying and providing technical support in developing and delivering various courses. Collaboration with local market organisers as well as established industries and fair trade organisations and local and Kathmandu-based training institutions will be important.

Once training has been given, successful participants may then be in the position, if they so want and as part of **Activity 3.9**, to apply for financial support through the proposed SME Financing Facility (**Activity 7.1**) and Grants Fund (**Activity 7.2**) to help them expand or set up their enterprises. The activity may also be able to help with linking producers to potential wholesale or retail buyers and markets.

Brief description	
	The training provided under this activity will very much depend on the nature of the agricultural product or art or craft being produced or manufactured and the types of markets they are normally sold to or through.
	In the first instance, an assessment of training needs will need to be carried out amongst existing farmers and residents in selected areas to determine what skills training is needed, especially with regard to business and marketing. There may even be a need or even a demand to further develop technical and vocational skills relating to the actual products being produced.
	During this activity, assistance will largely be sought through the CSIB and FNCSI, as well as other training institutions within the TDA and elsewhere in Kathmandu. Existing courses will be sourced where possible, but new ones designed and developed where necessary. The courses and any manuals that are produced (in Nepali) need to take into consideration the local resources available and constraints that are faced.
	It is envisaged that the training itself will be carried out in local trainings institutions where possible, but also in Kathmandu and other centres if necessary. Trainers will likely be a mix of academic and vocational experts depending on the course subject. Expertise from outside of the TDA or Nepal could be brought in to assist with training where appropriate or requested.
	The duration of each course will likely vary from one to two days to a week or more, depending again on the subject matter. Participants would include interested local farmers and residents keep on developing their home-based agricultural or art/craft livelihoods. Where possible, participants will be brought together in central points in order to maximise on available resources.
Principal output/s	
	Upwards of **200 individuals** (at least 50 from each district) from trained in the production, manufacture and sale of a variety of tourism-related agricultural and art and craft products.
Targeted zone/s	
	Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).
Focal level of activity	
	District and **local** levels.
Strategic objectives addressed	
	S-7: Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA
	L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA
Priority rating	
	Low priority.
Timing and target dates	
	Design training courses and develop manuals **during first half of Year 2**; deliver training courses **during second half of Year 2 and Year 3**; repeat training **during Year 5**; upwards of 200 individuals trained in production and sale of a variety of tourism products by **end of 2021**.
Implementation driver/s	
	Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI) & specialists through **proposed IRP** on tourism awareness and training with assistance through an **IDA-supported intervention**.
Implementation partners	
	District Agriculture Development Office (DADO); craft producer associations; VDCs; buffer zone committees; communities; vocational training bodies.
Estimated budget (rupees)	
	NPR 2,000,000.
Possible funding sources	
	Proposed IRP; IDA; DDCs; VDCs.
Other related activities	
	Establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (**Activities 3.1**, **3.4** and **3.5**); development of unique tourism products based on locally-produced foods & materials & intangible assets (**Activity 3.9**); tourism awareness courses for selected communities (**Activity 10.2**); promotion of tourism training through TDA website (**Activity 11.2**).

Institutional capacity building

ACTIVITY 10.9	KTA 10 – Tourism Awareness and Training

Build up the capacity within district development committees and local tourism development committees in the TDA to better plan and implement tourism development in their geographical areas of operation and focus

Rationale

DDCs within the TDA have the mandate for planning and facilitating the implementation of tourism development within their specific areas of jurisdiction, while the DNPWC has the responsibility for planning and overseeing the development of tourism in their protected areas, namely KTWR and MBNP. However, due to limited budgets and competing sectors for state funds, DDCs within the TDA generally do not have the necessary staff, expertise or resources allocated to the tourism sector. This has inevitably resulted in less focus being placed on tourism and an associated lack of proper planning and effective implementation by the DDCs. DNPWC is much better placed overall with regard to planning, but even so, still no comprehensive tourism development plans exist for either KTWR or MBNP. It is hoped that the latter will be addressed under *Activities 1.3* and *1.4*, respectively.

Of the three DDCs within the TDA, only Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts have formal tourism development plans. With the former, which was put together by a Kathmandu-based consultancy company, the plan is quite comprehensive on background information, but falls very short on actual activities to be implemented and how. The Sankhuwasabha Plan on the other hand was put together on behalf of the DDC by the Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center, a local NGO. The plan is certainly a much better one, but it is still very product-oriented and still lacks detail on what activities need to be undertaken, how, by whom and at who's cost. Sunsari District presently doesn't have any formal tourism development plan at all and largely relies on direction and plans put together by the NGOs Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee and "Green East". The former plan is very infrastructure-oriented, while the latter is more conceptual – neither have much detail on the activities needed and what mechanisms are required to implement them. None of the above plans can be considered as being holistic, integrated and action-oriented and all seem to ignore the fact that tourism development is very much a multi-sectoral, multi-responsibility and complex task. They are also not linked in in any way to the *National Tourism Strategic Plan* (NTSP). This is not surprising in that the NTSP was drafted only in 2014/15.

Although two of the three DDCs have one or two staff members assigned the responsibility for implementing the plans, the skills and human, financial and material resources available for doing so are simply not sufficient for the task in hand. The tourism development committees that have been set up arguably also largely lack the skills and resources to assist in formulating the plans and then seeing them implemented. These deficiencies are largely manifested in the region by the present low level of tourism development that is seen across the region and the general absence of new tourism developments taking place, other than a few hotels being expanded and some new ones being built. Tourism is still viewed and treated as being of low priority, despite the sector enjoying national priority.

This activity is aimed at supporting the DDCs and the various tourism development committees in their tourism planning efforts to help ensure that any plans that are put together in the future are holistic, integrated, action-oriented and realistic and, above all, can at least be implemented to a reasonably good degree. The latter requires the establishment of good linkages with a range of different stakeholders and partners, all of whom need to play a role in tourism development. The formulation of the actual district-level plans will be tackled under *Activity 1.5*.

The availability of appropriately-trained planning manpower within the DDCs and the tourism development committees will enhance the ability of these state and non-state bodies and other key players to jointly identify development priorities (not just infrastructure) within the districts of the areas and to formulate and effectively implement appropriate plans. It is envisaged that, with better planning at district level and with the planning tying into national priorities set out in the NTSP and working through the regional-level plan set out in this TDAP, tourism development within the three districts will see significant progress in the coming years.

Brief description

This activity will firstly involve approaching those state and non-state bodies within the TDA, including the Eastern Branch Office of the DoT based in Kakarbhitta and the management bodies of KTWR and MBNP, responsible for formulating and implementing tourism development plans to assess their interest in receiving capacity-building with respect to the formulation of effective plans. Each of these bodies will be asked to identify and select a number of candidates for subsequent training, coaching and mentoring. These candidates would eventually be responsible for planning and implementation of tourism development in their own districts.

Outside tourism development planning expertise will be brought in to drive this activity, provide on-site coaching and to work closely with local existing and potential planners. The intervention, which will be based on international best-practice, will include a mix of seminars, workshops, discussions and site visits within the TDA, as well as study tours and exchange visits to other destination areas within Nepal, such as Chitwan and Sagarmatha NPs, Annapurna Conservation Area, Pokhara, etc. and to national institutions involved in tourism, such as the DoT, NTB, NATO, NATTA, TAAN and NMA. These tours and visits will be undertaken in order to share practical experience, knowledge and ideas, as well as to build working relationships between planners around the country.

Principal output/s

Upwards of **50 individuals** (at least 15 from each district) from DDCs and non-state tourism development committees trained in effective holistic, integrated and action-oriented tourism development planning.	
Targeted zone/s	
Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).	
Focal level of activity	
District level.	
Strategic objectives addressed	
S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA. **S-2**: Establish a strong link between tourism-related plans at national, regional, district and local levels. **S-6**: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.	
Priority rating	
Medium priority.	
Timing and target dates	
State and non-state bodies and candidates identified and selected **during first half of Year 1**; participants trained **during second half of Year 1 and first half of Year 2**; training evaluated **during second half of Year 2**; training repeated **during Years 3 and 5**; upwards of 50 individuals become competent tourism development planners by **end of 2021**.	
Implementation driver/s	
Proposed IRP on tourism awareness and training with possible assistance through an **IDA-supported intervention**.	
Implementation partners	
DoT; DDCs; tourism development committees; CCIs; DNPWC; tourism-related associations	
Estimated budget (rupees)	
NPR 1,500,000.	
Possible funding sources	
Proposed IRP; IDA; tourism-related associations; DDCs	
Other related activities	
Formulation of tourism development plans for protected areas (***Activities 1.3*** and ***1.4***); formulation of district-level tourism development plans (***Activity 1.5***); improvements to existing tourist attractions (***Activity 2.1***); development of visitor parks and cable-car services and new tourist attractions (***Activities 3.10 to 3.14***); conversion of recreational facilities around Num to serve residents and tourists (***Activity 3.18***); establishment of tourism service and information centres (***Activities 4.1 to 4.3***); enforcement of National Building Code and building standards (***Activity 5.1***); development and application of environmental guidelines (***Activity 5.2***); enforcement of regulations protecting heritage sites and traditional buildings and landscapes (***Activity 5.3***); PPP mechanism for running tourism service and information centres (***Activity 8.1***); establishment of tourism development committee for Makalu Barun area (***Activity 8.4***); tourism awareness course for communities and district authorities (***Activity 10.1***); promotion of tourism awareness training through TDA website (***Activity 11.2***).	

Key Task Area 11 – Marketing and Promotion

Regional tourism marketing strategy

ACTIVITY 11.1	KTA 11 – Marketing and Promotion

Formulate and implement a 4-year marketing strategy and plan to promote tourism in the TDA

Rationale

Much of this TDAP is focused on improving the existing tourism offer within the TDA and on developing a diverse range of new tourism products, activities and services. What is also needed, however, is an effective mechanism by which the entire tourism offer within the TDA, both old and new, can be promoted to all the tourism markets which the TDA targets. A comprehensive regional marketing and promotion strategy, together with an implementable action plan, is therefore required.

This strategy and plan would likely follow the structure of similar and standard tourism marketing strategies and plans implemented in Nepal and the sub-continent and around the world. There is, however, no single model to follow and it would not achieve much here by going into any great detail as to how the strategy and plan should look and be put together.

Nevertheless, aspects that should be covered in the marketing strategy for the TDA include *inter alia*: ♦ market analysis; ♦ competitor analysis; ♦ identification of target markets; ♦ positioning; ♦ attractions and unique selling points (USPs); ♦ marketing mix; ♦ promotional tools and activities; etc. Those aspects which should then be tackled in the associated marketing plan include *inter alia*: ♦ priorities; ♦ timescales and target dates; ♦ responsibilities; ♦ logistics; ♦ budgets; ♦ funding sources; etc.

A very brief market analysis is given in **Section 2.2** of this TDAP, but a much more detailed one is required for the marketing strategy. The TDA's main competitors will be other regions within Nepal as well as neighbouring India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Tibet in China. The tourism markets for the TDA will likely be the same as they largely are now, namely: Nepal, India/SAARC and third countries. Other potential major markets may be identified, such as China. The TDA's USPs have been provisionally listed in **Section 2.4**. The marketing mix will likely include a wide range of promotional products and activities, such as brochures, pamphlets, posters, signage, website, information portal, print and electronic (TV and radio) media, social media, advertising, email shots, public relations events, promotional campaigns, word of mouth, local and regional tourism and travel shows in Nepal, India, China, Japan and elsewhere in the world, regional working groups, etc.

If possible, future plans for the tourism sector within the TDA should also be included in the marketing strategy and plan, especially those relating to product improvements (eg. GHT, PA-based concessions, etc.) and emerging tourism niches (eg. MICE tourism, health tourism, village product tourism, etc.). In this way potential visitors can be pre-informed of many of the developments proposed under this TDAP. This gives potential visitors and others a feeling that things are actually happening in the TDA with respect to tourism and that the region is very much a "watch this space" destination.

There will be a need to set measurable objectives under the strategy and to set up an effective monitoring system. The latter will involve not just measuring results against objectives and targets but also assessing, for instance, the perceptions of visitors with respect to the tourism product on offer in the TDA. Visitor surveys would help to determine how successful marketing and promotion has been and what the quality of the tourism products and standards of service are on the ground.

It would make sense to formulate a marketing strategy and plan for the TDA which ties in with the implementation schedule of this TDAP. Assuming the marketing strategy and plan will be developed during Year 1 of this TDAP (ie. 2017), then it should cover a period of four years (2018-2021) and come to an end at the same time as the TDAP (ie. end of December 2021).

It is envisaged that the regional marketing strategy and plan would be put together by the NTB, or at the very least with the Board's close involvement and collaboration. Recognising that resources within the NTB are already very stretched even coping with its' present-day mandate, support from a donor- or IFI-funded intervention in the formulation of the strategy and plan may be welcome.

Implementation of the strategy and plan as a whole will also be the responsibility of the NTB, but very much in close partnership with many and various tourism industry players, and not just in the private sector. Again, donor or IFI support may be welcomed.

Implementation of the 4-year marketing strategy and plan for the TDA would have direct and indirect relevance to many of the other activities under this TDAP (see "Other related activities" below). Without this strategy and plan and the various promotional activities associated with them, many of the TDAP's activities would not be able to fully- deliver on their own objectives and expected results. In this regard, effective promotion of the TDA's many tourism products and services will be essential for the overall and long-term success of the TDAP itself.

Brief description

This activity could be undertaken in-house by one or more appropriate NTB staff members. It could also be undertaken by an independent tourism marketing expert working in close collaboration with NTB and DoT staff, especially those at the head offices in Kathmandu and the branch office in Kakarbhitta.

To begin with, the *National Tourism Strategic Plan (NTSP) 2016-2025* and the *Tourism Marketing Strategy and Implementation Plan for Nepal* would need to be studied, along with the *Tourism Destination Area Plan for Eastern Nepal 2017-2021* (this document). This would be done in order to ensure that the regional marketing strategy and plan conforms as much as possible to existing and recently formulated tourism development and marketing plans. Nepalese and international experience and best practice with respect to tourism marketing would be applied where possible.

Extensive consultations would be held with a range of key and other tourism sector stakeholders and players, including but not limited to the DNPWC, Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA), Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO), Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA), Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN), Nepal Cycling Association NCA), key private sector tourism product owners, custodians of tourist attractions, Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs and selected VDCs. Consultations would also be held with those donor agencies, IFIs and international NGOs currently involved in or considering future involvement in the tourism sector (eg. DfID, EU, USAID, World Bank, ADB, UNDP, etc.).

A draft 4-year strategy and plan would be produced that is action-oriented and ensures that there is a mechanism in place to oversee, coordinate, manage and monitor implementation of the plan. The draft would be submitted to the NTB, MoCTCA and other key stakeholders for comment. Once comments have been satisfactorily addressed, probably through additional consultations and some realignment, the final marketing strategy and plan would be produced and submitted for approval, most likely by the Chairperson of NTB and the most appropriate senior-level officials in the MoCTCA.

Once the regional marketing strategy and plan has been approved, it would then be up to NTB to ensure that it is fully implemented over the 4-year lifetime of the plan. Implementation would coincide with the last four years of this TDAP.

It is envisaged that towards the end of 2021 a follow-on marketing strategy and plan for the region would need to be put together. If required, assistance from an IDA-supported intervention may be available.

Principal output/s

Draft and Final **Eastern Region Tourism Marketing Strategy and Plan 2018-2021 document** produced.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **regional** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-1: Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA.
S-2: Establish a strong link between tourism-related plans at national, regional, district and local levels.
S-5: Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations.
S-6: Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.
S-9: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
M-7: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.
L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.
L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.
L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.
L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Formulation of 4-year regional marketing strategy undertaken **during second half of Year 1**; marketing strategy approved by the **end of 2017**; marketing strategy implemented by NTB **from Year 2 to Year 5**; implementation of regional marketing strategy ends at the **end of 2021**.

Implementation driver/s

DoT/NTB with possible support from an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

DNPWC; TAAN; NMA; HAN; NATTA; REBAN; key private sector tourism product owners; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; selected VDCs.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,000,000.

Possible funding sources

DoT with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention.

Other related activities

Establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (**Activities 3.1 to 3.5**); establishment of upmarket private sector concessions in PAs (**Activities 3.6** and **3.7**); encourage the development of health and MICE tourism (**Activities 3.8** and **3.9**); development of new tourist attractions within the TDA (**Activities 3.10 to 3.14**); establishment of outdoor day-visitor and recreational facilities (**Activities 3.15 to 3.18**); establishment of new trekking, hiking and cycling trails (**Activities 3.19 to 3.21**); development of a range of tours and tourism activities (**Activities 3.22 to 3.28**); establishment of tourism service and information centres and kiosks in the TDA (**Activities 4.1 to 4.4**); development and installation of tourism information boards, roadside directional signage and GHT signage (**Activities 6.1 to 6.3**); establishment of QR code-based tourist/visitor information system (**Activity 6.4**); development of interpretative materials (**Activities 6.5** and **6.6**); delivery of public tourism awareness courses and campaign (**Activities 10.1** and **10.2**); development and support from tourism industry players of regional website and Internet-

based tourism information portal for the TDA (***Activities 11.2*** and ***11.3***); establishment of East Nepal-India cross-border destination area liaison and marketing group (***Activity 11.4***).

Internet-based marketing and promotion and information provision

ACTIVITY 11.2	KTA 11 – Marketing and Promotion

Establish a website and associated Internet-based tourism information portal to specifically promote the Eastern Nepal region as a tourist destination within Nepal

Rationale

Key to the promotion of tourism within the TDA will be the existence of a website or webpage that advertises the tourism attractions, products and activities which are available and on offer in the region to both international and domestic tourists as well as other visitors. At present such a site doesn't exist and prospective visitors need to obtain information on the region from a variety of different Internet sources, from more traditional printed promotional material, through advertising and by word-of-mouth.

The official tourism website for Nepal is the Discover Nepal website (http://www.welcomenepal.com/) belonging to and maintained by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). This recently revamped and overall very good website which ranks high on search engines has four primary navigation bars, namely "Places To See", "Things To Do", "What's On?" and "Plan Your Trip". Each of these has a number and variety of secondary navigation bars that direct readers to links within the site that provide good information and photographs on a wide variety of subject matter, such as regions, cities/towns, attractions, national parks, heritage sites, pilgrimage sites, outdoor activities, festivals, crafts, an events calendar, etc. and a range of information that visitors need in order to plan their trip. It also has links to sections of the site that include *inter alia* features, videos, and a gallery of visitors' photographs. The site also has links to websites belonging to NATTA, NATO, TAAN and the Society of Travel and Tour Operators (SOTTO) and well as to Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and various email services.

With respect to the Eastern Nepal TDA, however, this region hardly features as a specific tourist destination on the Discover Nepal website and few tourist attractions are actually mentioned. This is perhaps understandable when the TDA is compared with other arguably more richly-endowed regions of Nepal which are currently much more popular with visitors and tourists. Mention is certainly made of the birdwatching opportunities available in KTWR, MBNP, the Barahachhetra pilgrimage site, rafting on the Sunkoshi, Arun and Tomar Rivers and the rhododendron trail that runs from Basantapur and through part of eastern Sankhuwasabha District and neighbouring Terhathum District, but these are generally quite cursory and not very informative.

The Discover Nepal website has a number of shortcomings and many of these have been pointed out in the recently-approved National Tourism Strategic Plan (NTSP) and appropriate recommendations made. For example, sections of the website that directly target visitors who are wanting to plan a trip could be grouped under a more inviting menu item with a strong call-to-action. Destinations, activities, accommodation listings and practical travel advice could be grouped under a section titled "Visit" or "Plan Your Trip" rather than being segmented across four unrelated sections on the website. In addition, assigning travel products or activities to destinations would allow visitors to find products and activities while researching a specific destination or region on the website, or to decide which destinations appeal to them. Cross-referencing of content types is therefore very important.

The website presently requires readers to direct themselves to the three main private sector tourism associations within Nepal in order to look for, choose and book accommodation and tours. Lacking such a booking engine, the Discover Nepal website cannot be considered to be a 'one-stop shop' in the real sense. As pointed out in the NTSP, there is a need to use the website as a platform for converting "lookers" into "bookers" and as a referral forum for building a social media community, increasing loyalty and boosting word-of-mouth promotion.

Although certainly informative and a valuable tool in promoting Nepal as a world class holiday destination, the Discover Nepal website is currently only available in English. This effectively means that it is probably not very accessible or useful to visitors from neighbouring India or China or other countries where English is not spoken or understood widely. With ties with China in particular looking to be strengthened considerably in the near future and with China having the potential for becoming a major tourism market for the TDA and Nepal as a whole, there is a need to consider producing a Chinese language version of the website. Other language versions could also be considered, such as Japanese and even Nepali in order to better serve the domestic tourist market.

With respect to the TDA, there is an opportunity with this TDAP to give much more prominence to the TDA and the tourism attractions and products that it has to offer and will offer in the near future. In doing this, there may be an opportunity for the Discover Nepal website to initiate a more regional or tourism destination area (TDA) approach to promoting tourism in Nepal that is in keeping with the six priority areas that have been identified within the National Tourism Strategic Plan (NTSP). Whether or not this can be done using the current structure of the Discover Nepal website is questionable. If, as the NTSP recommends, the website undergoes a major restructuring, the six TDAs could be included. If not, there is probably a need to create a separate website for the Eastern Region TDA that can be accessed through the Discover Nepal website.

An important element of the Eastern Region TDA website would be to ensure that the tourism industry itself is regularly informed of existing, developing and future tourism products and services. As pointed out by the President of NATO, it is difficult for Nepalese and international travel agencies and operators to offer products and services in the TDA if they are not aware of their existence. In a very competitive world where not only the regions within Nepal are competing with one another, but also countries and regions, having a profile in the national, regional and international market places is very important. The website, therefore, should have a section that is specifically dedicated to keeping industry players informed of developments and products.

Information on the website could be supplemented by automatic updates, perhaps on a fortnightly or monthly basis, being emailed to travel agencies and tour operators both within Nepal and abroad.

As no other potential host exists at present, the TDA's tourism website would have to be hosted by NTB.

The website for the Eastern Nepal TDA, as defined in this TDAP, could be expanded to include the Far Eastern Nepal TDA which incorporates Illam and its surroundings, especially the Kanchenjunga area. With the Far Eastern Nepal TDA largely sharing the same visitor/tourist access points (ie. Kakarbhitta, Biratnagar and its airport, Mahendra Highway, Tumlingtar Airport, the GHT and in the future Kimathangka), it would make sense to produce a regional tourism website that covers both TDAs.

In essence, it is envisaged that the TDA website would provide a wide range of services to both tourists and visitors and to the tourism industry itself. In addition to providing information on the individual tourist destinations, attractions and activities, the website would also provide information through an information portal on available accommodation and services. Some form of booking engine that readers can access and interact with could also be provided, so converting "lookers" into "bookers" in a 'one-stop shop' context.

In addition, a discussion platform or forum could also be set up that has links with the social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google, Pinterest, etc.) and travel review sites such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com and HolidayCheck. This would allow visitors and tourists to comment on their experiences, so providing good feedback to product owners and managers and impressions to future visitors.

Other forms of information that could be provided through the website include a calendar of upcoming events, up-to-date weather forecasts (linked to the website of the Meteorological Forecasting Division, http://www.mfd.gov.np/), emergency contact details, maps of specific areas, links to relevant national associations, other TDA websites, individual tourism products and service providers (eg. hotels, guesthouses, lodges, tour operators, restaurants, etc.), tourist attractions (eg. DNPWC, public parks, temples, etc.), etc.

Linked to the widespread use of QR codes throughout the TDA (*Activity 6.4*), and providing access to the Internet and Wi-Fi is possible (*Activity 4.14*), the website could prove to be a very useful, powerful if not essential tool for those visitors equipped with smartphones who are taking part in visits to the region.

Information to the tourism industry could include, for instance, notifications on tourism awareness courses and available training in tourism and hospitality (*Activities 10.1 to 10.8*), the promotion of existing and possible twinning arrangements (*Activity 8.3*) and links to the proposed SME Financing Facility and the Grants Fund (*Activities 7.1* and *7.2*) and the procedures that need to be followed. It may even be possible for users to apply for loans and grants online through appropriate links on the TDA website. Concepts for the promotion and development of specific tourism niches could also be made available through the website (*Activities 3.8* and *3.9*). Investment opportunities and tenders could also be publicised and launched through the website (eg. *Activities 9.3* and *9.4*).

The tourism industry should also be able to advertise (for a fee) on the website, so providing the industry with a powerful promotional tool. In addition to obvious benefits this would have for tourism product owners, advertising could also generate some revenue for the NTB to help cover the operational and maintenance costs of the website.

It is envisaged that the TDA's website would need to be appropriately branded and possible viewed as being a pilot for similar websites for other priority TDAs in Nepal.

The development and establishment of a website and information portal would clearly have significant positive impact on the implementation of many other activities under this TDAP (see "Other related activities" below) and the benefits of having the website would extend beyond the lifetime of this TDAP.

Brief description

This activity would be driven primarily by NTB with the assistance of an appropriate IT and website designer through a donor-funded intervention.

NTB would firstly need to make a decision as to the geographical scope of the TDA's website and whether or not it would also include the neighbouring Far Eastern region of Nepal. NTB would also need to decide how the TDA's website fits in with the existing and possible improvements that may be made to NTB's Discover Nepal website.

A working group comprising IT, website and marketing personnel from NTB, the IT/website designer from the donor-funded intervention and state and private sector representative from each of Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha districts would then be set up. This would initially help to broadly conceptualise the TDA's website and brief the website designer are what needs to be included. Consultations with potential key contributors to the site, such as DNPWC, TAAN, NMA, etc., would also be held.

The website designer would then design a site and submit the plans to the NTB and other key stakeholders for comment. Once comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the website would be built. This would necessitate obtaining information from a wide range of participating players. It is expected that NTB would drive the information gathering process with the contacts that it already has, process that information and then feed text, maps, photographs, videos and other material to the website designer to populate the site.

Once developed, the website would then be demonstrated to the NTB and key stakeholders and comments requested. After necessary adjustments have been made to the site, it would be reviewed again by the NTB and key stakeholders, finalised and launched.

Management and maintenance of the site would be the responsibility of the NTB. Updating of the site would be the responsibility of the regional and district stakeholders, especially the regional branch of the DoT in Kakarbhitta, the three DDCs and relevant

tourism committees and associations. Private sector product owners would be expected to submit information updates on a regular basis.

Principal output/s

Regional tourism marketing website and **Internet-based tourism information portal** established and up-and-running.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **regional** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

S-9: Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA.

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.

M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.

M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.

M-7: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.

L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.

L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.

L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.

L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating

High priority.

Timing and target dates

Website/information portal concept developed **during second half of Year 1**; design and development of website/portal undertaken **during first half of Year 2**; website/portal fully up-and-running by the **end of June 2018**; support provided to NTB **during second half of Year 2**; website/portal run by NTB **from second half of Year 2 to Year 5 and onwards**.

Implementation driver/s

NTB with possible support from an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Sunsari, Dhakuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism-related associations; (eg. TAAN, NMA, etc.); private sector tourism product owners; community-owned tourism product owners; Internet service provider/s.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,500,000.

Possible funding sources

DoT/NTB with possible support through an IDA-funded intervention; advertising revenue; subscriptions from tourism product owners; possible contributions from DDCs.

Other related activities

Improved tourist attractions (*Activity 2.1*); upgraded and existing GHT and other trekking trails (*Activities 2.2 to 2.6*); community lodges, campsites and homestays (*Activities 3.1 to 3.5*); new upmarket private sector concessions in PAs (*Activities 3.6* and *3.7*); development of specific tourism niches (*Activities 3.8* and *3.9*); new tourist attractions within the TDA (*Activities 3.10 to 3.14*); outdoor day-visitor and recreational facilities (*Activities 3.15 to 3.18*); new trekking, hiking and cycling trails (*Activities 3.19 to 3.21*); development of a range of tours and tourism activities (*Activities 3.22 to 3.28*); establishment of Internet and Wi-Fi capacity and availability in Makalu Barun area (*Activity 4.14*); inclusion of QR codes on GHT and other signage (*Activities 6.1* and *6.3*); establishment of QR code-based tourist/visitor information system (*Activity 6.4*); links to SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund (*Activities 7.1* and *7.2*); encouragement for establishing twinning agreements (*Activity 8.3*); launching of public tenders (*Activities 9.3* and *9.4*); delivery of a range of tourism awareness and training courses (*Activities 10.1 to 10.8*); inclusion in 4-year regional tourism marketing strategy and plan (*Activity 11.1*); promotion of support from tourism industry players for the regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activity 11.3*); establishment of East Nepal-India cross-border destination area liaison and marketing group (*Activity 11.4*).

ACTIVITY 11.3	**KTA 11 – Marketing and Promotion**

Encourage and support tourism product owners in the TDA to advertise and promote their products through the TDA website and to interact with visitors through the information portal

Rationale

The development of a regional tourism website and associated information portal for the TDA (*Activity 11.2*) will take place at much the same time as a marketing strategy and plan for the region is being formulated (*Activity 11.1*). During the development of the website and portal, contact and consultation with a range of tourism product owners would undoubtedly be made. This will have been done primarily to help inform and guide their design and subsequent development.

Once they are established, there is no point in having a website and portal that is little used by the tourism industry or by tourists and visitors alike. It will therefore be important to promote the website and portal to the tourism industry as a whole, especially within the TDA but also more nationally. In this way, a wide diversity of TDA tourism product owners in multiple tourism niches (wildlife, trekking, mountaineering, cycling/mountain biking, rafting, paragliding, pilgrimages, religious sites, MICE, health, village products, festivals, events, etc.) can feature on the website and be involved in the information portal to whatever extent they wish to be. Tourism players, however, need to be persuaded on the benefits of their participation, not just to their own businesses but also to the development of tourism in the TDA as a whole.

NTB will be the drivers of both the strategy and plan formulation and the development of the website and portal. It makes sense, therefore, for NTB to also take on the role of approaching and persuading tourism industry players to participate in the website and portal in a meaningful way. Although the resources of the NTB are already stretched, approaching tourism players should not take up that much time or human or financial resources as much of this can be done via the Internet.

Outside support, such as from a donor agency or an IFI, is not considered necessary as this activity would form part of the day-to-day operations of the state-funded NTB. Operational costs, however, could be partly offset through the sale of advertising space on the website.

Brief description

This activity would be carried out by NTB as part of its normal day-to-day operations. It can be conducted largely via the Internet from NTB's head office in Kathmandu.

As the design and establishment of the website and portal approaches completion, NTB would use its databases to obtain and list the contact details of those tourism product owners based in the TDA and adjacent to it and companies working from Kathmandu or elsewhere in the country that run tours or do business within the TDA. This 'mailing list' would include the full range of tourism-related associations, tour operators, hotels, guesthouses, homestays, restaurants and bars, tourist attractions, district and local authorities, relevant committees, etc. both within the TDA and also outside of the region. There would clearly be merit in including potentially-interested tour operators based in neighbouring India and Bangladesh, as well as later on in Tibet and China. Selected tour operators in Buddhist-dominated Sri Lanka could also be included in the mailing list.

NTB would then compile a small series of communications which can be sent out using the contact details. These communications, which would be in the form of email shots and postings on the social media, would focus on 'selling' the website and portal to product owners, persuading them to engage with them and responding to and acting on any queries that may be received.

Ideally, tourism product owners should be able to register on-line with the information portal and to post any queries to NTB through this facility. Registration and subsequent involvement with the website and portal should be made as simple as possible for all product owners. Involvement may include, for example, the placement of adverts, new developments, notifications of upcoming events, letters and comments, etc. All should help contribute to the website and portal being increasingly used by both tourism product owners and service providers and by potential and existing visitors and tourists alike.

Ideally, tourism product owners and other interested bodies should not have to pay to register on the website or portal. As soon as that becomes a requirement, unwillingness amongst players to become involved will undoubtedly arise and difficulties and doubt will be experienced in how to pay, to whom and for what in return. However, product owners and others should be encouraged to place paid-for adverts on the website.

Principal output/s

Significant **participation in the regional website and tourism information portal** by tourism product owners doing business in the TDA.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

District and **local** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.
M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.
M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.
M-7: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.
L-7: Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism.
L-8: Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA.
L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating

Medium priority.

Timing and target dates

Compilation of the 'mailing list' and development of website/portal promotion communications undertaken **during first half of Year 2**; promotional drive launched **during second half of Year 2 and through Year 3**; NTB continues with promoting the website/portal as and when necessary.

Implementation driver/s

NTB.
Implementation partners
Tourism-related associations; private sector tourism product owners; community-owned tourism product owners; custodians of tourist attractions; DDCs; municipalities and VDCs; tourism development-related committees.
Estimated budget (rupees)
NPR 1,000,000.
Possible funding sources
NTB; private sector tourism product owners (sale of advertising space on the website).
Other related activities
Improved tourist attractions (***Activity 2.1***); establishment of community lodges, campsites and homestays (***Activities 3.1 to 3.5***); establishment of upmarket private sector concessions in PAs (***Activities 3.6*** and ***3.7***); development of health and MICE tourism (***Activities 3.8*** and ***3.9***); establishment of new tourist attractions within the TDA (***Activities 3.10 to 3.14***); establishment of outdoor day-visitor and recreational facilities (***Activities 3.15 to 3.18***); establishment of new trekking, hiking and cycling trails (***Activities 3.19 to 3.21***); development of a range of tours and tourism activities (***Activities 3.22 to 3.28***); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (***Activity 11.2***); establishment of East Nepal-India cross-border destination area liaison and marketing group (***Activity 11.4***).

Cross-border destination area liaison and marketing

<u>**ACTIVITY 11.4**</u>	**KTA 11 – Marketing and Promotion**
Establish an East Nepal-India cross-border tourism destination area liaison and marketing group	
Rationale	

With the TDA currently receiving a large proportion of its visitors from neighbouring India, it would be worthwhile establishing a more formal link between the tourism industry in the TDA and the tourism sector in selected states within India. In this way, the Eastern Nepal TDA could be better-promoted in arguably its most important tourist source market.

The opportunities and benefits of developing greater interaction between Nepal, India, Bhutan and China have already been recognised. In January 2016, for instance, a regional conference on cross-border tourism in the Himalayan region organised by the National Tourism Foundation (NTF) was held and attended by state and non-state players, during which amongst other things, more collaboration and the concept of a regional tourism destination of four nations (Nepal, Bhutan, India and the Autonomous Republic of Tibet) were discussed. Interest in a proposed cross-border tourism liaison/marketing group for the TDA therefore already exists and the seeds for one have already been planted.

It is not really that important to establish a separate liaison/marketing group for the Eastern Nepal TDA. What is important is that the concept of such a group is vigorously pursued and developed as a national initiative and that a structure is eventually put in place which stimulates more interaction between the countries and increases the flow of tourists across international borders.

For the purposes of this TDAP, it would be best to begin with to focus on the links that can be improved and/or established between Nepal and India – links with Bhutan could be left until a later date. There may, for instance, be a good opportunity for the TDA to benefit from the increased flow of tourists into Sikkim via the new airport that is due to open there in early-2017. Later on, once the Kimathangka-Khandbari-Biratnagar highway has been opened and probably after this TDAP has run its course, a similar cross-border tourism liaison/marketing group could be set up between Nepal and China. This would help coordinate the tourism sectors between Nepal and the potentially huge market in neighbouring China.

It is envisaged that the DoT, in joint or close collaboration with the NTF, would drive this activity and consult and work with counterpart bodies in neighbouring India. They would also consult with local tourism product owners to gauge the level of interest in such a cross border tourism liaison/marketing group.

The website and tourism information portal set up under ***Activity 11.2***, along with the expected participation of a wide diversity and number of tourism product owners within the TDA, elsewhere within Nepal and in neighbouring India (***Activity 11.3***), would help to inform and guide the proposed liaison/marketing group once it has been set up with whatever areas of cross-border cooperation it decides to focus on.

Brief description	

This activity would need to be initiated at high level with the MoCTCA approaching and liaising with the Ministry of Tourism in India. Following a decision on the geographical scope of the cross border liaison/marketing group (ie. TDA only or incorporating other districts in Nepal as well), the relevant tourism departments and divisions in both countries (DoT and NTB in Nepal) would then pursue the activity further.

From the Nepalese side, the DoT and NTB would work primarily with the NTF with the purpose of helping to take the cross border initiative that began in early 2016 to another level. Other relevant government ministries and departments (eg. DoI, DNPWC, etc.), DDCs (Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha) and interested and involved private sector product owners at regional and district levels and at national level in Kathmandu would be involved in these discussions where possible.

The DoT/NTB/NTF team, supported by the other interested/involved players, would then liaise and consult directly with their counterparts in India.

The ultimate aim of these discussions is to design and establish a cross border liaison/marketing group which is able to take into consideration the interests of all the involved parties on both sides of the border. From the point of view of this TDAP, it would be important to ensure that the interests of the Eastern Nepal TDA are taken into consideration and acted on accordingly.

The exact structure and *modus operandi* of the group would need to be worked out during this activity.

Principal output/s

A **Nepal-India cross-border tourism liaison/marketing group** established and up-and-running.

Targeted zone/s

Northern Zone (Sankhuwasabha District), **Central Zone** (Dhankuta District) and **Southern Zone** (Sunsari District).

Focal level of activity

National and **regional** levels.

Strategic objectives addressed

M-1: Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists.

M-3: Exploit as much as possible the Internet and Wi-Fi and related technology for the benefit of the tourism sector within the TDA.

M-6: Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area.

M-7: Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas.

L-16: Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large.

L-18: Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA.

Priority rating

Low priority.

Timing and target dates

Steps taken to establish cross-border tourism liaison/marketing group **during second half of Year 1 and all of Year 2**; group established by the **end of 2018**; group fully up-and-running from the **beginning of 2019 onwards**.

Implementation driver/s

DoT in association with **NTF**; **Indian counterpart bodies**; possible facilitation support from an **IDA-supported intervention**.

Implementation partners

Tourism-related associations; private sector tourism product owners; community-owned tourism product owners; custodians of tourist attractions; DNPWC; DoI; DDCs; municipalities and VDCs; district-/local-level tourism development-related committees.

Estimated budget (rupees)

NPR 2,000,000.

Possible funding sources

DoT/NTB; NTF; Indian counterpart bodies; IDA-funded intervention; Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; private sector tourism product owners.

Other related activities

Inclusion in district-level tourism development plans (*Activity 1.5*); establishment of tourism service centre at Itahari (*Activity 4.1*); establishment of tourism information centres and kiosks (*Activities 4.3* and *4.4*); possible development of trans-national twinning agreements (*Activity 8.3*); inclusion in 4-year regional tourism marketing strategy and plan for TDA (*Activity 11.1*); development of regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activity 11.2)*; promotion of support from tourism industry players for the regional website and Internet-based tourism information portal for the TDA (*Activity 11.3*).

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