TOURISM DESTINATION AREA PLAN (TDAP)
FOR
EASTERN NEPAL
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PART 1 – MAIN REPORT

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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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The formulation mission

The Government of Nepal (GoN), through the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), recently finalised a 10-year *National Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025* (NTSP) for Nepal. The NTSP identified a set of interventions for future tourism development in Nepal, as well as seven (7) priority tourism destination areas (TDAs) within the country.

The Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice (T&C) of the World Bank Group (WBG), in close cooperation with the UKAID-funded Samarth/Nepal Market Development Programme (Samarth-NMDP), is assisting the MoCTCA and the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN) in preparing plans for two TDAs within Nepal, namely the Makalu/Arun River/Koshi Tappu region in the East and the Upper Karnali/Bardiya Banke/Rara region in the West/Far West of Nepal. These two regions have been selected because of their recognised tourism potential in terms of natural and cultural endowments, but also because the GoN is in the process of supporting two large Hydro Electric Power (HEP) projects on the Arun and Karnali Rivers, respectively. These two major HEP projects are being facilitated by the IBN. The Makalu/Arun River/Koshi Tappu or Eastern Region of Nepal is the subject of this tourism destination area plan, or TDAP.

A small team of international and Nepali consultants and government officials, drawn from IFC, Samarth/NMDP and IBN, was put together to formulate the TDAP for Eastern Nepal. The formulation mission was conducted over a 5-month period between May and September 2016. It involved extensive consultations with key and other stakeholders and players at national, district and local levels both in Kathmandu and within the three targeted districts of Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha. The consultations also involved two field visits to the region and the holding of several district-level stakeholder workshops and several working group sessions and a validation meeting in Kathmandu. This TDAP document is the product of these field visits, consultations and discussions.

The <u>Objective</u> of this assignment as given in the Terms of Reference (ToR) was two-fold, namely: 1) to examine the region between Makalu Barun and Koshi Tappu from a tourism development potential perspective by looking at the broad landscape in terms of infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, access to markets, existing tourism-related operations, the proposed dam site on the Arun River, nearby urban centres, etc.; and 2) to develop a phased Tourism Destination Area Plan that indicates the potential of these areas in terms of tourism growth and the investment gaps that need to be addressed to enable this growth and a suggested sequencing and ballpark costing for these investments.

The TDAP also takes into consideration and adheres to the MoCTCA's plans for the enhancement of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT), an already world-renowned product and that stays true to the authentic appeal of Nepal's tourism attractions. The TDAP has identified possible developments that can be supported by the Government's designated 'GHT' budget.

There are three <u>Principal Outputs</u> for this assignment, namely: 1) a series of consultation and discussion meetings and workshops; 2) a Tourism Destination Area Plan (TDAP) for the Makalu/Arun River/Koshi Tappu region in Eastern Nepal; and 3) a workable Implementation Action Plan (IAP) that is both feasible and sustainable to implement.

The Eastern Nepal Tourism Destination Area Plan 2017-2021

The geographical area covered by this TDAP for Eastern Nepal encompasses the entire administrative districts of, from south to north, Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha. Biratnagar, which falls within Morang District on the Nepal-India border, is also included in the TDA by virtue of its role as a major border city and the presence of a domestic airport. A section of Saptari District to the west also falls within the TDA as the western section of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) takes in part of the Koshi River. Parts of Terhathum and Taplejung Districts to the east also effectively fall within the TDA by virtue of the concentration of rhododendron forests that is found in those areas and the fact that the cultural route of the GHT runs east-west from the forests and into the TDA.

The TDAP document is divided into two separate volumes, namely **Part 1 – Main Report**, consisting of four (4) chapters and two (2) appendices, and **Part 2 – Annex**, consisting of one (1) annex.

Chapter 1 (Part 1) contains and introductory section which is followed by an overview of recent tourism development planning in Nepal, mentioning in particular the *Tourism Policy 2008*, *Tourism Master Plan 2008*, *Tourism Vision 2020*, *National Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025* and several TDA-related district- and local-level tourism development plans. It also highlights other major tourism development projects currently underway in Nepal. The chapter then goes on to outline the need for TDAPs in Nepal, the scope and structure of this TDAP and the methodology and process used during its formulation.

Chapter 2 (Part 1) firstly presents a brief summary overview of the principal elements which make up the natural and manmade tourism resource base, tourism and tourism support infrastructure, tourism activities and services and principal state and non-state and national, district and local stakeholders and players in the TDA including international development agencies (IDAs). Overall, the TDA has a diverse and attractive tourism resource base, but a largely undeveloped tourism potential that is only partly supported by infrastructure. There are a number of state and non-state stakeholders and players at national and district level involved in tourism, but many do not tend to work together well with respect to tourism planning and development.

The chapter then provides a summary analysis of the tourism market for the TDA, focusing on largely unquantifiable tourism statistics, the tourism profiles of the three districts and possible future trends. Visitors to the TDA comprise Nepali, Indian and third-country tourists with Indians making up the bulk of numbers. The future Koshi Highway connecting Tibet with China mostly along the Arun River valley will have the greatest impact on tourism development, as will the completion of the Arun-3 HEP dam in the Makalu Barun area. If Biratnagar Airport were to become an international airport, this would likely significantly increase the flow of visitors into the region.

A SWOT analysis of the tourism sector in the TDA is then presented which focuses on the 'positives' (strengths and opportunities) and 'negatives' (weaknesses and threats). Factors were largely grouped under categories of environmental, infrastructural, anthropogenic, institutional, socio-economic and other.

The SWOT analysis is followed by a summary of 'unique selling points' (USPs) relating to specific environmental (topography, unspoilt nature, wildlife and flora), infrastructural (Koshi Highway, Arun-3 HEP dam, airports), anthropogenic attractions (religious/pilgrimage sites, landscapes and architecture, trekking trails, adventure tourism) and tourism markets (Indian, Chinese, low volume/high value high-end market).

Chapter 2 concludes with an outline of the key constraints to the development of tourism in the TDA, emphasising that it will be how these are tackled during the implementation of the TDAP that will largely dictate how successful the development and long-term viability of the tourism industry in the TDA will be. The constraints fall into five categories, namely natural, policy, institutional, financial and socio-economic, although there is clearly overlap between some of them. Apart from the obvious and largely unassailable natural constraints, such as landslides, earthquakes, monsoons, etc., the main constraints facing tourism development in the TDA relate to *inter alia* physical accessibility in central and northern areas, low priority given to tourism in the region, poor representation of tourism amongst district and local authorities, overall lack of awareness of tourism across the board, shortage of state funding, difficulties experienced in obtaining commercial loans for tourism enterprises, perceived investment risk and general unwillingness of the private sector or state to invest in the sector, localised scarcity of labour, low tourism skills levels and standards of service, competition from agriculture and conflict between agriculture and nature conservation.

Chapter 3 (Part 1) presents the TDAP itself. The <u>Overall Goal</u> of the Eastern Nepal TDAP is "to provide the Government and other state and non-state stakeholders at district, regional and national levels with a guiding framework along which the vision for tourism development in Eastern Nepal can be realised and environmentally- and socially-acceptable and sustainable economic growth and job creation can be achieved".

The <u>Specific Objectives</u> of the TDAP are to: 1) create sustainable employment opportunities in the region; 2) encourage meaningful community participation and economic activity in the tourism sector within the region; 3) promote socio-economic growth and alleviate poverty within the region, especially in remote, rural and economically-disadvantaged areas; 4) increase revenues in the region and contribute to GDP growth per capita through tourism; 5) increase tourist arrivals into the region without compromising sustainability and environmental and cultural quality; 6) diversify the region's tourism attractions and services; 7 improve the quality of the tourism product and associated human resources within the region; and 8) market and brand the region in key generating markets within and outside of Nepal.

The TDAP has 36 sets of <u>Strategic Objectives and Targets</u>, these being divided into: 1) short-term (within 2 years); 2) medium-term (up to 4 years); and 3) long-term (more than 4 years) strategies and targets. Short-term objectives (11 in total) are those that need to be met urgently or as a priority, or which are the basis for other strategic objectives to be addressed, while medium-term objectives (7 in total) include those that are also of a priority nature but which may take longer to address and deliver on, or which are dependent on certain short-term objectives being met first. Long-term objectives (18 in total) include those that are not of especial priority, or which build on the achievement of medium-term objectives. It is expected that some of the long-term objectives may not be fulfilled by the end of the 5-year implementation period.

For purposes of achieving the Strategic Objectives and delivering on the Targets, a total of 97 <u>Activities</u> have been identified and included in the TDAP and, in order to make the TDAP more easy to follow and practical to implement, each of these activities has been grouped appropriately under one of 11 <u>Key Task Areas</u> (KTA).

Implementation agencies responsible for implementing the activities under the TDAP and delivering the outputs are split into Drivers and Partners. The former take the lead responsibility and role in implementing a particular activity, while the latter assist the Drivers to varying degrees with implementation. Implementation agencies, which can be national, regional, district or local bodies can be Drivers or Partners depending on the activity being implemented.

Funding for activities comes from a variety of sources, including *inter alia* ministries, departments, district authorities, state agencies, national programmes, donor agencies and donor-funded programmes and projects, IFIs, NGOs, foundations, trusts, private sector business, communities and self-generated revenue. It is envisaged that most activities will be funded from multiple sources, so spreading the burden of funding more widely. Funding mechanisms through which funds are provided vary and range from annual state budget allocations at national, regional, district and local levels to grants, bank loans, public-private partnerships (PPPs), concessions, business activities, donations, volunteering and IDA support. With respect to the estimated cost of implementing activities, indicative budgets have been given. These are given in rounded figures and are weighted on the heavier side.

The TDAP divides the Eastern Nepal TDA into three broad Zones, namely Southern Zone, Central Zone and Northern Zone, each roughly corresponding with the three targeted districts of Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha, respectively. Overall, it sees tourism in the Southern Zone as focusing primarily on religious/pilgrimage, nature and wildlife (KTWR) and business tourism, in the Central Zone on recreation, religious/pilgrimage, culture, adventure, MICE and business tourism and in the Northern Zone on trekking/mountaineering, religious/pilgrimage, nature and wildlife (MBNP) and business tourism.

A tabular summary of KTAs and activities is presented in the ***Implementation Action Plan*** (IAP) in ***Table 1 (Part 1)***. Complementing and expanding on the IAP, detailed and largely indicative descriptive accounts of the activities have been placed in ***Annex 1 (Part 2)***, a separate volume of this TDAP document. These accounts, which are also in tabular format, give more detail on the rationale behind the activities and descriptions of them and indications as to exactly what the deliverables are and when they are to be delivered. The accounts also expand slightly on other aspects relating to each activity.

The overall aim of presenting the IAP in two parts and in this format is to ensure that the TDAP as a whole and the IAP in particular are clear and easy-to-read and can be easily followed and understood by any individual tasked with implementing one or more of the activities included in it. ***Table 1*** is primarily intended to act as a broad guide for implementers and to indicate the context of an activity in relation to other activities and has deliberately been kept clear of cluttering text. Implementers can then refer to ***Annex 1*** for more detailed accounts of specific activities that he/she is concerned with without having to wade through swathes of 'non-relevant' text.

Each activity under the TDAP is treated and described using a standard approach. This approach covers the following: ♦ title and reference number of activity; ♦ rationale; ♦ brief description; ♦ principal output/s; ♦ targeted zone/s; ♦ focal level of activity; ♦ Strategic Objectives addressed; ♦ timing and target dates; ♦ Implementation Drivers; ♦ Implementation Partners; ♦ estimated budget; ♦ possible funding sources; and ♦ other related activities.

Overall, the individual activities will be supportive of one another and will work together over the 5-year period in a holistic, integrated and action-oriented manner to successfully implement the First TDAP.

The <u>Principal Deliverables</u> or outputs of the activities under each KTA are as follows:

> ➤ **KTA 1: Policy and Planning** (5 activities) – policies for piloting concessions in protected areas (PAs); at least 5 tourism development plans for PAs and districts.
> ➤ **KTA 2: Tourism Product Improvement** (6 activities) – significantly improved visitor infrastructures at more than 20 public tourism attractions; 175 km of upgraded trekking trails.
> ➤ **KTA 3: Tourism Product Development** (28 activities) – more than 12 community lodges/campsites; 20 homestays; 2 up-market tourism concessions in PAs; several selected tourism niches significantly developed; 2 visitor parks and 1-2 cable-car services; more than 20 new public tourist attractions; 2 day-visitor facilities; recreation facilities/tourism hub in Num; 60 km of new trekking and hiking/cycling trails; expanded range of excursions and water-based activities.
> ➤ **KTA 4: Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services** (16 activities) – 2 tourism service and 4 information centres; at least 10 tourism information kiosks; one visitor centre; 9 PA entrance structures; at least 10 improved/built tourist attraction access roads; upgrades/improvements to Tumlingtar and Biratnagar Airports; 16 incineration and solid waste disposal facilities in and around PAs; up to 12 ozone purified safe drinking water stations; Internet and Wi-Fi capacity in Makalu Barun area; up to 6 mountain huts/shelters and 6 helipads.

➢ **KTA 5: Environmental Management and Protection** (4 activities) – National Building Code regulations enforced; environmental guidelines followed; protection of heritage sites and traditional landscapes enforced; import and disposal of glass and other solid waste into Makalu Barun area addressed.

➢ **KTA 6: Visitor Information Provision and Management** (7 activities) – tourism information boards at gateways; tourism road signage; GHT trailside signage; tourism-related QR code system in widespread use; several tourism guidebooks and apps; Internet-based register of trekkers/mountaineers/support teams.

➢ **KTA 7: Investment and Funding** (4 activities) – NPR 160 million Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) Financing Facility; NPR 200 million Grants Fund; more than 60 SMEs supported through soft loans; more than 350 new enterprises and 50 public tourist attractions supported; up to 10 tourism-related community cooperatives; several visitor-supported workers' or community funds/trusts.

➢ **KTA 8: Partners and Relationships** (6 activities) – numerous PPPs; several twinning agreements; several new tourism development committees and hotel/homestay associations.

➢ **KTA 9: Concessions and Agreements** (8 activities) – tourism investment portfolios for PAs; 2 national/international tenders; 2 tourism concession agreements; up to 20 MoUs between communities, district authorities and private sector operators.

➢ **KTA 10:– Training and Awareness** (9 activities) – more than 500 community and district authority individuals significantly more aware of tourism; public tourism awareness campaign; more than 500 individuals received basic, intermediate and advanced tourism skills training; more than 1,000 individuals received tourism-related waste disposal, sanitation and hygiene training; more than 250 individuals from public tourist attractions trained in tourist and visitor management and other skills; more than 50 individuals received advanced and accredited training and qualifications in tourism; more than 150 newly-qualified guides produced; up to 200 individuals received training in production, manufacture and sale of tourism-related agricultural and arts/crafts products; up to 50 district authority individuals trained in action-oriented tourism development planning.

➢ **KTA 11:– Marketing and Promotion** (4 activities) – 4-year marketing strategy and plan for Eastern Region DA being implemented by NTB; TDA website and information portal; website and portal being widely used within TDA; East Nepal-India cross-border destination area liaison and marketing group.

Some of the key activities included in the IAP, either as stand-alone activities or groups of activities, have been identified as possible 'Investment-Ready Projects', or IRPs. These are priority projects that are considered to be fundamental to or pilots of most of the other activities included in the IAP and which might be readily funded by the Government of Nepal and/or one or more IDAs.

Thirteen (13) IRPs have been proposed, these being: 1) Formulation of policies that are supportive of tourism development; 2) Improvements to 4-5 selected public tourist attractions; 3) Upgrading and development of selected GHT trekking routes in Makalu Barun; 4) Development of 2-3 pilot community lodges/campsites; 5) Promotion of development of 1-2 upmarket tourism products in protected areas; 6) Development of 2 day-visitor recreational facilities; 7) Development of recreational/tourism facilities in Num; 8) Development of 2 tourism service and information outlets in Itahari and Bhedetar; 9) Feasibility studies on upgrading of Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports; 10) Enforcement of National Building Code and promotion of preservation of architectural heritage and landscapes; 11) Development of Internet-based and integrated tourism information system; 12) Establishment of tourism-related financing facilities and mechanisms; and 13) Provision of tourism awareness and skills training for DDCs, tourism committees and selected communities and tourism SMEs. The total indicative budget for the 13 IRPs is NPR 604,750,000 (approximately US$ 5.5 million) to be spent over a period of five years.

Chapter 4 (Part 1) focuses on the coordination and management of the implementation of the TDAP. During the formulation of this TDAP, close consideration has been paid to how the plan will be implemented on the ground. No matter how good or bad a plan is, the mechanism that is adopted to coordinate and manage its implementation is in many ways more important than the plan itself and is the key factor that will determine whether the plan is successfully implemented or not

It is recognised that, certainly at first glance, the TDAP is a complex document made up of many interrelated activities that each have to be implemented in full and on time if the holistic and integrated plan as a whole is to fully-achieve its objectives and goal. It is believed that the TDAP should be implemented as a regional tourism development 'programme' (tentatively named the 'Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme', or 'ENTDP') and be driven by an authoritative 'structure' that coordinates, manages, monitors and, if necessary, adjusts implementation of the plan.

Of three options considered for the driving structure, one of them is the most promising and has been recommended to coordinate and manage the implementation of the TDAP through the proposed ENTDP. This structure comprises a body made up of four state agencies, namely the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) and the Investment

Board of Nepal (IBN), as well as one or more partner international development agencies, or IDAs (donor agency, IFI, international NGO), as a supporting partner.

There are a number of key reasons and advantages for choosing this option, chief among them being the presence of a dedicated and fully-funded body in place to implement the ENTDP and TDAP over the full five years and to provide international best practice technical assistance and support as required.

Next steps!

Once this plan has been approved and translated into Nepali, it will first be necessary to convene a working group comprising of the MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC and IBN in order to move on from the plan formulation stage to beginning the implementation process. This will involve *inter alia*: ♦ agreeing upon the IRPs and priority activities to be implemented immediately; ♦ approaching interested IDAs with regard to their being involved in and supporting implementation of the TDAP and the proposed ENTDP; ♦ establishing a Programme Steering Committee (PSC) comprised of the four principal and other state players plus several tourism-related associations, private sector players, DDCs and one or more participating IDAs; ♦ setting up the proposed SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund; and ♦ incorporating the ENTDP into ministry budgets and work plans as appropriate.

Final note

The TDAP is intended to be a practical document that is easy to read and understand and which can be used as a strategic planning document at regional and district levels by a variety of implementing agencies and bodies and representative individuals. Some of the latter may not possess the necessary knowledge or experience to fully understand complex terms, concepts and descriptions, or have the time to spend reading through pages of text. The Plan therefore focuses on practical implementation and action (viz. IAP and *Annex 1*) rather than on unnecessary amounts of background information and analysis and does not go into much detail beyond the activity level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1   Introduction

The **Government of Nepal** (GoN), through the **Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation** (MoCTCA), has recently finalised a 10-year *National Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025* (NTSP) for Nepal. The NTSP has identified a set of interventions for future tourism development in Nepal with priority clusters and sub-sectors, as well as seven priority tourism destination areas (TDAs) within the country.

The **Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice** (T&C) of the **World Bank Group** (WBG), which helps countries achieve rapid and broad-based economic growth centred on strong contributions from the private sector, in close cooperation with the UKAID-funded **Samarth/Nepal Market Development Programme** (Samarth-NMDP), is assisting the MoCTCA and the **Investment Board of Nepal** (IBN) in implementing aspects of the NTSP. Destination development planning is a priority and the IBN and MoCTCA have requested the WBG to prepare two plans, one focusing on the tourism development potential in the eastern part of Nepal and the other focused on a region in the west of the country. More specifically, the areas to be addressed are the Makalu/Arun River/Koshi Tappu region in the East and the Upper Karnali/Bardiya Banke/Rara region in the West/Far West of Nepal. These two regions have been selected because of their recognised tourism potential in terms of natural and cultural endowments, but also because the GoN is in the process of supporting two large Hydro Electric Power (HEP) projects on the Arun and Karnali Rivers, respectively. These two major HEP projects are being facilitated by the IBN.

The **International Finance Corporation** (IFC), a member the WBG, provides financial resources in the form of debt, equity, structured finance and advisory services in order to foster the development of private sector enterprises in developing countries. As part of a project that aims to assist destination development in Nepal, the IFC/WBG has been requested to prepare tourism destination plans for priority tourism destinations in Nepal. The IFC office in Nepal is therefore working closely with IBN, Samarth/NMDP and the MoCTCA in formulating the TDAPs for the Eastern and Western/Far Western regions of Nepal.

The **Objective** of this assignment formulating the Tourism Destination Area Plan (TDAP) for the Eastern Region is two-fold:
1. To examine the region between Makalu Barun and Koshi Tappu from a tourism development potential perspective by looking at the broad landscape in terms of infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, access to markets, existing tourism-related operations, the proposed dam site on the Arun River, nearby urban centres, etc. and
2. To develop a phased Tourism Destination Area Plan that indicates the potential of these areas in terms of tourism growth and the investment gaps that need to be addressed to enable this growth and a suggested sequencing and ballpark costing for these investments.

Importantly, this TDAP would take into consideration and adhere to the MoCTCA's plans for the enhancement of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT). The GHT is already a world-renowned product and stays true to the authentic appeal of Nepal's tourism attractions. Through further development and improvements in quality, the GHT and associated attractions would help to ensure sustainable and socio-economically beneficial tourism products that are able to attract increasing numbers of visitors from diverse source markets. The TDAP would identify possible developments that can be supported by the Government's designated 'GHT' budget.

The **Principal Outputs** of this assignment are:

1. A series of **consultation and discussion meetings and workshops** with national, district and local tourism stakeholders and other players to identify and develop opportunities and address challenges with tourism development in the region.
2. A **Tourism Destination Area Plan** (TDAP)[1] for the Makalu/Arun River/Koshi Tappu region in Eastern Nepal.
3. A workable **Implementation Action Plan** (IAP) that is both feasible and sustainable to implement.

Formulation of this TDAP was undertaken by a small team of representatives drawn from IFC, Samarth/NMDP and IBN. This involved holding numerous consultation meetings with key state and non-state stakeholders and players at

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[1]   In the Terms of Reference for this assignment, the plan is referred to as a "Tourism Destination Development Plan", or TDDP. For purposes of this document, however, a distinction has been made between the broader regionally-focused 'tourism destination area' (ie. Eastern Nepal comprising several districts) and a more locally-focused 'tourism destination' (eg. individual district, protected area, tourist attraction, etc.).

national, district and local levels, undertaking two field visits to Eastern Nepal and conducting a number of stakeholder workshops.

It is expected that this TDAP, together with the TDAP for the Upper Karnali/Bardiya Banke/Rara region in the west of the country, would be taken forward by the MoCTCA and IBN to the Government of Nepal for ratification and funding allocations.

1.2   Outline of recent tourism development planning in Nepal

Tourism planning in Nepal goes back to the mid-1950s with the formulation of the *First National Development Plan 1956-1960* with that plan identifying various tourism development opportunities and infrastructure requirements. Since then, a number of tourism policies, acts and plans have been produced, many of these having already been satisfactorily summarised in the current *National Tourism Strategic Plan (NTSP) 2016-2025* (see **Section 1.2.3** below).

In this section, a brief summary of the principal tourism planning documents which have been produced in Nepal over the last eight or so years is given, together with a brief account of the tourism-related projects and programmes that are ongoing and which, to a greater or lesser extent, are relevant to this TDAP.

1.2.1   *Tourism Policy 2065 (2008)* and *Tourism Master Plan 2008*

In 2007, the Government of Nepal declared tourism to be a priority sector in the country and decided to formulate a new policy to replace the *Tourism Policy 1995*.

The long-term <u>Vision</u> for tourism expressed in the resulting **Tourism Policy 2065 (2008)** is:

"to develop Nepal as an attractive, pleasing, safe and unique destination in the global tourism map through conservation and promotion of the natural, cultural, biological and human-made heritage of Nepal,"

while the policy's Mission is:

"to improve the living standards of the people through tourism activities with a substantial contribution towards the national income by sustainable use of the national heritage".

The four main <u>Objectives</u> to achieve the Vision and Mission are:

1) To develop the industry and create jobs in order to improve the living standard of the Nepalese people, especially poverty alleviation through ecotourism and rural tourism.
2) To develop Nepal as a major tourism destination and promote and conserve its natural and cultural heritage.
3) To expand and spread tourism through safe, reliable and regular air and land transport.
4) To ensure that the environment is protected and that the development of tourism infrastructure uses natural resources sustainably.

A total of 26 <u>Policy Areas</u> are identified in the policy document. Under these policy areas as a whole, a total of 152 <u>Policy Actions</u> are given, these effectively being individual strategies to implement policy statements. With there being no Strategy or Action Plan *per se* included in the policy, the policy actions are presented as the key mechanism for implementing the policy as a whole.

During the formulation process for the NTSP in 2013, the *Tourism Policy 2065 (2008)* was assessed according to the degree of implementation by policy area. It was concluded that, although the Policy is comprehensive and describes in detail the intent, wishes and aspirations of the Government, there are certain areas that can be improved with a more targeted focus. There needs to be, for instance, a clear mechanism to ensure that actions are taken to implement the policy areas identified with responsibilities and a schedule allocated to both public and private sector stakeholders. In addition, an evaluation and monitoring mechanism must be put in place to ensure that the actions have been completed successfully of to introduce remedial actions where required. Furthermore, the Policy needs to link in better with other government policies, especially the Ministry of Environment's policy on climate change.

Although the *Tourism Policy 2065 (2008)* is still in effect today, it is clear that it does need to be reviewed, especially in light of the recent advent of the NTSP and socio-economic and political developments that have taken place in the last few years.

At the same time as the *Tourism Policy 2065 (2008)* was being drafted, a parallel process worked on the development of a **Tourism Master Plan 2008** for Nepal. This plan, however, was never endorsed by the Government largely because it did not adequately reflect the views of the private sector. Also, although the Master Plan featured an action plan (unlike the *Policy*), it was considered to be incomplete and inadequate.

1.2.2   *Tourism Vision 2020*

In 2009 and following on from the *Tourism Policy 2065 (2008)*, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) in partnership with industry partners formulated the **Tourism Vision 2020** to guide the development of the sector and to set targets to be achieved by 2020. Its overall <u>Vision</u> is:

> "*Tourism is valued as the major contributor to a sustainable Nepal economy, having developed as an attractive, safe, exciting and unique destination through conservation and promotion, leading to equitable distribution of tourism benefits and greater harmony in society*,"

while its two main <u>Goals</u> are: 1) "to increase annual international tourist arrivals to Nepal to two million by 2020"; and 2) "to augment economic opportunities and increase employment in tourism sector to one million".

Tourism Vision 2020 has six <u>Main Objectives</u>, each of which has a number of <u>Strategies</u> related to it:

1) To improve livelihoods of the people across the country by developing integrated tourism infrastructure, increasing tourism activities and products, generating employment in the rural areas, enhancing inclusiveness of women and other deprived communities and spreading the benefits of tourism to the grassroots level (11 strategies).
2) To develop tourism as a broad-based sector by bringing tourism into the main stream of Nepal socio-economic development, supported by a coherent and enabling institutional environment (3 strategies).
3) To expand and extend tourism products and services in new and potential areas of Nepal by enhancing community capacity to participate in tourism activities (5 strategies).
4) To publicise, promote and enhance the image of Nepal in international tourism source markets (6 strategies)
5) To enhance flight safety and aviation security, extend air connectivity and improve capacity and facilities of national and international airports (8 strategies).
6) To attract new investment in creating new tourism facilities, products and services (3 strategies).

In addition to the 36 Strategies that have been identified, the document also presents a list of 20 short- and 11 long-term actions that need to be carried out. Most of them have direct relevance to the Tourism Destination Area Plan that is the subject of this document, with many aimed specifically at developing tourism around particular hubs within the country, including in Eastern Nepal.

Overall, *Tourism Vision 2020* provides a brief and clear set of strategic objectives and strategies and some key actions to achieve tourism development in Nepal as a whole by 2020. Arguably the biggest failing of the document, however, is the absence of a detailed Action Plan to support its implementation.

1.2.3   *National Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025*

Prior to 2013, the tourism policies, strategies and plans that had been formulated were not supported by detailed implementation action plans that could help guide the Government and its partners in their efforts to develop the sector. Stakeholders therefore decided to commission the preparation of a strategic plan that had a 10-year horizon and was supported by a detailed 5-year action plan.

The <u>Overall Goal</u> of the resulting **National Tourism Strategic Plan 2015-2024** (NTSP) (recently updated and now referred to as the **National Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025**) is "to provide the Government and stakeholders with a guiding framework along the economic development vision through technical and financial assistance for developing the tourism industry as a key catalyst for rapid economic growth and job creation.

The six <u>Specific Objectives</u> of the NTSP are to:

1) Increase revenues and employment opportunities and contribute to GDP growth per capita through tourism.
2) Diversify the country's tourism attractions and services.
3) Increase tourist arrivals without compromising sustainability and environmental and cultural quality.
4) Market and brand Nepal in key generating markets.
5) Improve the quality of the product and tourism human resources.
6) Alleviate poverty and encourage community participation.

Interventions under the NTSP are grouped under 11 specific <u>Strategic Goals</u>, these relating to:

1) **Planning and development** – to develop tourism in a planned and sustainable manner.
2) **Branding** – to establish a universally recognised Nepal tourism brand and a desirable tourism image locally and abroad.

3) **Marketing** – to achieve consistently high growth in tourism arrivals throughout the year and significantly improve value derived from visitors in terms of revenues, seasonality and geographic spread.

4) **Tourism economy** – to contribute to greater GDP growth and employment, reduce poverty and increase sustainable access to foreign exchange for national development.

5) **Investment and business environment** – to attract investment and improve/expand commercial tourism facilities and services in the sector.

6) **Human resource development** – to improve the tourism human resource capacity, quality, quantity and performance.

7) **Quality improvement** – to improve the quality of accommodation, food, safety and public sector services to enhance the tourism experience in Nepal.

8) **Tourism infrastructure** – to provide clear guidelines of necessary tourism infrastructure development that will be incorporated into MoCTCA policy and work plans for immediate implementation.

9) **Institutional, management and policy** – to provide an effective institutional, regulatory framework to support the development and growth of the sector.

10) **Cultural heritage** – to protect, preserve and promote the diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Nepal and generate income and employment through sustainable tourism development.

11) **Natural environment** – to minimise the impact of tourism on the environment through a proactive planning and implementation strategy and promotion of good practice.

The NTSP is being implemented in two five-year <u>Phases</u>:

➢ **Phase 1 (2016-2020): Diversification and Improvement** – under this initial phase, the emphasis is on: ♦ diversifying the range of products; ♦ developing new types of products and consolidating products that are currently emerging; ♦ defending and improving the current trekking and mountaineering product that Nepal relies on; and ♦ improving the quality of the products and services across the board.

➢ **Phase 2 (2021-2025): Consolidation and Expansion** – during this second, the emphasis will be on: ♦ consolidating the new products and new locations that have been developed; ♦ opening up new areas; ♦ expanding the product range; ♦ targeting new high-yield markets; ♦ continuing to improve product and service quality; and ♦ maintaining the quality improvements that have been achieved.

Following an extensive and very informative situational analysis of the tourism sector in Nepal and the setting of the above development goals and objectives and outlining of the strategy rationale and competitive positioning of Nepal, the NTSP sets out a <u>Structural Plan</u> for tourism in Nepal. This plan focuses on the current and envisaged spatial flow of tourists within Nepal in a phased manner which corresponds to the two-phase approach adopted in the NTSP. It sees the current spatial tourism flow centred on the "Golden Triangle" (Kathmandu-Pokhara-Chitwan) in the centre of the country with links to the Everest area being expanded to also cover eastern and western Nepal.

Within eastern Nepal, the border and airport town of Biratnagar is viewed as being a regional gateway, as are Illam and Taplejung further to the east and north. Biratnagar is seen as being the principal gateway to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) in the west of the region and to Dharan, Dhankuta, the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale area, Sankhuwasabha and Makalu Barun National Park (MBNP) to the north and the tourist attractions that these areas hold. Biratnagar and the areas linked to it all fall within the region covered by this TDAP.

The NTSP then identifies six priority geographical areas, or <u>Tourism Destination Areas</u> (TDAs), within Nepal to receive attention during the 10-year lifespan of the Plan. The overarching objective of TDAs is to reinforce the roles of the relatively underdeveloped regions of Nepal as significant tourism destinations in the country, primarily through the exploitation of their tourism assets and key attractions. TDAs are essentially development zones, or regional clusters, where integrated actions and programmes can be implemented in order to develop the tourism sector across administrative boundaries (ie. district and, in some cases, regional) in a holistic and cost-effective manner.

The justification for selecting TDAs varies from one to another, but generally it refers to the: ♦ infrastructure availability, level and planned development in each area; ♦ potential for attracting tourists to the area; ♦ demand from tourists that for a variety of constricting factors is presently unrealisable; ♦ diversification potential of activities available within each area; ♦ sustainability of each TDA with regard to rural and urban plans drafted by government at different levels; ♦ degree to which the social impact of tourism development will not negatively affect local cultures and the potential for poverty alleviation; and ♦ the Government's strategic priority for these disadvantaged areas.

Six (6) TDAs were initially identified, but this number has recently been expanded to seven (7). These are:

1) Greater Pokhara-Central/West TDA
2) Greater Lumbini TDA

3) Kailali and Surroundings-Far West TDA
4) Illam and Surrounding-East TDA
5) Karnali Region-Mid West TDA
6) Central Region TDA
7) Janakpur Region TDA.

Tourism development proposals for each TDA seek to develop tourism, including community-based tourism, at a range of sites across the region, particularly within protected areas and aim to diversify the present tourism offer, attract more visitors to the region and increase the length of stay and average visitor spend in order to maximise economic benefits to local communities.

The NTSP then sets out a Tourism Development Strategy for Nepal that, informed by the situational analysis, sets out to achieve the development goals and objectives and support the physical development strategy outlined above. This it does by discussing and making numerous and appropriate recommendations on: ♦ policy, strategy and regulatory frameworks; ♦ a statistical system for tourism; ♦ product development; ♦ infrastructure, air access and utilities; ♦ human resource development; ♦ enhancement of quality in the tourism sector; ♦ branding, ♦ marketing; ♦ improving the economic performance of the sector; ♦ enhancing community involvement in the sector; ♦ protecting and enhancing cultural heritage through tourism; ♦ managing the natural heritage and protecting the environment; ♦ institutional framework and roles and responsibilities of institutions implementing the Strategy; and ♦ monitoring and evaluating the Strategy.

The recommendations are then translated into 171 different Actions which fall under 54 Strategies and which in turn are grouped into 11 main categories. These are all dealt with in summary in a 5-Year Action Plan that is presented towards the end of the document. The 11 categories of strategies and actions are as follows:

1) **Policy, strategy and regulatory framework** – 6 strategies and 12 actions
2) **Tourism infrastructure enhancement and strengthening** – 5 strategies and 26 actions
3) **Human resource development** – 9 strategies and 30 actions
4) **Quality improvement in tourism** – 4 strategies and 9 actions
5) **Destination branding** – 3 strategies and 5 actions
6) **Destination marketing** – 10 strategies and 42 actions
7) **Investment and business environment** – 1 strategy and 2 actions
8) **Enhancing local economic impact and community participation** – 5 strategies and 14 actions
9) **Protection and enhancement of cultural heritage** – 4 strategies and 9 actions
10) **Institutional framework** – 6 strategies and 12 actions
11) **Development of demonstration projects** – 1 strategy and 10 actions.

The total cost of implementing the strategic action plan over the initial five years of the NTSP is estimated at NRP 6.1 billion (US$ 61 million).

Without doubt, the NTSP is a very important and recent addition to the national-level planning framework for tourism in Nepal and to the development of this key sector over the next 10 years.

1.2.4   Relevant district and local tourism plans

Several district- and local-level tourism development plans exist within or associated with the TDA, either in completed form or as drafts. The plans which are most relevant to this tourism destination area-level plan and which were encountered during the formulation mission are outlined briefly below.

➢ The Tourism Product of the East: "Green East"
This regional/destination area-based plan focuses on establishing the Dharan, Illam and Taplejung area within Nepal as an alternative tourism destination to the "Golden Triangle" in central Nepal which links Kathmandu, Pokhara and Chitwan and is currently the principal tourism destination in Nepal. Based on the mountains, rivers, forests and natural beauty, the plan considers nature-based tourism as being the region's strength, tapping in where also possible into the region's cultural, historical and religious heritage, agriculture, hill station, adventure sports (rafting, paragliding, cycling) and urban environment possibilities.

➢ Barahachhetra Master Plan (undated)
This local-level plan was produced by the Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee consulting and holding discussions with relevant individuals at site level and by distributing questionnaires. The plan that has been compiled is very much an infrastructure plan that lists a large variety and number of different activities

or projects that focus on the construction and/or upgrading of roads, bridges, a wide range of different types of buildings, bus parks, waste management facilities, viewing towers, staircases, recreational parks, picnic spots, etc. and on the undertaking of several feasibility studies on, for example, the establishment of a zoo and a cable car. Activities listed in the Master Plan are divided into short-, medium- and long-term activities, many of which have budgets attached.

➢ Dhankuta District Tourism Master Plan (2014)
In addition to a detailed treatise on the state of tourism in Nepal at the time and background information on Dhankuta District as a whole, this district-level plan provides brief descriptions of the main religious and recreational sites of tourism potential within the district, as well as other places of touristic interest. The Goal of the tourism development plan is to establish and sustainably manage and develop tourism in Dhankuta District and to disseminate wider and increased benefits to local communities, with special focus being paid to the conservation and promotion of the natural, cultural, archaeological and historical resources of the district. The tourism development plan's three Objectives are: 1) to develop conditions for tourism while preserving the natural, cultural, archaeological and historical heritage; 2) to improve the quality of life of local communities and contribute to inclusive economic growth; and 3) to strengthen local institutions and organisations to plan, implement, monitor, manage and coordinate tourism development activities. The plan lists in very broad terms the intended results relating to these objectives and outlines, also very broadly, the short- medium- and long-term strategies to be followed over three 5-year phases from 2014-2028. Unfortunately, no specific activities or action plan to achieve these strategies and objectives are given.

➢ Integrated Tourism Development and Management Plan of Sankhuwasabha 2012-2017 (2012)
This district-level plan was produced by a local NGO, Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center, on behalf of the Sankhuwasabha DDC and NTB. Of all the district/local plans, this is certainly the most comprehensive and best plan and one that largely meets the requirements of good planning. It should rightly be considered as being an example of best practice.

The plan comprises seven chapters. Following an introduction, methodology and SWOT analysis, it reviews the present status of tourism in the district. It identifies nine (9) tourism niches for the district, namely, mountaineering, trekking, eco-tourism, water-based tourism, religious tourism, historical and cultural tourism, agro tourism, business/ transit tourism and sports tourism. As well as identifying various existing and potential tourist potentials and attractions, it also sets out a number of threats and challenges that need to be faced. Another chapter sets out the vision, objectives and strategies, the long-term vision being "to develop Sankhuwasabha District as an attractive tourism destination and share the benefits from it among the poor and disadvantaged contributing to poverty alleviation and attainment of socio-economic prosperity".

Eighteen (18) strategic objectives have been identified as have 12 priority areas and 85 activities. The 12 priority areas are: 1) conservation of tourism assets; 2) management of tourism infrastructures; 3) tourism activities development and expansion; 4) infrastructure development and expansion; 5) tourist services expansion; 6) develop and expansion of other support services; 7) institutional development; 8) human resources development; 9) marketing and promotion; 10) environment conservation, waste management; 11) promotion and linkage of local products and tourism for income generation; and 12) partnership with neighbouring districts. Activities have been selected for implementation using criteria based on community participation, employment and income, expansion of tourism activities and benefits sharing, marketing and promotion and priority ranking.

The plan also has a chapter on possible other developments, such as building hotels and viewing towers, tourist products, etc., through private sector, government and public support.

The plan, which has a long-term vision until 2020, also includes a 5-year periodic plan covering the period 2012/13 to 2016/17.

Within this plan, the 85 activities try to build on the existing and popular areas, such as MBNP, the Makalu Base Camp Trail, Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) trekking trail, etc., while also trying to capture the potential of new products and services such as mountain biking, water sports and business and sports tourism. At the same time, the plan envisions building partnerships with neighbouring districts and regions for development, as well as putting effort on marketing.

While the strengths of the region are mostly the richness of natural and cultural attractions and some development works, such as road access and a growing interest among stakeholders, the plan also sees some threats and issues, such as the lack of initiatives from both the private and public sectors. It also assumes that

political stability is present and that funds are available from the Government and donor agencies to implement the plan and its related projects.

> Pathibhara community application (2016)
> Although no formal tourism development plan exists for this community in the Arun River valley, a list of desired developments within the Pathibhara VDC was provided to the TDAP formulation team during the field visit. Most of the developments listed are primarily community-related, but some are focused specifically on tourism. These include the development of local trekking routes, support for the ongoing development of a community campsite/lodge, tourism-related training and financial support. Other desired developments that could have a strong tourism flavour include a cultural centre, the restoration of a local monastery, training for weaving rugs and knitting. The building of access roads and a suspension bridge and the completion of a micro-hydro project, for instance, would also have direct benefits for tourism in the area.

Conspicuously, Sunsari District, which is home to KTWR, the district administrative capital Inaruwa, Dharan and many religious and natural tourist attractions, does not presently possess any district-level tourism plans at all. It is understood, however, that the Sunsari DDC does intend to produce a periodic plan for tourism in the near future.

Some district-level committees, VDCs and communities consulted during the formulation mission expressed their ideas on what types of tourism developments and activities they would like to see take place in their specific areas. Although very few of these ideas have been written down in formal plans, they have nevertheless been taken into consideration during the formulation process. This is particular so for some communities lying adjacent to the eastern boundary of KTWR, the various hotel associations and chambers of commerce and industry for Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha districts, six of the Arun-3-affected VDCs along the Arun River and a number of individual hotel owners/managers in the TDA.

1.2.5   Major tourism development projects currently underway in Nepal

A number of tourism-related projects and initiatives are currently underway in Nepal at national and local level, several of which have relevance to this TDAP. The most significant ones are the following:

> **South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP)** – one of only three Asian Development Bank (ADB) projects that focuses specifically on the tourism sector (the other two are directed at the Mekong), this regional project began in November 2009 and focuses on upgrading and improving transport and other infrastructure and public services in key tourism sites in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Within Nepal the project is focused on upgrading the Gautam Buddha Airport in Bhairahawa (Rupandehi District) to become Nepal's second international airport. The US$ 55.7 million upgrade is scheduled to finish in early-2018. In the past, the SATIDP also supported improvements to the nearby Buddhist pilgrimage site at Lumbini, birthplace of the Lord Buddha.

> **Government of Nepal's Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (TIDP)** – initially established with the assistance of the German Government in 1972 and later supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the current TIDP began in February 2009 and is funded by the Government of Nepal and implemented by the MoCTCA. The project presently involves upwards of 20 tourism development initiatives around the country.

> **Samarth/Nepal Market Development Project (Samarth/NMDP)** – this five-year DfID-funded pro-poor rural market development programme began in March 2012 and is directed primarily at the agriculture sector within 22 districts of Nepal, including Sankhuwasabha District. One of the ten focal areas the project addresses is tourism through which it aims to improve the economic opportunities through tourism in rural Nepal in the Himalayan region by developing innovative visitor products, improving marketing efforts and supporting destination area management. Current project interventions include: ♦ destination area management; ♦ product and infrastructure improvement; ♦ industry standards improvement; ♦ industry linkage creation; ♦ revenue stream enhancement; ♦ strategic marketing efforts; and ♦ industry knowledge and capacity enhancement. Of direct relevance to this TDAP is the work that is being done by the project on the further development of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) [this follows on from the SNV Netherlands Development Organisation-implemented Great Himalaya Trail Development Programme that came to an end in 2013] and the formulation of a Tourism Business Development Plan for Manaslu Conservation Area in collaboration with the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC).

> **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** – this 8-member country regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge sharing centre aims to assist mountain people in understanding, adapting to and making the most of new opportunities brought about by globalisation and climate change and the influence that these have on fragile mountain ecosystems and their livelihoods. With respect to tourism,

ICIMOD aims to enhance community involvement in tourism by improving capacities to host tourists, strengthening product and service linkages, valuing and preserving the natural and heritage elements that enable visitors to enjoy an authentic tourism experience and revitalising trading routes and trails through the mountains. ICIMOD also: ♦ supports national and local authorities in crafting suitable tourism-related policies and strategies; ♦ stimulates national and regional platforms to share knowledge and shape policies and adaptation mechanisms; ♦ builds the capacity of host communities to improve service quality and value chain linkages; and ♦ collaborates with the private sector to encourage more responsible tourism practices.

➢ **World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Hariyo Ban Program** – through its sustainable livelihoods program, WWF promotes the involvement of asset-deprived, vulnerable and marginalised communities living in and around protected areas in ecotourism. WWF's 5-year, USAID-funded Hariyo Ban Program works to empower Nepal's local communities, primarily in the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) and in the Chitwan-Annapurna Landscape (CHAL), in safeguarding the country's living heritage and adapting to climate change through sound conservation and livelihood approaches. The latter includes involvement in environmentally-sustainable tourism.

➢ **Nepal Tourism Board's district tourism development plans** – ten (10) tourism development plans have been or are currently being formulated by NTB in conjunction with respective district authorities. This includes districts falling within the region covered by this TDAP and mentioned above.

1.3   Tourism Destination Area Plans (TDAPs)

1.3.1   Need for TDAPs

The NTSP has identified seven priority areas, or TDAs, within Nepal that would be the Government's focus for tourism development over the 10-year period between 2015 and 2024. However, in order to ensure that the national-level tourism development goals and objectives of the NTSP can be effectively applied at regional level, and especially within the TDAs, it is clearly necessary for regional/TDA-level plans to be formulated for each of the priority areas.

These TDA plans, or TDAPs, should adopt or take into consideration all or as many as possible of the goals and objectives, principles and thinking that are included in the national-level NTSP. This is primarily to ensure that tourism development in the regions and TDAs are in agreement with national policy and plans. At the same time, however, the TDAPs should also take cognisance of the specific, often unique and many and varied characteristics of each of the TDAs.

In doing this, TDAPs would provide a vital link between the strategising and planning that takes place at national level, which in most cases can be a very much top-down and prescriptive approach to planning, and the planning that occurs at district and local levels, which by nature is much more of a bottom-up or grassroots approach to planning and which often better reflects needs-based development.

TDAPs by nature are both holistic and integrated and involve the participation and input of state and non-state stakeholders at both national and district/local level. Implementation of the TDAPs must also be largely undertaken by district/local implementation agencies and partners working together and in collaboration, where necessary, with a range of national and even international stakeholders and players.

The NTSP recognises the importance of possessing such holistic and integrated TDAPs. *Action 2.1.1* within the NTSP's 5-year Action Plan, for instance, requires the development and endorsement by the Government of Nepal of integrated destination development plans for each TDA to be carried out and achieved during the first three years of strategy implementation (ie. 2015-2017) through the combined efforts of a number of implementing agencies and partners, amongst them the MoCTCA/DoT, NTB, DDCs and the private sector, plus if necessary technical assistance.

The TDAP for Eastern Nepal is one of the first of such regional-level tourism destination development plans to be tackled. Although the geographical area of this plan doesn't fully correspond with the Illam and Surroundings-East TDA identified in the NTSP, it is nevertheless still a plan with a very strong regional and tourism destination area orientation to it.

The approach used in the formulation of this Eastern Nepal TDAP, together with lessons learnt from the formulation process, have been largely adopted and applied during the formulation of a similar TDAP for the Karnali Region-Mid West TDA.

1.3.2   Scope of this TDAP

The **geographical area** covered by this TDAP for Eastern Nepal encompasses the entire administrative districts of, from south to north, Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha (*Figure 1*). Biratnagar, which is located on the Nepal-India border and falls just within Morang District, is also included in the TDA by virtue of its role as a major border city and the presence of an airport for domestic flights which could be upgraded to handle international flights. A section of

Saptari District also falls within the TDA as the western section of the KTWR takes in part of the Koshi River. Again, part of Terhathum and Taplejung Districts also effectively falls within the TDA by virtue of the concentration of rhododendron forests that is found in the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale area and the fact that the cultural route of the Great Himalayan Trail (GHT) runs east-west from the forests and into the TDA.

Figure 1 – Map of Nepal showing approximate location of Eastern Nepal Tourism Destination Area

With the Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts being administrative units, implementation of the plan would be much easier from a government perspective to plan for and to manage.

It needs to be said that the TDA covered by this TDAP does not wholly-equate with the Illam and Surrounding-East TDA identified in the NTSP. In this respect, therefore, this TDAP is said to cover "Eastern Nepal". Should any future TDAP be developed to cover the districts to the east of this TDA and up to the border with Sikkim and West Bengal States in India, it could be said to represent "Far Eastern Nepal".

For purposes of this document, therefore, "**Eastern Nepal**" is defined as the broad geographical area described above and equates to the TDA that is covered by this Plan. It does not include those areas within Nepal that fall between the TDA and the eastern border with India, such as Illam, Taplejung, Kanchenjunga, etc.

The construction of the **Arun-3 Hydro Electric Power (HEP) dam and associated infrastructures** will play an important role in the planning and development of tourism in the TDA, especially along the Arun River in Sankhuwasabha District. Despite being a major capital infrastructure development undertaking in its own right and helping to meet the energy demands of the future for both Nepal and India, this US$ 1,300 million project also offers a number of opportunities to develop and improve the livelihoods of communities that will be impacted by the dam. One of these opportunities relates to tourism and the role that a developed tourism sector could play in improving the economy of local communities and the districts as a whole. Without doubt, tourism within the area would certainly offer local communities and residents good business and employment opportunities in the future, these being almost directly attributable to the construction of the Arun-3 dam and the associated major road between Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the north and India to the south via the Arun River valley.

The formulation and initial implementation of this TDAP for Eastern Nepal is taking place at much the same time as the plans for the construction of the dam and associated infrastructures are being finalised and the finance is being secured. This is one of the few instances worldwide whereby the planning and construction of a major dam and the planning of a tourism industry around the same dam is taking place concurrently and in close association.

Taking into consideration the construction, commissioning and operational phases of the Arun-3 HEP project over a likely 5-year period, tentatively scheduled to begin in early-2017, this TDAP will take advantage of opportunities to develop tourism products in and around the area of the dam, but especially around the village of Num. With potentially upwards of 3,000 management and staff being involved in the construction of the dam, the TDAP will need to address

the requirement to provide these workers and their families with adequate recreational and entertainment facilities and, once construction is over, to subsequently convert these facilities into products that can then be used by visitors and tourists long into the future. It is for this reason that part of the TDAP will focus on Arun-3, and the area around Num, as a specific tourist destination and hub in its own right.

The northern **approaches** to the Eastern Nepal TDA pass through the Sagarmatha (Everest) and Kanchenjunga areas of Nepal which lie to the west and east, respectively. Very few roads or tracks connect these areas, especially in the high mountainous areas. The principal links between these two adjacent areas for tourists in particular, therefore, are formed by the High Route and the Cultural Trail that together make up the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT). Because the TDA falls on the GHT and forms an integral part of it, the TDAP will also address the tourism development needs of the GHT in the region in a fair amount of detail.

The **period covered by this TDAP** runs from January 2017 until December 2026, while the associated Implementation Action Plan (IAP) covers the 5-year period from January 2017 to December 2021. A 'start date' of January 2017 has been chosen because it is unlikely that the TDAP for Eastern Region will be endorsed by the Government of Nepal before that time. It is hoped, however, that approval of the plan will be secured in early-2017 in time for implementation of the Plan to begin.

The TDAP is intended to be a **practical document** that is easy to read and understand and which can be used as a strategic planning document at regional and district levels by a variety of implementing agencies and bodies and representative individuals. Some of the latter may not possess the necessary knowledge or experience to understand complex terms, concepts and descriptions, or have the time to spend reading through pages of text. The Plan, therefore, will focus on practical implementation and action rather than on unnecessary amounts of background information and analysis and will also not go into much detail beyond the activity level.

A number of **guiding principles** behind the implementation of the TDAP have been adopted, though others are likely also to apply. The guiding principles are as follows:

- ➢ View tourism as being an important and integral part of community development.
- ➢ Promote a partnership approach to implementation.
- ➢ Government provides a facilitatory environment for tourism development and growth.
- ➢ Involve a range of state and non-state stakeholders and players in implementation.
- ➢ View the private sector as being the engine of economic growth within the tourism sector.
- ➢ Promote ownership amongst stakeholders of plans and tourism developments.
- ➢ Ensure that tangible benefits in the form of jobs and business opportunities and increased incomes accrue to local communities.
- ➢ Promote a "Think Local First!" approach to supporting the tourism industry.
- ➢ Share implementation and development costs where possible.
- ➢ Ensure that tourism developments are sensitive to the natural environment.
- ➢ Incorporate earthquake-resistant designs and materials within tourism infrastructures where possible.
- ➢ Ensure that tourism developments are climate change smart.
- ➢ Ensure that tourism developments are sensitive to cultural heritage.
- ➢ Promote the construction of aesthetically-appropriate infrastructures.
- ➢ Strive for high standards in the quality of tourism products and services.
- ➢ Build capacity and enhance human resources where possible.
- ➢ Be innovative and prepared to take risks.

1.3.3   Structure of this TDAP

This TDAP document is split into two parts: **Part 1 – Main Report** and **Part 2 – Annex**. Each part is presented in a separate volume.

Part 1 – Main Report

Part 1 is divided into four (4) chapters. The first two chapters are largely introductory and background in nature, while the third chapter represents the core of this planning document. The fourth and last chapter focuses on how this TDAP can be implemented. Two (2) appendices follow at the end.

In slightly more detail, **Chapter 1** is an introductory chapter that: ♦ gives a brief background to the formulation mission for this TDAP; ♦ outlines the principal and most relevant tourism planning initiatives that have taken place in Nepal at national, district and local level over the last eight or so years and the documents that have been produced; ♦ highlights the main tourism development projects that are currently underway in the country; ♦ introduces the concept of and need for TDAPs and the structure used in this TDAP; and ♦ outlines the methodology and approach used in formulating the Plan.

Chapter 2 provides a brief situational analysis of the tourism sector in the Eastern Nepal TDA. The chapter: ♦ gives a brief summary of the natural and anthropogenic (man-made) resource base for the tourism sector, the tourism-specific infrastructure and the infrastructure that supports it, the tourism activities and services that are provided and the stakeholders and players that are involved; ♦ provides a brief summary of tourist statistics, tourism profiles and trends; ♦ presents a SWOT analysis of the sector in the TDA; ♦ highlights the unique selling points of the region; and ♦ summarises the key constraints that apply to tourism development in the TDA.

Chapter 3 is the TDAP for Eastern Nepal itself. The chapter; ♦ discusses a 10-year Vision for the tourism sector in the region; ♦ sets out the goal and specific objectives of the Plan; ♦ introduces the perceived need for two consecutive 5-year TDAPs; ♦ lists the short-, medium- and long-term strategic objectives and targets of this TDAP; ♦ introduces the key task areas that form this TDAP and the range and types of activities that would need to be implemented under the Plan; ♦ explains the concept of implementation drivers and partners; ♦ discusses possible funding sources and mechanisms for plan implementation and the indicative budgets required; ♦ outlines a tourism development spatial plan for the Eastern TDA; ♦ introduces and presents the summary Implementation Action Plan (IAP) for the TDAP (*Table 1*); ♦ introduces and outlines the concept of 'investment-ready' projects and how they are included in the TDAP; and ♦ lists the perceived assumptions and risks associated with implementation.

Chapter 4 focuses on how the TDAP will be implemented, coordinated, monitored and evaluated. The chapter: ♦ explains the need for the effective management and coordination of plan implementation; ♦ proposes the establishment of a 'tourism development programme' that is tasked with implementing the TDAP and possibly also the TDAP for other regions of Nepal; ♦ proposes several coordination mechanisms and structures to deliver the proposed programme and makes appropriate recommendations; and ♦ outlines the next steps that need to be taken in order to put the TDAP into action.

The two **Appendices** that are included at the end of Part 1: ♦ list the stakeholders and players who were consulted during the formulation of the TDAP; and ♦ list the key reports and documents that were referred to during the plan formulation process.

Part 2 – Annexes

Part 2 comprises one (1) Annex.

Annex 1 provides more detailed and indicative descriptions of the individual activities that appear in *Table 1* in *Section 3.9.2* (Part 1). This annex forms the bulk of this TDAP document.

1.3.4   Methodology and process adopted

The plan formulation mission took place over a five-month calendar period (beginning of May to the end of September, 2016) and was carried out by a two-person core team consisting of an international tourism planning expert and a national tourism planning expert seconded from the Samarth/Nepal Market Development Project. Over this period, and especially during the two field visits that were undertaken during the mission, the tourism planning experts worked closely with three senior members of staff from the IBN as well as specialists from IFC.

The mission was overseen and guided by a steering group comprising several senior staff members from the IFC offices in Kathmandu and Washington DC and by the Tourism Programme Manager from Samarth/NMDP.

The formulation mission took place in four (4) stages:

> **First Stage** – involved preliminary consultations with key national stakeholders in Kathmandu and was followed by an intensive 2-week field visit to the TDA.

- ➢ **Second Stage** – involved the writing up of a preliminary partial draft of the TDAP and the putting together of several PowerPoint presentations on, in particular, the draft IAP.
- ➢ **Third Stage** – involved a second field visit to the TDA in order to present and to discuss the draft TDAP and IAP with regional stakeholders and to validate or reach broad consensus on the approach taken and the recommendations made. The field visit was followed by further consultation meetings in Kathmandu and a validation meeting of key stakeholders.
- ➢ **Fourth Stage** – saw the finalisation of the TDAP and submission to the IBN and the MoCTCA for approval.

During the formulation mission a range of methods were used to collect information and to consult with stakeholders in a participatory and inclusive manner. These included the collection of relevant reports, documents, maps and other materials, Internet searches, face-to-face interviews and group discussions with key informants and stakeholders in both Kathmandu and in the field, field trips, site familiarisation visits, stakeholder workshops, email communications and telephone calls. A number of meetings and discussions were also held between the tourism planning experts, IBN and the steering group.

Consultations with stakeholders and players were held in Kathmandu, KTWR, Barahachhetra, Chatara, Ramdhuni Bhasi, Inaruwa, Itahari, Dharan, Mulgat, Dhankuta, Hile, Pakhribas, Basantapur, Deurali, Tumlingtar, Khandbari, Num, Num Bazar, Gadhidanda, Simma and Yakuwa. It had been intended to consult with some local stakeholders in Gola and Barun Dhovan on the boundary with MBNP, but inclement weather and flooding prevented that from taking place.

A full list of those state and non-state organisations and individuals consulted during the mission at national, district and local levels is given in *Appendix 1*, while a list of key reports and documents referred to is given in *Appendix 2*.

2   SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.1   Summary of tourism resource base, infrastructure and services

It is not the purpose of this document to provide a detailed list of each and every tourism resource, attraction, facility, operation, service, etc. that exists within the TDA. This would be the task of more destination-focused tourism development plans for the region that each deal with an individual district and/or more local tourist destinations, such as the Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts, individual towns and cities, groups of VDCs, protected areas, etc. Some such plans already exist, but others will need to be drawn up that fall under the umbrella of this TDAP. Some existing plans will also need to be updated and improved.

What will be given here is a brief summary overview of the principal elements which exist within the TDA and which make up the natural and manmade tourism resource base, tourism and tourism support infrastructure, tourism activities and services and principal stakeholders and players in the tourism sector.

2.1.1   Natural resource base for tourism

The natural resource base for the TDA falls into the following main categories:

Topography
There are three main landforms within the TDA which are, from south to north: 1) the Terai (below 700 m); 2) hill (700-3,000 m); and 3) mountain (above 3,000 m) regions. The altitude within the TDA ranges from 70 m in the Terai region to 8,485 m (Mt Makalu) in the north on the Nepal-Tibet border. Over a distance of only about 200 km, the topography varies from the flat plains of the Terai, through deeply-dissected hilly areas in the central and northern part of the TDA to high mountains in the extreme north. Over much of the TDA, therefore, the scenery is both varied and often beautiful and spectacular, all of which is appealing to residents and tourists alike, especially those that like nature and outdoor pursuits, such as trekking, hiking, mountaineering and other adventurous activities.

Rivers, waterfalls and lakes
The TDA is bissected and drained by several large rivers and a number of smaller but no less spectacular rivers. The large Arun Nadi (Arun River) flows southwards from Tibet and becomes the larger Saptakoshi Nadi (Koshi River) which flows further southwards past the huge Koshi Barrage and into northern India. The Tamar Khola (Tomar River) flows westwards from far-eastern Nepal into the Arun River, while the Sunkoshi Nadi (Sunkoshi River) flows into the Arun River from the west. These three largest rivers meet at "Three Rivers", on the boundary between Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts. A number of smaller rivers also flow into the Arun and Koshi Rivers. In addition to being spectacular in their own right, most of these rivers obviously have an attraction for water-based activities.

Waterfalls are common throughout the central and northern parts of the TDA, with some (eg. Namaste Jharna north of Bhedetar) being particularly popular with visitors and tourists. There are also a number of attractive natural lakes, such as Rani Lake in Dhankuta District, Sado Pokhari and a number of similar lakes in eastern Sankhuwasabha District and Kalo Pokhari in MBNP. In general, though, remoteness and lack of easy access to many of these lakes limits the ability of all but the most determined of visitors and tourists from visiting them.

Climate
Five climate zones are found in the TDA, these being: 1) tropical (split into lower tropical below 300 m and upper tropical from 300-1,000 m); 2) sub-tropical (1,000-2,000 m); 3) temperate (2,000-3,000 m); 4) subalpine (3,000-4,000 m); and 5) alpine (above 4,000 m). Much of the Terai region in the TDA, as is the northern part of India, falls within the lower tropical climate zone and is characterised by often being hot and humid, especially during the summer months and the monsoon season. The hilly regions north of Dharan, however, lie above 1,000 m and enjoy a cooler and less humid climate characterised by lower temperatures and frequent hill and valley mists.

Together with the deeply dissected valleys and associated vegetation and scattered farmland, this much more pleasant climate is certainly an attraction to Nepali, Indian and other visitors and tourists living in the lowlands or passing through.

Vegetation and flora
With an altitudinal range of more than 8,000 m, it is not surprising that the vegetation and flora within the TDA is very diverse. The vegetation is closely associated with the three landforms in the TDA (Terai, hill and mountain) and the five climate zones. A variety of biomes exist, ranging from tropical savannas in the Terai, to sub-tropical broadleaf and coniferous forests in the hills, to temperate broadleaf and coniferous forests on the slopes of the Himalayas, to montane grasslands and shrub lands and finally to rock and ice at the highest altitudes.

With the variety of biomes, there is clearly a diverse range and number of plant species living in the TDA. Rhododendron species are particularly abundant and noticeable in the hilly regions and no fewer than 28 of the 32 species of rhododendrons found in Nepal have been recorded in the TDA. When in flower (April-May), these are particularly popular with visitors and tourists, especially in the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) forests in the far-eastern part of the TDA in Terhathum and Taplejung Districts. Other types of plants are also abundant and diverse, especially orchids and bamboos.

Fauna

As with the vegetation and also influenced by landforms and climate zones, the fauna within the TDA is also diverse. Some of the large species of mammals, such as rhinoceros and tiger, no longer live naturally in the TDA, but most of the smaller and arguably less charismatic species still exist in pockets in both the lowland and highland areas of the TDA. Most notable among them include the Asiatic elephant, wild water buffalo, spotted deer, hog deer, smooth-coated otter, golden jackal, snow leopard, red panda, wild boar, musk deer, grey langur, Assam macaque and Ganges river dolphin.

Birdlife in the TDA is prolific with upwards of 500 species of birds being found. These include resident and migratory birds and most can be seen in one or both of the TDA's protected areas, as well as on the grasslands and forested areas throughout the region. A number of the species are endemic to the area, while others are considered very rare. Birdwatching is particularly popular amongst visitors.

The reptile and amphibian fauna is also very abundant and includes a large number of different snake, lizard, turtle, gharial, crocodile and frog species. Although not nearly as obvious as birds and mammals, these animals are also of some interest to visitors. Fish species are also abundant with, for instance, more than 200 species being found in and around the Koshi River.

The insect fauna is also very diverse with butterflies being particular abundant and visible. More than 640 species of butterfly have so far been found in Nepal, many of which occur in the TDA. Although found throughout the year, the best months to see them are from March to October.

Most wildlife species of interest to visitors and tourists can be seen in the TDA's two state-level protected areas (see below) and in many of the grassland and forested areas in the region.

Protected areas

Two state protected areas are located in the TDA, both falling under the jurisdiction of the DNPWC. These are:

1. **Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR)** – located in the south-western corner of the TDA, this Reserve is 176 km^2 in size (plus 173.5 km^2 of buzzer zone) and lies at an altitude of between 75-81 m above mean sea level. KTWR is located astride the Koshi River north of the Koshi Barrage and comprises a wide and open flood plain with associated riparian vegetation, much of the latter resulting from the construction in the 1960s of a dyke and groynes along the river's eastern banks. The Reserve lies within to the east Sunsari District in the TDA and to the west Saptari District and was gazetted in 1976 to preserve habitat for the only remaining population in Nepal of wild buffalo or *Arna* (*Bubalus arnee*). In addition to several elephant as well as wild boar, spotted deer, hog deer and a number of other mammal species, the Reserve also supports more than 485 species of birds and is a world-renowned Ramsar site. It also contains more than 200 species of fish.

2. **Makalu Barun National Park (MBNP)** – located in the northern part of the TDA, this Park is 1,500 km^2 in size (plus 830 km^2 of buffer zone) and lies between altitudes of 344 and 8,485 m (Mt. Makalu). MBNP comprises mainly steep hills and deeply-dissected valleys and rugged mountainous terrain typical of the Himalayan mountain range. The Park, which falls within Sankhuwasabha District west of the Arun River and in Solukhumbu District in the west, was established in 1992. In addition to snow leopard, red panda, musk deer, wild boar and other mammal species, the park contains 440 species of birds, 25 species of rhododendron, 47 types of orchids and 56 rare plants, as well as 315 species of butterflies. There are also a number of religious sites in the form of small temples, *gumbas* and other sacred sites.

There are also several community-protected forested areas within the TDA, including Ramdhuni and the forested areas to the south of Dharan and Panchakanya Natural Park adjacent to Dharan, all examples in Sunsari District.

2.1.2   Anthropogenic resource base for tourism

The anthropogenic or man-made resource base for the TDA broadly falls into the following main categories, some of which clearly overlap:

Religious resources
Approximately 81% of Nepali citizens are Hindu, 9% Buddhist, 4.5% Muslim and the 5% or so being made up of Kirats, Christians and others. Within the TDA, therefore, there is a range of religions that form the basis of what could be called religious or pilgrimage tourism.

The most predominant form of religious tourism relates to Hinduism and there is a large number of religious buildings and sites within the TDA to which tens of thousands of Hindu pilgrims visit every year. Some of these sites are much more popular than others, especially if they are accessible by road. Examples include the Barahachhetra Temple complex on the eastern bank of the Koshi River, the much smaller Ramdhuni Temple 20 or so km to the south and Suddha Buddha to the north-east of Dharan. Elsewhere within the TDA, there are many other smaller Hindu temples, shrines and pilgrimage sites. Depending on their accessibility, these are also visited by pilgrims and other tourists.

In addition to the Hindu religious and pilgrimage sites, there are also a number of Buddhist sites within the TDA, especially in the more mountainous areas. These comprise a mix of *gumbas* and *stupas* and are also visited by pilgrims and tourists wherever they are accessible.

Buildings and architectural resources
In addition to the many and various religious buildings many of which have distinct architectural styles, the local architecture found in the TDA is quite distinct. Depending on where they are located, traditional buildings in the form of houses, stalls, barns, grain stores, hay stacks, etc. are constructed of either wood or stone and usually roofed with thatch or tiles. Combined with local landscapes, especially hillside and river valley paddy fields, these are very attractive.

Nowadays, unfortunately, concrete walls and floors, reinforcing steel and corrugated iron for roofing is often employed, most likely because it is now easier and arguably cheaper that traditional construction materials and may last longer. Cities and towns in the TDA, such as Biratnagar, Itahari and even Dharan, now look much like any other town or city within Nepal or wider afield, although there are fortunately some buildings that still retain traditional styles and building materials.

Some settlements, Khandbari for example, still have large numbers of old and traditional buildings, many of which are lined up along attractive streets and are of appeal to tourists. In Khandbari and in many other towns, however, large numbers of these types of building seem to have been removed and replaced with more modern and ubiquitous types of buildings. Concrete and glass, often combined with bright colours, are seemingly becoming the norm and the trend is continuing almost unabated and without much concern being shown by local authorities and residents.

This drive towards modernisation is a great pity as the local architecture is certainly a valuable asset and resource for tourism and there is a real danger that parts of the TDA will simply begin to look like any other place in Nepal or South East Asia and their appeal to tourists and even residents will diminish and disappear altogether. Retaining and promoting traditional architecture should become a priority within the TDA, otherwise one of the region's unique tourism assets and draws for tourists will be lost.

Man-made landscapes
Man has been living in the TDA for thousands of years and during that time has done much to alter the landscape, especially through the cultivation of land. With the TDA consisting of both very steep hillsides and more level lands along river banks and in the lowlands and with a variety of crops being grown, a range of man-made landscapes has been formed. In their own way, these are to a greater or lesser extent appealing to visitors and tourists.

In the Terai, for instance, where cropping and the raising of livestock, mainly cattle, are predominant, land which has not been settled on is devoted almost entirely to agriculture. Large and small fields exist, many being separated by a network of irrigation and drainage channels. Together with the local architectural style, many of these agricultural lands are quite attractive, both to Nepali residents and tourists and foreign visitors. In the west of Terai region within the TDA, the floodplain of the Koshi River also has great appeal. Although a natural feature, the floodplain has been extensively modified over the years through the building of the dyke road along the eastern bank of the river, the construction of the Koshi Barrage and the creation of numerous fishponds. Forests along the riverbank have also established themselves.

In the hilly areas and above river banks, paddy fields for growing barley, rice and other crops are quite commonplace and often very attractive, particularly when they are combined with local architecture consisting of traditional wooden houses, grain silos, hay stacks, etc. Elsewhere, tea estates in the region provide a different form of scenery, again popular with many visitors, Nepali and foreigner alike.

In the future, the construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam and the water body that it will create will result in another manmade landscape (waterscape) that is likely to be attractive to visitors and tourists.

Arts, crafts and local produce

Although perhaps not renowned amongst tourists for any unique forms of art of craft, the TDA certainly produces a range of goods that is or could be sold to tourists and retail outlets inside and outside of the region. Woven textiles, for example, are made by women in many villages and towns and sold at local markets and through retail outlets in the towns and cities. Jewellery made from gold, *rudraksha* beads, etc. is also made in the region, as are a range of other items. Sold alongside locally-made goods, however, is a lot of material that has been imported from India and China and elsewhere from the Far East.

Arts and craft shops do exist in the main urban settlements, catering primarily for the Indian market, but further north in Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts where tourism is not well-developed the sale of such items is not that common. The problem that many would-be producers face in these areas is the distribution of their products and access to markets. These are both severely hampered by problems of remoteness and inaccessibility and sufficient numbers of tourists.

Other products made and sold locally include the millet-based alcoholic beverage *tongba*, a traditional and indigenous drink of the Limbu people of eastern Nepal that is offered to guests as a sign of respect. Hile in Dhankuta District is one of the production centres for this product. Locally-made honey is also produced in the TDA.

In addition to the arts and crafts and agricultural products, local cuisine can also be considered as a resource for tourism, especially in the more inaccessible and remote areas of the region, but also in the bigger towns and cities. As with local architecture, it is hoped that such foods won't be entirely superseded by chain fast-food outlets and restaurants as has been the case and continues to be the case in many parts of Nepal and elsewhere in the world.

Intangible resources

Intangible resources include those aspects of life in the TDA that could appeal to visitors and tourists. They include, for instance, cultural traditions, festivals, music, dance, storytelling, lifestyle, meditation, well-being, health, herbal remedies, etc. Some of these are already being exploited for tourism purposes (eg. festivals, health tourism, retreats, etc.), but there is certainly more that could be done to broaden and enhance the experience of tourists visiting the TDA.

2.1.3   Tourism infrastructure

The tourism infrastructure or products in the TDA can be grouped into the following main categories, some of which again can clearly overlap:

Overnight accommodation facilities

Overnight accommodation facilities include hotels, resorts, guesthouses, hostels, homestays, tented camps and campsites. They include establishments where domestic and foreign tourists, both recreational and business, stay at least one night during their visits. All of these are found within the TDA, though the price range and quality varies considerably from one product to another.

Most of the larger and better quality hotels and resorts are found in Biratnagar, Itahari and Dharan, with several also being located in and around Hile. These hotels range from 4-star, especially in Biratnagar, and below. A small up-market tented camp is also found adjacent to KTWR.

Many more middle- and low-cost hotels are also found in the above cities and towns, as well as in Inaruwa, Bhedetar, Dhankuta, Basantapur, Tumlingtar and Khandbari. Very low-cost hotels can be found almost everywhere. Guesthouses also exist in some of these and other locations.

In general, these hotels cater primarily for Nepali and Indian tourists, but also for third-country visitors, all either on holiday, or visiting friends or relatives, or on business trips.

In some areas, such as in Biratnagar, Bhedetar, Hile, Tumlingtar and Khandbari, new hotels are being built or existing ones being extended to cater for increasing or a perceived increase in numbers of visitors.

The concept of homestays, in which private individuals and families welcome paying guests into their homes, has been around for a while and appears to be increasing in popularity. Areas where homestays are currently fairly well-established include around Namje near Bhedetar, along the TMJ and in several other locations in the TDA, but especially in very rural areas, such as the MBNP buffer zone. One or two homestays also exist adjacent to KTWR. Homestays represent an ideal portal for local residents to enter the tourism sector with generally minimal outlay.

Campsites are also available, especially in the northern part of the TDA, but these are generally very low-key and largely unserviced sites that rely on guests or trekking/mountaineering groups to bring their own tents and other equipment.

Restaurants, cafes and bars

Most settlements in the TDA, big or small, have a range of eating and drinking establishments, some obviously being linked to hotels and resorts. As with overnight facilities, restaurants, cafes and bars range enormously in size, price range and quality and together cater for all markets. The facilities include established restaurant chains and takeaway outlets, local eating houses, coffee/tea houses, bars and numerous small roadside kiosks. Customers would range from Nepali residents, workers and domestic tourists to Indian and third-country visitors. With the availability of alcohol and drinking in public being restricted across the border in India, many of these establishments are likely to be fairly popular with Indian visitors.

Entertainment facilities
All of the larger settlements have a range of entertainment facilities, such as nightclubs, cinemas, casinos and music/stage theatres. The price range and standard of the facilities vary considerably and would likely only be popular with some tourist market segments.

Outdoor recreational areas
With the possible exception of playing fields for sports, such as football, netball, basketball, golf and cricket, outdoor recreational facilities in the TDA are generally far and few between and those that do exist are of varying quality. There are a number of public parks in the larger cities, such as in Dharan and also in Bhedetar, as well as a couple of formal viewing points at strategic locations, perhaps the most well-known being Charles' Tower above Bhedetar. Overall, however, outdoor recreation for local residents, let alone for tourists, is very poorly provided for in the TDA and formal public recreational facilities are rare.

Trails
Although the southern and much of the central parts of the TDA are relatively easy to reach by vehicle or are in close proximity to a road or track, there are still many areas, such as in the northern part, that can only be reached on foot, and sometimes only after several days' walk. In the north, such as in Sankhuwasabha District, trails have existed for generations, connecting hill and mountain communities. Many have now been adopted by trekkers, mountaineers and mountain-bikers for outdoor recreational purposes and form part of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT).

The GHT, which roughly follows two east-west interconnected routes (the High Route in the north and the Cultural Route in the south), is a network of trails that spans the hilly and mountainous areas of Nepal and beyond. Within the TDA, the GHT connects the Kanchenjunga region to the east with Sagarmatha and Everest to the west. Although not as popular as other sections of the GHT, the Makalu Barun section of the GHT does receive upwards of 1,500 visitors a year. The TMJ region to the east of the TDA also attracts trekkers moving between Dhankuta District and Kanchenjunga and visitors wishing to see the rhododendron forests in the area.

By and large, all of the trails are quite passable on foot, though many of the routes could be described as being arduous. Where the trails cross rivers and streams footbridges have been built, many of them suspended. Beyond this, very little other infrastructure exists on the trails, including signage.

Several trails also exist in the hilly areas in the central part of the TDA in Dhankuta District. Many of these have also existed for generations with some, such as the Salt Trail near Bhedetar, representing important and now bygone trading routes.

Some trails, such as the short one leading to the beautiful Namaste Jharna (Waterfall) north of Bhedetar, have recently been upgraded and are proving very popular with Nepali residents from all over the country and with Indian and some third-country visitors.

2.1.4   Tourism support infrastructure

The tourism sector within the TDA is supported by other forms of infrastructure, most of which were primarily intended for mainly community and socio-economic development purposes. Although much of this infrastructure was not specifically intended to serve the tourism sector, it certainly contributes to it. In addition to allowing the many and varied natural and anthropogenic tourism resources to be exploited, tourism support infrastructure provides essential support to the tourism- and hospitality-related infrastructures/products, activities and services that exist or which may be developed in the future within the TDA. Tourism support infrastructure can be grouped into the following main categories:

Roads and bridges
The southern and to a less extent the central parts of the TDA are generally well-served by roads and bridges, but the north has few roads and bridges.

Sunsari District is crossed in an east-west direction by the Mahendra Highway (AH2) which connects Kathmandu and all points to the west of the TDA with Kakarbhitta and the Indian border to the east. Within the same district, the H08 highway runs in a north-south direction and connects Biratnagar and northern India in the south with Dharan and then Dhankuta further to the north. Along much of its length, this road is referred to as the Koshi Highway. This road will eventually connect with Kimathangka on the Nepal-Tibet border in the Arun River valley to create a trans-Nepal road connecting China with India. Within the well-populated Sunsari District, there are numerous roads leading off these highways and serving the many settlements in the rural areas. The majority of these roads are asphalt surfaced and in good condition.

Within Dhankuta District, the hilly terrain means that fewer roads exist. The road from Bhedetar to Dhankuta and Hile is tarred and in good condition. Beyond Hile, main roads connect with Basantapur to the east in Terhathum District and Deurali and with the Arun River valley and onwards to Bhojpur to the north-west and up the Arun River valley towards Tumlingtar. The road to Basantapur is currently not in a particularly bad condition, but does need improvement. Beyond Deurali towards Chainpur and the Sankhuwasabha District, the road is being maintained and upgraded under an ADB-funded road improvement protected, but in parts is in very bad condition, made worse by the rains and mists that occur at the high altitudes. The road to the Arun River is currently unsurfaced and in many places in poor condition.

Other than the tarred main road from Chainpur to Tumlingtar and then Khandbari, roads within Sankhuwasabha District are far and few between and generally in quite poor condition. The Koshi Highway presently extends as far as Num and Num Bazar on the east bank of the Arun River. Much of this road, however, is in very poor state, although sections of it are being upgraded. In the future, the Koshi Highway will cross the Arun River just below the still-to-be-constructed Arun-3 HEP dam and follow the river valley northwards to Kimathangka on the Tibet border. The alignment of this road has already been determined and some sections have been laid out, but much work has still to be done.

The completion of the Koshi Highway will have significant impact on the social and economic development of this District as well as on the tourism sector and business and employment opportunities in the area and the TDA as a whole.

Throughout the TDA, but especially in the hilly and mountainous areas, a combination of heavy rains and unstable rock and unstable soil strata mean that small landslips and larger landslides are a constant problem. Also, the rain, heat and often heavy traffic lead to fairly rapid deterioration in road surfaces. Travelling within these areas, therefore, often requires using 4x4 vehicles and tractors, as well as motorcycles.

Airports and airstrips

The TDA has two airports, both of which provide access to the TDA for residents, tourists and businessmen. They are:

1. **Biratnagar Airport** – located at an altitude of 72 m on the north-western outskirts of Biratnagar approximately 8 km from the Indian border. Currently Nepal's second-largest airport and slated to become at some time an international airport, the airport handles domestic flights to and from Kathmandu and Tumlingtar, but also flights between Biratnagar and Bhojpur, Lamidanda and Taplejung. It has an asphalt runway 1,505 m long and 30 m wide and has the ability to operate 24 hours a day.

2. **Tumlingtar Airport** – located at an altitude of 518 m on the east bank of the Arun River approximately 10 km from Khandbari in Sankhuwasabha District. The airport handles domestic flights between Kathmandu and Biratnagar and has a runway 1,219 m long and 30 m wide. The airport does not enjoy any advanced navigation and landing equipment and is often closed to traffic due to inclement weather.

Two other airports, or airstrips, are found in close proximity to the TDA, but neither plays a significant role in tourism in the TDA. They are Bhojpur Airport, located 20 km to the west of the Arun River and with a 533-m runway, and Taplejung (Suketar) Airport, located to the east of the TDA and only suitable for STOL, or short take-off and landing, aircraft. Both airports/airstrips handle domestic flights between Kathmandu and Biratnagar, but both are very susceptible to inclement weather and are frequently closed

Electricity supply

Mains electricity is found in many areas within the TDA, especially so in the much more populated and developed Sunsari District and to a lesser extent in Dhankuta District. Many people, however, especially those in the more rural areas, also possess solar power and to some extent diesel/petrol generators to use as an alternative to mains electricity or as a standby when mains electricity power-cuts occur.

In Sankhuwasabha District, mains electricity supply is much less widespread and restricted largely to the main settlements, such as Khandbari, Tumlingtar and Chainpur and those smaller settlements that have been fortunate enough to be connected. In this district, residents rely much more on small micro-hydro plants, solar power and generators.

Once the Arun-3 HEP dam just north of Num has been constructed and electricity is being generated, mains electricity will become much more accessible and available to communities living in this remote part of the country. This will likely provide significant benefits to communities and to socio-economic development in the area. The tourism sector is also likely to benefit from this major infrastructural development and the long-term service it will provide.

Water supply and sanitation
According to 2011 data from the Ministry of Urban Development, coverage of water supply (ie. number of people served, rather than geographical area) for Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts was, respectively, 77.5%, 76.4% and 80.3%. This implies that the provision of water through supply systems (pipelines, pipes, taps, protected wells, etc.) within the TDA is fairly good, particularly in urbanised areas where most people live, although clearly there is still much to be done to ensure that everyone has access to clean water, especially those living in rural and remote areas. In some hilly areas, such as around Hile and Dhankuta, water is actually in short supply and any tourism development that takes place in such areas must take into account this shortage.

Ministry of Urban Development figures for the coverage of sanitation are not so good. In 2011, the same three districts within the TDA saw the provision of sewerage systems and sewage treatment covering, respectively, 51.3%, 48.6% and 53.4% of residents in the districts. This clearly implies that around half of the households and businesses within the TDA are still not connected to a sanitary system, most likely in the rural and remote areas away from urbanised centres, and need to rely on much less hygienic and efficient pit toilets or indeed open ground.

The shortfall in water supply systems within the TDA is likely to be partly addressed through the use of the many natural springs that exist and wells that have been dug and it is probable that many of these water sources have been in use for generations. Streams and rivers are also likely to be used as a source of water, especially in the more remote areas. Importantly, the quality of the water obtained from springs, wells and other sources, especially if they are not suitably protected or maintained, is of real concern. Nowhere, other than perhaps in well-established urban areas, can one be truly sure that the water being used is free of any waterborne health risks.

From a tourism perspective, the availability of safe drinking and washing water and hygienic toilets is of major concern to tourists and visitors. Although bottled water is often used by tourists, there is still always the concern that food has been prepared or cooked or dishes and cutlery washed using unsafe water and that contamination is a common problem, especially in areas where sanitation is poor.

Communications
Communications coverage within the TDA overall is fairly good. The Nepal Telecom Communication (NTC) landline telephonic system is common throughout the region, although clearly fewer households and businesses benefit from it in the more rural or remote areas, especially in Sankhuwasabha District and parts of Dhankuta District.

As far as mobile telephone systems are concerned, most residents have access to one or more mobile networks with Ncell being the most commonly used. Even in the rural and remote areas Sankhuwasabha District, cell-phones and smartphones are quite common, but will work only where the network signals can be picked up. Satellite phones are quite frequently used in the most remote areas, such as in MBNP.

Access to the Internet within the TDA is less common but improving all the time. Where subscribers are connected to NTC landline telephone systems and have access to asymmetric digital subscriber lines (ADSL), using the Internet is usually not a problem, but this is normally only in urbanised areas. Internet access is also available through smartphones, providing users are able to connect to the Internet using Wi-Fi technology.

From a tourism perspective, most tourists and visitors nowadays expect to have access to the Internet using Wi-Fi technology through smartphones, iPads and laptops. Providing they possess the right technology, this is possible over much of the TDA, except in the northern part around Makalu Barun and other remote areas where Wi-Fi currently doesn't exist.

Tourism information outlets
Tourism-related information in the form of brochures, pamphlets, maps, booklets, postcards, etc. is available to tourists and other visitors to the TDA but very much on an *ad hoc* and uncoordinated basis. Some of the bigger hotels have racks with varying amounts of promotional material in them and there are several shops in urban areas and some smaller settlements that sell a variety of maps. As far as can be ascertained, however, there are no tourism information offices within the TDA dedicated specifically to serving tourists and other visitors.

It could be argued that in the age of the Internet such outlets are not necessary as much information is now available on the World Wide Web. However, for various reasons not everyone has access to the Internet whilst in Nepal,

especially many visitors from India, and simply having access to the Internet does not necessarily mean that the information one requires can be found.

A well-sited tourism information office or centre in one or more of the TDA's tourism hubs or crossroads, such as presently exist in Itahari, Dharan and possibly Hile, would certainly provide a useful service to tourists and visitors, especially if the provision of information goes hand-in-hand with other services, such as recharging facilities, toilets, Internet access, First Aid, etc.

Signage
Signage certainly exists within the TDA, but very little of it is tourism-related. Directional signs along roadsides can be found, but these are generally directions to nearest cities or towns or larger settlements. With the exception of advertising signs to some hotels or resorts or generally well known destinations of interest, very few signs are to tourist attractions or points of interest to tourists. Unless one knows where one's going, or is in the company of someone who does (eg. tour guide, taxi driver, local resident, etc.), then it is very easy for independently travelling tourists to get lost without having to continually ask people for directions.

Most of the tourism-related signage that does exist is readable only by those who understand Nepali or Hindustani – very few are in English. English is a language that most visitors from the West can understand as do many from the East, but in the future Chinese may need to be a language that is included on signage, especially when the Koshi Highway from Tibet has been opened.

2.1.5   Tourism activities and services

A range of activities and services are available to tourists and visitors to the TDA. These can be grouped into the following main categories:

Tourism activities
Visitors and tourists to the TDA can presently indulge in a variety of different outdoor and indoor pursuits and activities. These include but are not restricted to:

- **Trekking, mountaineering and hiking** – trekking is done mostly in the hilly areas in Sankhuwasabha District and the mountainous areas in and around MBNP, with mountaineering expeditions being conducted primarily to Mt Makalu. Some hiking is done in Dhankuta District, particularly on the various trails around Hile, but is presently not that common on the rather disconnected trail system that exists there.
- **Mountain-biking and cycling** – although quite popular in other parts of Nepal, recreational bikers and cyclists are not that abundant in the TDA. Most visit and ride around Sunsari District with some travelling up to Hile and occasionally beyond. Some particularly adventurous enthusiasts bike along the trails in Sankhuwasabha District, either into the Makalu Barun area or towards the rhododendron forests and Taplejung District to the east.
- **Paragliding** – this is a fairly popular activity in the TDA amongst Nepali residents and visitors and Indian tourists and is usually done from the hilltops to the north of Dharan. From here paragliders can use the updrafts of warm air coming off of the Terai. There is talk about paragliding in the upper reaches of the Arun River around Tumlingtar, but it is somehow doubtful that air currents there are ideal. There are 70 paragliding companies currently operating in Nepal, so there is no shortage of experience in the country.
- **Rafting, canoeing and pleasure boating** – commonly undertaken on the Tomar River from either up in Taplejung District or from just below the main road bridge at Mulghat, rafting groups travel there from Dharan and then raft down the Tomar River to its junction with the Koshi River and on to Barahachhetra from where the rafters and support teams travel back by road to Dharan. Some rafting is done on other stretches of the Arun Rive. A certain amount of white-water canoeing is done on the same stretches of river. Down towards Koshi Tappu, rafting and canoeing also takes place. A pleasure boat operates on the Koshi River from Barahachhetra.
- **Rock-climbing** – some areas in Dhankuta District are used for rock-climbing, but most likely only by a few local enthusiasts.
- **Wildlife and bird-watching** – both KTWR and MBNP are excellent areas for wildlife and bird-watching with bird watching also being possible over much of the TDA. Butterfly enthusiasts also visit the area, in particular the many forests that occur in the region.
- **Rhododendron viewing** – the Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) forests in the far-eastern part of the TDA in Terhathum and Taplejung Districts and along the Milke Danda Trail in Sankhuwasabha District are especially popular with tourists and visitors wishing to see upwards of 30 species of rhododendrons in flower, especially during April and May.

- ➢ **Pilgrimages** – many visitors, both from Nepal and especially from India, undertake pilgrimages to Hindu and Buddhist religious sites within the TDA. These pilgrimage tours can take in several of the most important and a number of the less important sites.
- ➢ **Guided tours** – undertaken usually by bus or in minibuses, groups of visitors from Nepal and India travel to a variety of tourist attractions and destinations within the TDA, in particularly in Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts. These tours are usually accompanied by tour guides who may also double as vehicle drivers.
- ➢ **Outdoor recreation** – site-seeing visits or time spent relaxing in the open are also common in the TDA, especially for the more urban residents. Unfortunately, outdoor recreational facilities are generally far and few between and those that exists are not well-appointed.
- ➢ **Entertainment** – tourists and visitors do attend cinemas and musical and theatrical events, but these are primarily within the urban areas.
- ➢ **Business and MICE tourism** – many visitors to the TDA are in the region on business or company-related events. Although business or MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions/events) may be the primary reason for them being there, and providing time allows, a number will also undoubtedly take advantage of tourism-related activities that appeal to them.
- ➢ **Festivals and events** – a number of festivals take place at various locations in the TDA, both in the larger urban areas such as Dharan, but also in the smaller towns and settlements, such as Dhankuta and Khandbari. These festivals, which are an intangible form of tourist attraction, may be linked to religious beliefs, or relate to culture, traditions, dance, music and the holding of busy and colourful local markets.
- ➢ **Health and well-being** – activities relating to retreats, meditation and different forms of health or well-being tourism are also undertaken in the TDA. Dharan is particularly well-known amongst Nepali and Indian visitors for health tourism linked to the health facilities that exist there.

Tour and trekking operators

Although a number of trekking tours and mountaineering expeditions take place in the TDA during any one year, the great majority of them are organised through tour and mountaineering operators based outside of the region. According to TAAN, a total of 31 trekking companies run tours in the TDA, some being much more active than others. Virtually all of these companies operate from Kathmandu and very few, if any, companies operate out of offices in Biratnagar or other cities and towns in the TDA. In general, most of the trekking business in the TDA is handled by half-a-dozen or so companies.

Tour and mountaineering groups normally fly into Biratnagar or Tumlingtar, with very few travelling to the TDA by road. Many groups arriving in Tumlingtar are transported to Murmidanda by helicopter in order to cut down on the amount of time spent trekking to MBNP.

River-rafting tours in the TDA are normally organised and run by rafting companies based in Dharan and generally use the Tomar River, entering the river either in Taplejung District for longer river expeditions, or near Mulghat for shorter trips westwards to the Koshi River.

Porters

Most of the trekking and mountaineering tours and expeditions to the TDA use porters. With the general lack of labour in the Sankhuwasabha District, however, locally-hired porters are actually in short supply and most operators employ porters from outside of the district or bring them in from Kathmandu or elsewhere.

With the northern part of the TDA now a non-restricted area, visitors are able to trek within it without needing special permits, other than an entrance permit for MBNP itself. This means that trekkers can enter the area independently and without the need to go through trekking operators. Most of such trekkers would need the services of one or more porters and they try to obtain these locally. Again with the general shortage of labour in the area, brought about by the mass migration of young workers to the Middle East, this is not always easy and willing porters may have to be recruited and walk in from settlements far from the trek starting points.

Tour guides

With most trekking and mountaineering expeditions and other organised tours from Kathmandu, tour guides are included in the group. These are either full-time members of staff of the various operating companies, or are hired for each trip. Most are qualified and experienced guides and provide good service.

Freelance guides are frequently hired by independent travellers visiting both urban and rural locations with many also acting as chauffeurs. This is quite common in cities such as Itahari and Dharan where electric-powered three-wheeled *tuktuks* are commonly used. Although the majority of these guides are knowledgeable to a greater or lesser extent, it is likely that many are not registered and the quality of service will vary considerably.

Travel agencies

Travel agencies are common in the main urban areas within the TDA, such as Biratnagar, Itahari and Dharan. Many of them, however, are low key operations that sell to local residents and incoming visitors and tourists alike day excursions to various tourist attractions within the TDA, primarily within Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts. The majority of them, however, also sell tours to other parts of Nepal and abroad.

Very few travel agencies in these cities are members of the Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA). Of the 21 companies currently registered as members of the Eastern Regional Association branch of NATTA, 16 are located in Kakarbhitta in Jhapa District or in Illam District, three in Janakpur to the west of the TDA and only two in Biratnagar. This strongly suggests that the tour agencies are focussed on the Indian market and Indian tourists travelling into Nepal by road from Sikkim.

By comparison, the western regional branch of NATTA centred around Pokhara currently has 134 registered members, while the headquarters branch centred in Kathmandu has 457 members. The far-western branch of NATTA, which covers a region similar to eastern Nepal that is not well-developed for tourism, has 15 current members.

Airlines

There are currently 17 domestic airline companies in Nepal. At present, Biratnagar Airport handles flights from five domestic airlines. Buddha Air, Sita Air and Yeti Airlines handle a number of daily flights to and from Kathmandu, while Gorkha Airlines and Nepal Airlines run flights between Biratnagar and Tumlingtar in Sankhuwasabha District, Bhojpur, Lamidanda and Thamkharka to the west of the TDA and Taplejung/Suketar to the east.

Tumlingtar Airport handles flights from six domestic airlines, namely Buddha Air, Gorkha Airlines, Nepal Airlines, Sita Air, Tara Air and Yeti Airlines. All six fly to and from Kathmandu, usually on a daily basis, while Buddha Air, Gorkha Airlines and Nepal Airlines run flights between Tumlingtar and Biratnagar.

Some tour/trekking operators run helicopters from Tumlingtar to Murmidanda on the boundary of MBNP, primarily to carry trekkers and support teams, including porters, directly to the park in order to avoid several days trekking up the Arun River valley.

Car-hire companies

There are several car-hire companies operating in the TDA, but primarily in the main urban centres such as Biratnagar and Dharan. These include some of the larger companies, such as Avis and Hertz, both of which have offices at Biratnagar Airport. In general, cars, small minibuses and 4x4 vehicles are rented primarily by independent travellers who do not use tour operators or travel on package tours.

Mountain-bike/cycle-hire

The hiring of mountain-bikes and cycles within the TDA is not common, largely because most cyclists use their own bicycles or bring in bikes they have hired elsewhere in Nepal, such as in Kathmandu or Pokhara. It is likely, however, that some hotels and resorts rent out cycles for short periods of time to their guests – some hotels who don't presently do so are certainly considering it. As tourism develops in the region and trails and routes are created, the practice of hiring out mountain-bikes and cycles may increase.

2.1.6   Tourism stakeholders and players

Tourism within the TDA is a multi-sectoral industry that involves, to a greater or lesser extent, the current or future participation of a range and number of stakeholders and players at international, national, regional/district and local levels. A list of the most pertinent ones is given below. Without doubt, however, other players which have links to the tourism sector to greater or lesser extents also exist.

Stakeholder or player	
NATIONAL LEVEL	
State bodies	
Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA)	Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) (under MoFSC)
Department of Tourism (DoT) (under MoCTCA)	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD)
Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) (under MoCTCA)	Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport (MoPIT)
Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) (under MoCTCA)	Department of Roads (DoR) (under MoPIT)
Department of Archaeology (DoA) (under MoCTCA)	Investment Board of Nepal (IBN)
Mountain Academy Nepal (MAN) (under MoCTCA)	Department of Immigration (DoI) (under Ministry of Home Affairs)
Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM) (under MoCTCA)	Nepal Police (under Ministry of Home Affairs)
Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC)	Nepalese Army
Non-state bodies	
Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN)	Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO)
Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI)	Nepal Cycling Association (NCA)
Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN)	Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA)
National Tourism Foundation (NTF)	Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN)
Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA)	Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (TAAN)
REGIONAL/DISTRICT LEVEL	
State bodies	
Department of Tourism (DoT)	Dhankuta District Development Committee
Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation	Sankhuwasabha District Development Committee
Sunsari District Development Committee	Birat Area Tourism Promotion Development Committee
Non-state bodies	
Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee	Sankhuwasabha Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center
Dharan Aadarsha Tourism and Hotel Management (DATHM)	SJVN Arun-3 Power Development Company Pvt. Ltd (SAPDC)
Hotel Association of Dhankuta	Sunsari Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Hotel Association of Sunsari/Dharan	Sunsari Tourism Development Committee
LOCAL LEVEL	
State bodies	
Selected VDCs in Sunsari District	Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC)
Selected VDCs in Dhankuta District	Pakhribas Agricultural Research Station (under NARC)
Selected VDCs in Sankhuwasabha District	Biratnagar Airport (under MoCTCA)
Selected VDCs in Terhathum District	Tumlingtar Airport (under MoCTCA)
Selected VDCs in Bhojpur District	
Non-state bodies	
Tour operators	Tea estate companies
Travel agents	Local community groups (women's, conservation, youth, etc.)
Hotel owners	Porters
Homestay owners	Muleteers
Custodians of religious sites	Tourism/hospitality training institutions
INTERNATIONAL LEVEL	
Donor agencies (eg. DfID/UKAID, EU, GIZ, SDC, SNV, USAID)	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
International Financing Institutions (IFIs) (eg. WB/IFC, ADB)	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
International NGOs and foundations (eg. UNDP, WWF, Kandoori)	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT)

2.2   Summary of tourism market analysis

2.2.1   Tourism statistics and profiles

Brief accounts of overall tourism statistics for Nepal and the Eastern Nepal TDA and the forms of tourism presently being practised in the region are given below.

Nepal
According to the *Nepal Tourism Statistics 2015*, Nepal received a total of 538,970 visitors during 2015[2]. This figure is 32% down on the figure for 2014, mainly as a consequence of the earthquakes that hit central Nepal in April/May 2015. The total visitor figures for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 were, respectively, 803,092, 797,616 and 790,118. Over this 3-year period visitor numbers fell by an unremarkable 1.6%. The year 2015 should therefore not be considered as a 'normal' year.

Of the total number of foreign visitors, 13.9% came from India (by air), while 86.1% originated from third countries (ie. all countries except Nepal and India). The top ten countries of origin were India (13.9%), China (12.4%), USA (10.0%), Sri Lanka (8.2%), Thailand (5.7%), UK (5.5%), Australia (3.5%), Japan (3.3%) and France and Germany (3.0%).

The average length of stay for visitors during 2015 was 13.16 days. This was slightly up on the previous three years (12.16, 12.60 and 12.44, respectively), most likely linked to longer stays of foreign visitors involved in post-earthquake recovery efforts.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of foreign visitors came to Nepal for holiday/pleasure, pilgrimage, trekking and mountaineering reasons. During 2015, however, the numbers of foreign visitors travelling to Nepal on pilgrimages and for trekking/mountaineering were down 85% and 91%, respectively, again a reflection of the impact of the earthquakes on the tourism industry. The peak seasons for foreign visitors (except Indians) were in March/April and October/November.

A total of 384,321 visits were made by foreign tourists to the country's national parks and wildlife reserves, but it should be noted that some foreign visitors visited more than one protected area. The most popular protected areas were Chitwan NP (178,257), Shivapuri NP (103,018), Annapurna CA (78,926), Sagarmatha (34,412), Langtang NP (12,265), Koshi Tappu WR (8,719) and Makalu Barun NP (1,186). No figure for 2015 was given for Bardiya NP which received 14,197 visitors the previous year. The Kanchenjunga area received 731 foreign trekkers.

Eastern Nepal TDA as a whole
Tourism-related figures for the Eastern Nepal TDA are difficult to come by and as far as can be ascertained no figures exist for the numbers of domestic tourists visiting the region.

From the above figures it can be seen that relatively few foreign visitors take in the TDA, although clearly tens of thousands of Indian and other SAARC citizen visitors cross the border into the TDA for pilgrimage, holidaying and business purposes. MBNP, with 1,186 visitors in 2015, accounted for just over 0.3% of foreign visits to protected areas, while KTWR, with 8,719 visitors in the same year, received a more respectable but relatively insignificant 2.3% of total visits. With MBNP, only about 150 visitors were from western countries, while with KTWR the great majority of visitors were from India. Kanchenjunga in the far-east of Nepal also hardly features with respect to numbers of visitors. Overall, therefore, and with the possible exceptions of KTWR and the main religious/pilgrimage sites, the TDA can be seen not to be on the Nepal tourist map to any great extent at present.

Data on foreign tourists are collected at various points within the TDA, but this is done by several government agencies and the information collected does not appear to be consolidated on an annual basis. For example, the CAAN registers arrivals and departures of all non-Nepali tourists at its two airports; the Department of Immigration records arrivals and departures of non-SAARC tourists at Kakarbhitta border post; the DNPWC records all visitors to KTWR and MBNP; and the Nepal Police registers the comings and goings of foreign tourists at various checkpoints within the TDA, such as at Deurali and Sabha Khola.

Southern, Central and Northern Zones within the TDA
With respect to the types of tourism which visitors to the TDA indulge in, this is largely linked to the three different 'tourist zones' that have been identified for the region. These zones largely coincide with the three districts of Sunsari (Southern Zone), Dhankuta (Central Zone) and Sankhuwasabha (Northern Zone).

Within the **Southern Zone**, most of the tens of thousands of tourists comprise Indian and other SAARC citizens visiting the religious and pilgrimage sites to be found in the district. Some of these also visit KTWR, mainly to experience the elephant-back riding that is offered there. With the exception of those travelling for business purposes, third-country tourists tend fly into the TDA via Biratnagar, although clearly a number travel to the region by road from Kathmandu or from India to the east. These likely visit KTWR and maybe some of the religious sites and then possibly move onto the

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[2] It should be noted that this figure does not include SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) visitors crossing into Nepal by land from neighbouring India. SAARC member countries are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. As cross-border movement of SAARC citizens is unrestricted, no record is kept of SAARC travellers/tourists crossing land borders from India into Nepal, including the TDA.

trekking areas to the north or head either eastwards to the Illam and Kanchenjunga areas and/or cross over the border into Sikkim in north-east India or head westwards into the rest of Nepal. It is likely that many visitors to the Southern Zone, especially from Nepal and India, are there primarily for business purposes. Religion, business and wildlife are therefore the most important forms of tourism in this zone.

Within the **Central Zone**, most of the tourists tend to be Indian and Nepali visitors seeking the cooler climate and spectacular hilly scenery and natural attractions (eg. Namaste Jharnar). Many also indulge in the various adventurous activities, such as rafting and paragliding, which can be had in the district. Many also visit one or more of the religious and/or cultural sites in the area, although these do generally tend to be in less easily-accessible rural areas. In addition to visits by businessmen to Dhankuta and other major settlements, increasing numbers of non-recreational visitors take advantage of the more pleasant climate and take part in MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, events/exhibitions) tourism. Some of the tourists are on their way to the Northern Zone and to destinations in Terhathum and Taplejung Districts to the east, especially along the GHT Cultural Route. Outdoor recreation, nature, adventure, religion, culture and MICE are the forms of tourism that predominate in this zone.

Within the **Northern Zone**, where fewer tourists venture, most are there to experience the trekking and mountaineering to be had. Most arrive in the area by air through Tumlingtar Airport and then fly by helicopter to Murmidanda to overcome the local shortage of porters and to get to the MBNP boundary as quickly as possible. However, numbers participating in this form of tourism are not large, presently around 1,100 visitors a year. Arguably, just as many if not more tourists, especially Indians and Nepalis, visit the several religious and pilgrimage sites that are found in the lower mountainous areas, especially along the Arun River. Business tourists, especially from Nepal and China, are also common in the area. In some areas, such as Khandbari which is the commercial and agricultural centre of the district and not really a tourist destination in its own right, it is Chinese businessmen who contribute most to the economy of the area through business tourism, many staying in local hotels for weeks and even months at a time. Most of these businessmen, as with most western tourists and many Nepali businessmen, fly into the zone through Tumlingtar Airport. Some foreign tourists arrive on foot from Taplejung and Terhathum Districts to the east along the GHT Cultural Route. The GHT High Route between Kanchenjunga and Sagarmatha via Makalu Barun is not well-established and is little used by trekkers. No *bona fide* tourists enter the Northern Zone from Tibet via the border settlement at Kimathangka. In the Northern Zone, the primary forms of tourism are trekking, mountaineering, religious/cultural and business.

2.2.2   Possible future trends

It is very likely that the construction of the Arun-3 HEP dam and the completion of the Koshi Highway between Tibet and India will have the biggest impacts on the socio-economic development of the TDA, including the tourism sector, in the medium- to long-term future.

The Arun-3 HEP dam will result in the electrification of many communities in the northern part of the TDA, especially along the Arun River valley and wider afield. The project developing the dam incorporates a component aimed at improving and enhancing the livelihoods of local communities with tourism development being one of the avenues being pursued in order to achieve this. Although it is questionable that the dam itself will become a major tourist attraction, water-based activities on the water body that will be created behind it and on the Arun River below could become popular with tourists and residents alike. If this water body were to become a conserved area that is somehow or other incorporated into the MBNP, then the waterbody could be marketed to tourists as a part of one of Nepal's most attractive, remote and challenging state protected areas.

Arguably, however, it will be the completion of the Koshi Highway that will have the biggest impact in the area and it is probable that most of these impacts will be of significant benefit to local communities and the regional economy. The road will result in the Northern Zone especially being made much more accessible, both to the rest of the TDA and Nepal, but also to India and especially China. The highway will mean that the whole of the TDA will lie on a major international trade route. Communities and residents living along it and in the vicinity will benefit from *inter alia* the significant improvements in infrastructures and communications that will follow, the trade, business and employment opportunities that will likely arise and a markedly improved access to agricultural, tourism and other markets.

The planned upgrading of the southern section of the Koshi Highway from Biratnagar to Dharan will also help improve access to the TDA by visitors from India. Furthermore, the planned construction of an alternative main highway from Kathmandu along the Sunkoshi River valley will likely improve access to the Central Zone of the TDA from the west. Road improvements that are ongoing within the Central Zone in particular will also improve access to that zone and to the Northern Zone to the north.

Should Biratnagar Airport be upgraded to become an international airport, then there is a real possibility of bringing into the TDA many more SAARC and third-country tourists and visitors than at present. Upgrading of Tumlingtar Airport to make it more reliable would also have a marked improvement on tourist arrivals to the TDA.

Overall, therefore, with just a few improvements to capital infrastructure, in the form of improved and new roads, upgraded airports and the provision of electricity, there is a real possibility of significantly improving and expanding the tourism sector within the TDA.

2.3   SWOT analysis of the tourism sector in the Eastern Nepal TDA

A broad SWOT analysis of the current status of the tourism sector in the Eastern Nepal TDA reveals a number and variety of different 'positives' (Strengths and Opportunities) and 'negatives' (Weaknesses and Threats). Some of these reflect the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats experienced by the tourism sector in Nepal as a whole, all of which are presented in the NTSP. Others, however, are very much focused on the Eastern Nepal TDA. It is very likely that many of these also relate to other TDA's within the country.

2.3.1   Strengths and Opportunities – 'positives'

The principal **Strengths** that exist within the tourism sector of the Eastern Region TDA and the perceived **Opportunities** that can be exploited in the future are as follows:

Environmental
- Relatively undeveloped and unspoilt state of the northern part of the TDA – mountain wilderness, currently very underutilised for tourism.
- World's fifth-highest mountain peak – Mt. Makalu (8,485 m).
- Diversity of landforms within the TDA – mountains, deep valleys, hills, rivers, floodplain, lakes.
- Presence of several large rivers, all draining the Himalayas – Arun, Sunkoshi and Tomar Rivers.
- Diversity of vegetation and biomes – tropical savanna through forests to montane grassland, shrub land and rock and ice.
- Presence of world-renowned rhododendron forests.
- Several charismatic mammal species occur in the area – snow leopard, red panda, wild water buffalo, Ganges river dolphin, etc.
- High diversity of birdlife.
- Already an established birdwatching destination – especially KTWR.
- High diversity of butterflies.
- Existence of two state protected areas – KTWR and MBNP.

Infrastructural
- Excellent road access exists in the south of the TDA – Mahendra Highway and subsidiary roads.
- Existence of two domestic airports – Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports with possibility of upgrading the former to international status.
- Location on future international road link between China and India.
- Future Koshi Highway will open up access to trade, business, tourists and visitors.
- Possible future alternative highway between TDA and Kathmandu via Sunkoshi River valley.
- Future Arun-3 HEP dam will have beneficial impact on socio-economy of Sankhuwasabha District in particular.
- Lies on GHT High Route and Cultural Route between Sagarmatha and Kanchenjunga.
- Existence of a network of GHT and subsidiary trekking trails.
- Potential 'backdoor route' to Mera Peak, Sagarmatha NP and Mt Everest – also offers longer altitude acclimatisation period.

Anthropogenic attractions
- Many sites of religious, cultural and historical interest exist.
- Potential for many outdoor activities – eg. trekking, mountaineering, hiking, cycling, rafting, canoeing, paragliding, rock-climbing, etc., many of which are already being exploited to varying extents.
- Presence of numerous markets and festivals.
- Existence of locally-produced agricultural products and arts and crafts.
- Potential for water-based activities on Arun-3 water body and Arun and Koshi Rivers.

Other
➢ Close proximity to Indian tourist source market.
➢ Presence of several tourism training institutions – Dharan, Biratnagar.
➢ Existence of some investors keen on taking risks in investing in tourism sector – eg. local Nepali investors and investors from India.

2.3.2   Weaknesses and Threats – 'negatives'

The principal **Weaknesses** that exist within the tourism sector of the Eastern Region TDA and the perceived **Threats** that tourism development faces in the future are as follows:

Environmental
➢ Susceptible to landslips and earthquakes – especially in the hilly and mountainous areas in Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha Districts.
➢ Unpredictable levels of water in main rivers – likely to be exacerbated on the Arun River once the Arun-3 HEP dam is completed.
➢ Risk of widespread flooding in lower reaches of Koshi River.
➢ Water shortages in many areas – especially in settled areas within the hills.

Infrastructural
➢ Poor road network in northern and central areas – ie. Sankhuwasabha and Dhankuta Districts.
➢ Unreliability of Tumlingtar Airport – largely through lack of advanced landing and navigation equipment.
➢ Limited Internet and Wi-Fi availability – especially in Sankhuwasabha District.
➢ Poorly-developed GHT High Route between Kanchenjunga and Sagarmatha through north-eastern MBNP.
➢ Current low level of tourism development in many areas – leads to lack of exposure to tourism industry.

Institutional
➢ Generally poor representation of tourism sector within district and local authorities.
➢ Lack of formal linkages between state and non-state tourism players.
➢ Regional branch of DoT is located too far away in Kakarbhitta – arguably better to locate the office in the Eastern Development Region headquarters in Dhankuta to focus on tourism development issues rather than on marketing and promotion.
➢ Currently no link between local/district tourism development plans and National Tourism Strategic Plan (NTSP) – leads to marked mismatch between real and perceived priorities.

Socio-economic
➢ General lack of awareness of tourism exists within the TDA.
➢ Shortage of labour in many areas – especially so in more remote areas where upwards of 80% of the youth have secured employment in the Middle East.
➢ General absence of tourism industry skills in many areas.
➢ Generally poor quality of many tourism products.
➢ Generally low standard of service within tourism products.
➢ General lack of appreciation of value of traditional architecture and landscapes to tourism.
➢ Competition exists between agriculture and a largely-untried tourism sector.
➢ Difficulty in obtaining bank loans for tourism enterprises – especially for emerging entrepreneurs and new enterprises.
➢ Perception exists that the TDA is not viewed as a priority area by government.
➢ National priority placed on tourism development not reflected at district level.
➢ Overall shortage of state funding for tourism development.
➢ Low profile of the TDA within the tourism industry in general.
➢ Competition with other established tourism regions of Nepal – eg. Annapurna, Sagarmatha, Pokhara, Kathmandu, Chitwan, etc.

2.4   Summary of Unique Selling Points (USPs) of the Eastern Nepal TDA

Taking into consideration the various weaknesses and threats and the strengths and opportunities given above, it is possible to list those positive aspects that can be considered **Unique Selling Points** (USPs) with respect to tourism in the Eastern Nepal TDA and its future development. The main USPs which have been identified include the following:

Environmental
- Remote high hills and mountainous region in the north – although possibly considered to be a threat to tourism development it is also one of the strengths in the region's appeal to tourists.
- Largely unspoilt nature of MBNP and Buffer Zone.
- Boasts the world's fifth highest mountain (Makalu, 8,485 metres).
- Existence of several large and spectacular rivers – Arun, Koshi, Tomar Rivers.
- Contains one of the world's deepest valleys – Arun River valley with an effective depth of over 8,000 m.
- Existence of a large river floodplain along the Koshi River.
- Excellent birdwatching area – very diverse with a number of rare and/or endemic species.
- Presence of several charismatic species – eg. snow leopard, red panda, wild water buffalo, Ganges river dolphin.

Infrastructure
- Region will be serviced in the future by a major road connecting China with India.
- Region will possess a major HEP dam.
- Region served by two airports.

Anthropogenic attractions
- Presence of a large number of important and attractive Hindu pilgrimage sites – Barahachhetra, Ramdhuni, Suddha Buddha, etc.
- Attractive traditional rural landscapes and urban architecture.
- Geographically located between two trekking and mountaineering destinations – Kanchenjunga and Everest (Sagarmatha).
- Located on both the High Route and Cultural Route of the Great Himalayan Trail (GHT).
- Provides a backdoor route to Sagarmatha NP (Everest) with a less extreme altitude acclimatisation period.
- Good potential for certain forms of adventure tourism – eg. white-water rafting, canoeing, paragliding, mountain-biking, rock-climbing.

Tourism markets
- Very close proximity to a large existing and potential tourist source market in India with easy access.
- Close proximity to a potentially large tourist/visitor source market in China.
- Good potential in the north for low-volume/high-value tourism – eg. high-end market mountain lodges.

2.5   Constraints to tourism development in the Eastern Nepal TDA

From the SWOT analysis conducted above, it is also possible to identify those issues that are the **key constraints** to the development of tourism in the Eastern Nepal TDA. How these constraints are tackled during the implementation of the TDAP will largely dictate how successful the development and long-term viability of the tourism industry in the TDA will be.

The key constraints are grouped here under five (5) headings. There is clearly overlap, however, between a number of constraints and between the headings.

Natural constraints
- **Seasonal conditions** – relating to: ♦ winter (December to February) and summer and the monsoon season (June to August); ♦ extreme heat, especially in the Terai (average maximum temperature of 34°C in April); ♦ high humidity, especially in the Terai (average of 82% during August); ♦ high rainfall (upwards of 560 mm falls in the Terai during June and 2,800 mm in Makalu Barun from June to September); ♦ risk of flooding (especially in low-lying areas on floodplains, such as on the Koshi River, but also in hilly and mountainous areas where flash-floods are common); ♦ snowfalls in mountainous areas.
- **Extreme topography** – very rugged and high mountainous areas in the north with deeply dissected valleys in the north and central regions.
- **Earthquake zone** – the region as a whole lies within active fault zones (viz. earthquakes exceeding magnitude 7.7 in April 2016, January 1934, August 1916, etc.).
- **Constant risk of landslides** – the combination of steep slopes, unstable rock and soil strata and heavy rainfall, sometimes linked with earth tremors and earthquakes, can and does cause numerous landslips and landslides, especially in the northern and central zones.
- **Remoteness and inaccessibility** – many of the rural areas, especially in the northern part of the TDA, are in remote places. This not only makes living there for residents quite a struggle, but also hampers the development and day-to-day operations of tourism activities in the area. It should be noted, however, that the same remoteness is of strong appeal to many tourists, especially trekkers and mountaineers.

> **Difficulty of access to many areas** – many areas are also difficult to access, especially the more remote areas in the northern part of the TDA. This is usually the result of extreme topography and distance from major settlements as well as inclement weather. Roads and tracks are far and few between in many places, with residents having to rely on walking trails and footbridges across rivers and streams. Although this is again of appeal to many adventurous visitors, it also hampers the development of tourism in these areas. Access by air to the northern part of the TDA is also hampered through the fact that Tumlingtar Airport is often unpredictably closed during periods of inclement weather because of an absence at the airport of suitable navigation and landing systems. There is also an absence of landing strips elsewhere in the area.

Policy constraints

> **Region currently of low priority to central government** – an opinion expressed by a number of local residents and officials, this is especially the case with regard to tourism development and to a certain extent also to nature conservation.

> **Tourism not a priority to district authorities** – this tends to be a reflection of past national priorities, though interest amongst certain district and local authorities is certainly increasing and tourism development is beginning to receive specific focus.

> **Policy currently ambivalent towards establishing concessions within state protected areas** – with KTWR and MBNP both being very important tourism assets in the TDA, not currently allowing private sector concessions to be established and operated within them does seriously reduce the potential for tourism development in the TDA.

Institutional constraints

> **General lack of understanding amongst many government officials within the region of what tourism is about and the complex nature of the sector** – this is probably quite understandable in a region where tourism is not as well-developed or central to the district and local economies and where awareness and understanding amongst the public in general is quite poor.

> **Poor representation of the tourism sector within the structures of district and local authorities** – some district development committees have tourism officers while others don't, seemingly relying largely on non-government bodies such as tourism development committees to handle tourism-related matters on their behalf. Perhaps surprisingly, the branch office for the Department of Tourism is located in the extreme south-east of Nepal in Kakarbhitta and not in the Eastern Development Region headquarters in Dhankuta. This is likely a reflection of most Eastern Nepal-based tour operators having their own offices in and around Kakarbhitta to benefit from commercial ties to neighbouring Sikkim in India and of the Department's focus on marketing and promotion. Having the DoT branch office in Kakarbhitta would probably hamper the Department's ability to liaise and coordinate tourism development efforts with regional and district authorities throughout the Eastern Development Region.

> **Lack of an holistic and coordinated approach to tourism development amongst district-level government bodies and between those bodies and the private sector** – in general, the government and the private sector pursue their own agendas with respect to tourism development with relatively little liaison and coordination between them.

Financial constraints

> **Overall shortage of available state funding** – a problem that is common throughout Nepal (and may other countries) is that from national right down to VDC level there is a severe shortage of state funding for development and that competition for this funding is very intense amongst the various sectors. As in many areas around the world and especially for regions within countries that do not necessarily enjoy high priority from government, the tourism sector is often amongst the last to receive allocations from state, district and local budgets. There are some people who argue that state funds are not in short supply, only that good proposals and justification for assigning funds to tourism development have not been put together or communicated well enough. Regardless of this, however, investment in the tourism sector by the state, especially at TDA and district level, is currently not sufficient.

> **Absence of banks in remote areas** – in the northern part of the TDA in particular, banks and their branches are far and few between and concentrated primarily in the larger settlements and towns, eg. Khandbari. This means that potential borrowers and customers of banks have practical difficulty in interacting with their banks. This does have an influence on the ability to apply for and secure loans as well as to service them.

> **Difficulty experienced in securing loans from commercial banks for tourism-related products and activities** – this is a problem that appears to be commonly experienced within the TDA. Because of *inter alia*: ♦ a lack of understanding of the sector amongst both those engaged or wishing to engage in the sector and perhaps the

banks themselves; ♦ real and perceived risks associated with tourism development; ♦ the need for businessmen/entrepreneurs to provide sufficient collateral to secure loans; ♦ the medium- to long-term focus of the industry; ♦ the often extended time it takes for tourism businesses to begin making profits and be able to fully repay loans; and ♦ the fickle nature of a sector which is very susceptible to natural and socio-economic factors, businessmen and new entrepreneurs wishing to secure loans often come away from banks empty-handed. In contrast, for example, agriculture as a sector is much better understood by potential borrowers and banks, returns in the form of produce are generally much quicker, repayments are more predictable and pay-back periods are shorter. Overall, the risks from agricultural loans are perceived to be less.

➢ **Lack of alternative funding mechanisms for individuals perhaps wanting to become involved in the tourism business sector** – as obtaining loans from commercial banks is too difficult or expensive for borrowers and repayment periods are too demanding, individuals wishing to borrow capital or operational funding often have no other option than to invest their own limited capital in expanding their business or starting up new ventures or to approach family members or friends for private loans. Even such more informal loans, nevertheless, are still loans that need to be repaid with interest at some time or other. Borrowing from family and friends is also not without its pressures.

➢ **Perceived possible investment risks to investors** – as in many countries around the world, economically-sustainable tourism development is driven largely by the private sector. Within the TDA, the tourism sector is not yet well-established, even at basic infrastructure level. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that potential tourism investors see the region as being particularly risky for investment with there being no guarantee of at least a reasonable return. Some investors, however, have taken the bold step of investing heavily in the sector. This is especially the case in Biratnagar, where the market for middle- to high-income guests from neighbouring India and businessmen flying into Biratnagar from Kathmandu is larger, and also in Hile, where a substantial investment has been made in a fairly large middle-income resort. Generally, though, it is both likely and understandable that most Nepalese or foreign investors would prefer to put their money into areas where tourism is already established or enjoying good growth, eg. Pokhara, Bharatpur and in the country's main trekking areas, such as Annapurna and Everest/Sagarmatha.

Socio-economic constraints

➢ **Lack of awareness of and exposure to tourism** – overall, tourism awareness amongst communities and the public-at-large is poorly-developed within the TDA, especially outside of the main urban centres. Although the concept is now taking off throughout the country, the notion of Nepali people taking recreational holidays is not really well-developed in Nepal. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the awareness of what tourism is and what tourists are is not very prevalent. The general absence of tourism development in some areas is probably another reason, especially as few examples or models exist of what a good tourism product should be.

➢ **Limited level of tourism development locally** – in general, especially in the more inaccessible and remote areas and those areas away from the main markets, there are few tourism products that provide good examples of the benefits of being involved in the tourism sector and which could stimulate interest in or persuade prospective tourism players to invest in the sector. This is linked strongly to the general lack of awareness of what the sector is all about. Consequently, tourism does not presently contribute much to local economic activity in most areas.

➢ **Low level of tourism skills within the region** – overall, the standard of tourism product and service in the TDA is fairly poor. There are, however, some products that do deliver a good product or service to tourist and visitors, but even these cannot be described as being particularly good or excellent and they could be improved quite significantly. These poor standards are largely the culmination of a general lack of awareness about tourism and the needs and expectation of tourists and visitors and the absence or very limited exposure to tourism skills training. No matter how good the infrastructural component of a tourism product is (ie. buildings, furniture and equipment, utilities, vehicles, etc.), it will be the standard of service from staff members that will ultimately determine how good or successful such products will be, especially in a competitive market that is very much open to the social media.

➢ **Localised scarcity of labour in certain areas** – Nepal is one of the key sources of unskilled labour for many countries in the Middle East and elsewhere. Within the TDA, and perhaps especially in the northern part where jobs and economic opportunities are very limited, upwards of 80% of the potentially economically-active youth have sought and continue to seek work overseas. This has led to a significant scarcity of labour in many areas, perhaps manifested best in the inability of tour operators to find and hire porters for trekking tour and mountaineering expeditions and the need to often bring in porters and support staff from outside. This can lead to increased costs for tour operators and imported labour is relatively more expensive. If tourism is to be

developed in the TDA, then ideally there should be a ready availability of skilled and semi-skilled labour keen to be employed in the sector and to receive training and additional skills. At present, this is not the case, especially in the northern and central areas.

➢ **Individualistic approach to tourism by most tourism product owners** – hotel and other tourism-related associations do exist in the TDA, but certainly not universally so. Most are members of national associations such as HAN and NATO. Many individual product owners, however, apparently see little value in being paid-up members of national associations because it is often perceived that these associations are focused predominantly on the well-established tourism areas within Nepal, such as exist in the 'Golden Triangle', and are not really interested in undeveloped areas such as exists in the TDA. Even with the associations that exist, there appears to be little evidence of tourism product owners working together to raise and address issues of common concern and for them all to benefit from joint approaches to aspects such as marketing and promotion, lobbying district and central government, addressing funding requirements, etc. Instead, tourism product owners seem to run largely go-it-alone operations that compete directly with one another for as many customers as possible rather than working together as joint sector players in trying to create and promote an overall 'destination area product' that they could all benefit from. This individualistic approach is particularly prevalent in the more remote areas where tourism development is at a very low level and where competition for few visitors is arguably most intense.

➢ **Strong competition from agriculture** – in many areas, especially those where agriculture is the principal economic activity, tourism is presently unable to compete with existing sectors. For example, in areas where cardamom on other cash crops are being grown or harvested and have been for many years and where returns are relatively high, local residents are not really interested in becoming involved in a sector that they don't really understand, which is largely quite unpredictable and fickle and can involve a great deal of work especially out of normal hours. Convincing people to become involved in the tourism sector could therefore be an uphill battle.

➢ **Conflict exists between agriculture and nature conservation in some areas** – in some areas of the TDA, notably around KTWR, conflict does exist between the local communities and the DNPWC with regard to the obvious contradictory demands of agriculture, especially livestock, and nature conservation. Local communities within the buffer zone see the reserve and the grazing and browse it has as an obvious feed source for cattle and goats and for firewood and thatch. The reserve on the other hand sees such resources as being very important for nature conservation, in particular the preservation of habitat for the water buffalo, antelope and other animals living in the reserve. Although a fence does exist between both areas, this has been breached in many places and remains unrepaired. Promoting the development of tourism in either the reserve on in the buffer zone would be difficult to do without at least some success being experienced in addressing the fundamental conflicts that exist.

Measures, or activities, that need to be undertaken to address the above constraints form a key part of the TDAP itself (see **Chapter 3**).

3   TOURISM DESTINATION AREA PLAN (TDAP) FOR EASTERN NEPAL

3.1   Ten-Year Vision

Tourism development needs to be planned properly if it is to be environmentally, economically and socially acceptable and sustainable. It also requires a fairly long period of time to take place. In formulating a TDAP for Eastern Nepal, therefore, it would be ideal for the plan to have a longer-term vision, say for ten years. This 'ten-year tourism development vision' should paint a picture of where the TDA wishes to see itself with respect to tourism at the end of 2026. Through two consecutive five-year plans, this vision will help the implementing agencies steer the region towards a predetermined and 'ideal' state set in the future, rather than just allowing it to drift forwards to an ill-defined and uncertain destination.

As mentioned above in **Section 1.2.2**, the 10-year Vision included in the *Tourism Vision 2020* document states: "Tourism is valued as the major contributor to a sustainable Nepal economy, having developed as an attractive, safe, exciting and unique destination through conservation and promotion, leading to equitable distribution of tourism benefits and greater harmony in society." In many ways, this <u>national</u> vision is also valid and applies to the Eastern Nepal TDA, but it could certainly be made more specific and, arguably, more inspiring.

Developing a <u>regional</u> vision and one that enjoys the full ownership of the TDA's key stakeholders and players, however, should only be satisfactorily done by the very same people who are involved in the day-to-day development and operations of tourism in the region, namely the key stakeholders and players themselves.

One of the first tasks relating to the implementation of this TADP should therefore be a short exercise jointly undertaken by the key national stakeholders (MoCTCA/DoT/NTB/CAAN, MoFALD, MoFSC/DNPWC, TAAN, NATO, etc.) and district ones (DDCs, etc.) to discuss and set out a broad 10-year Vision for tourism in the Eastern Nepal TDA. This vision statement need not be detailed or carved in stone – as said above, it should merely paint a broad picture of where the key stakeholders wish to see tourism in the TDA in ten years' time.

Much if not all of what is included in this TDAP document will likely be covered by this vision. The Goal and Specific Objective set out below would remain the same as would most if not all of the Strategic Objectives and Targets. It is recognised even now that these may be adapted slightly as implementation of the TDAP proceeds in order for the plan to better-suit the prevailing socio-economic environment.

3.2   Goal and Specific Objectives of this TDAP

As explained above, regional-level TDAPs are seen as an offspring of the national-level NTSP. As such, the goals and objectives of TDAPs should be similar to those of the NTSP, but they must clearly reflect the regional focus of the plan.

The <u>Overall Goal</u> of the TDAP for Eastern Nepal is:

> To provide the Government and other state and non-state stakeholders at district, regional and national levels with a guiding framework along which the vision for tourism development in Eastern Nepal can be realised and environmentally- and socially-acceptable and sustainable economic growth and job creation can be achieved.

<u>Specific Objectives</u> of the TDAP for Eastern Nepal are to:
1) Create sustainable employment opportunities in the region.
2) Encourage meaningful community participation and economic activity in the tourism sector within the region.
3) Promote socio-economic growth and alleviate poverty within the region, especially in remote, rural and economically-disadvantaged areas
4) Increase revenues in the region and contribute to GDP growth per capita through tourism.
5) Increase tourist arrivals into the region without compromising sustainability and environmental and cultural quality.
6) Diversify the region's tourism attractions and services.
7) Improve the quality of the tourism product and associated human resources within the region.
8) Market and brand the region in key generating markets within and outside of Nepal.

3.3   Five-Year Tourism Destination Area Plans (TDAPs)

The 10-Year Vision for Tourism in Eastern Nepal should be achieved through the implementation of two consecutive five-year Tourism Destination Area Plans (TDAPs) rather than one single TDAP covering ten years. This is because it is strongly believed that, especially with tourism, plans with implementation periods longer than five years are unrealistic,

especially as the development of this sector is far from predictable and success is influenced by many factors, many of which are external to the sector.

The **First TDAP** would cover the years 2017-2021 and would focus on the initial development and establishment of an integrated and planned regional tourism industry in the TDA. Within this plan a large number and wide variety of issues need to be addressed. Many of these are fairly fundamental to the development of a re-developed, viable and sustainable tourism industry in the region and many of them will act as pilots or models to be followed in the future.

The **Second TDAP** would cover the years 2022-2026 and would build on the results, achievements and lessons learnt from the first, consolidate the gains of the previous five years and then further diversify, expand and strengthen the tourism industry in the region over the next five-year period in whatever ways are considered appropriate at the time. At the end of the Second TDAP, it is envisaged that all or much of the 10-Year Vision for tourism in Eastern Nepal would have been fulfilled.

Whether or not this second plan is formulated will largely depend on the opinions at the time of the various key stakeholders with regard to the need for a follow-on plan and on the availability of resources. Such a decision would need to be taken sometime in early-2021.

The remainder of this document focuses solely on the First TDAP. It is envisaged, however, that for continuity and consistency-sake, the Second TDAP, if indeed it is produced, would follow a similar format.

3.4   Strategic Objectives and Targets

In addition to the Overall Goal and Specific Objectives, the TDAP 2017-2021 is guided by sets of Short-, Medium- and Long-term Strategic Objectives totalling 36 in all. Where possible, the principal specific Targets are given. Taken together, the successful achievement of all these objectives and targets would go much of the way to fulfilling the 10-Year Vision that is to be developed.

Short-term strategic objectives (within 2 years) are those that need to be met urgently or as a priority, or which are the basis for other medium- and long-term strategic objectives to be addressed.

Medium-term strategic objectives (up to 4 years) include those that are also of a priority nature but which may take longer to address and deliver on, or which are dependent on certain short-term objectives being met first.

Long-term strategic objectives (more than 4 years) include those that are not of especial priority, or which begin to build on the achievement of medium-term objectives. They also include objectives that could be described as being 'nice to haves'. It is expected that many of the long-term objectives would be fulfilled by the end of the five-year implementation period of the TDAP.

All being well, the bulk of the strategic objectives that the TDAP 2017-2021 will be able to deliver on will be the short- and medium-term ones. Realistically and for a variety of reasons, however, many of the long-term objectives may not be fulfilled until well after the First TDAP has ended. This is the reason why it will be necessary to consider the formulation of a second 5-year TDAP for 2022-2026.

Each Strategic Objective is numbered, the intention being to match these objectives to the various Activities to be carried out under the First TDAP which are numbered and described in *Annex 1* (Part 2).

The Strategic Objectives and Principal Specific Targets for the TDAP 2017-2021 are given below.

No.	Strategic Objective	Principal Specific Target/s
Short-term – up to 2 years (ie. 2017 and 2018)		
S-1	Help develop a policy and action-oriented planning framework that promotes the development of tourism in the TCA	≥3 improved policies adopted; ≥5 tourism development plans produced.
S-2	Establish a strong link between tourism-related plans at national, regional, district and local levels	NTSP, TDAP, district and local/destination plans coherent
S-3	Promote the development of formal tourism-related public-private partnerships (PPPs) within the TDA	≥12 PPPs established for PAs and tourism information outlets
S-4	Promote the establishment of private sector and community tourism-related associations and committees	≥4 associations and committees established
S-5	Help develop management systems within tourism-related institutions and operations	Tendering, concession agreement and MoU systems in place
S-6	Build the capacity of tourism-related institutions and bodies within the TDA to carry out their responsibilities more effectively	Selected planning and management systems in place; ≥50 district staff trained

No.	Strategic Objective	Principal Specific Target/s
S-7	Encourage local communities to engage much more in the tourism sector within the TDA	≥12 communities integrally involved in the tourism sector
S-8	Provide mechanisms to financially support the development of tourism within the TDA	SME Financing Facility and Grants Fund established
S-9	Promote the development of high-end tourism products in selected areas within the TDA	≥2 up-market concessions established in PAs
S-10	Develop much-needed outdoor recreational facilities for selected areas within the TDA	≥4 outdoor recreational facilities established
S-11	Provide recreational facilities in and around Num for Arun-3 HEP construction staff and workers and their families	Range of recreational facilities for construction staff established
Medium-term – up to 4 years (ie. 2017 to 2020 inclusive)		
M-1	Significantly improve the amount and quality of information available on the TDA to visitors and tourists	Tourism information boards; road signage; GHT trailside signage; TDA website and information portal; guidebooks; apps; etc.
M-2	Provide a network of tourism service and information centres and kiosks within the TDA	1-2 tourism service centres, 4 tourism information centres and ≥10 tourism information kiosks established
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	QR code system widely and increasingly used in TDA; Internet/Wi-Fi available in Makalu Barun area
M-4	Significantly improve visitor safety and the capacity for emergency response within the TDA	≤6 mountain huts/shelters built; ≤6 helipads built; interactive Register of Trekkers in place
M-5	Encourage the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the hospitality industry and local existing and potential tourist attractions	Numerous MoUs drawn up and in operation
M-6	Promote Eastern Nepal as an attractive and emerging tourist destination area	TDA website and information portal in place
M-7	Promote the establishment of mutually-beneficial links between the TDA and neighbouring India and China and other areas	Nepal-India and Nepal-China cross-border marketing liaison groups established; several twinning agreements in place
Long-term – more than 4 years (2017 to 2021 and beyond)		
L-1	Upgrade and extend the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT) within the TDA	175 km of existing trekking trails upgraded; 45 km of new trekking trails established; GHT trailside signage
L-2	Improve the quality and visitor experience of a selected range of tourism attractions within the TDA	≤20 tourism attractions significantly improved; 9 entrance structures at PAs built
L-3	Provide tourism products and experiences within the TDA that help satisfy the needs and demands of a range of tourism markets	≥12 community lodges and/or campsites established; ≤20 homestays established
L-4	Expand the number and range of tourism attractions and activities on offer within the TDA	≤20 other new tourist attractions established; 2 visitor parks established; 1-2 cable car services established; hiking and mountain-biking trails developed
L-5	Establish Num as a tourism centre or hub in the northern TDA	1 tourism centre/hub established in Num
L-6	Develop hiking and cycling/mountain biking trails with the TDA	15 km of hiking/cycling trails established
L-7	Promote the development of specific tourism niches within the TDA, in particular religious/pilgrimage, MICE, business and health tourism	Significantly increased level of business within targeted tourism niches
L-8	Promote the production and sale of tourism-related products that are unique to the TDA	≥30 micro-enterprises established
L-9	Improve access to selected popular tourist attractions within the TDA	≥10 access roads to tourist attractions improved
L-10	Carry out selected improvements to facilities and services at visitor 'gateways' to the TDA	Facilities and services at Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports improved; signage significantly improved at other gateway points
L-11	Financially support the further development of existing tourism-related SMEs within the TDA	≥60 SMEs supported through soft loans obtained through SME Financing Facility
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	≥350 new enterprises and ≥50 public tourist attractions and infrastructures supported by grants obtained through Grants Fund
L-13	Promote the protection of the natural environment as a key element of the tourism sector within the TDA	Environmental guidelines produced, promoted and being followed; ≥16

No.	Strategic Objective	Principal Specific Target/s
		incineration and solid waste disposal facilities built
L-14	Promote and enforce environmental guidelines and building regulations relating to touristic and heritage buildings and landscapes	Building regulations enforced; environmental guidelines produced, promoted and being followed
L-15	Promote the development of mutually-beneficial tourism partnerships between the state, private sector and communities within the TDA	Numerous PPPs established; numerous MoUs in place; ≤10 tourism-related community cooperatives established
L-16	Significantly raise the level of awareness and understanding of tourism amongst local communities, district/local authorities and the public-at-large	≤2,700 individuals received various forms of basic to advanced training; awareness and understanding of tourism significantly improving
L-17	Significantly improve the standard of service provided within the tourism sector in the TDA	Standards of service in the process of being improved
L-18	Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism marketing and promotion strategy and plan for the TDA	4-year Marketing Strategy and Plan being implemented

3.5   Key Task Areas and Activities

In order to achieve the Strategic Objectives and deliver on the Targets given in the First TDAP and to begin to fulfil the 10-Year Vision, it will be necessary to initiate and implement a large number of individual activities. Many of these activities will be similar or closely related to other activities, while many others will differ quite considerably from one another. Overall, however, the individual activities will be supportive of one another and will work together in successfully implementing a coordinated, holistic and integrated plan.

Overall, the activities included in the First TDAP fall into eleven (11) categories, referred to here as **Key Task Areas** (KTAs). The 11 KTAs, together with a brief description of the range and type of activities included under them, are as follows:

Key Task Area 1 – Policy and Planning
Activities under this first KTA are concerned with the formulation of national-level **policy** governing concessions in protected areas and possible amendments to the current plans for the public use of the Arun-3 HEP dam once it is completed and the formulation of a number of destination-level **tourism development plans**.

Key Task Area 2 – Tourism Product Improvement
This KTA has a number of activities that are aimed at improving the quality of selected **existing tourism products** within the TDA, in particular the many and varied public tourist attractions in the region and the network of **trekking trails** that are associated with the country-wide Great Himalayan Trail (GHT).

Key Task Area 3 – Tourism Product Development
Closely related to KTA 2, this KTA focuses on the development of new tourism products that could be initiated, developed and added to the overall tourism offer within the region. A key part of this is the development of a number of **community lodges, campsites and homestays** in selected areas within the region, as well as two or more **upmarket private sector concessions** linked to protected areas. Some activities aim to encourage the further development of certain **tourism niches**, while others are directed at creating **new tourist attractions** within the TDA, drawing where possible on the region's unique physical and cultural characteristics. The development of **outdoor recreational facilities** is the focus of a number of activities, all designed to increase the attractiveness of the TDA for visitors and tourists, as well as for local residents. Expanding the **trekking trails** network within the region also receives attention, particular with respect to the provision of alternative and additional trails. Last but not least, some activities are directed at encouraging the private sector to expand the range and number of **tours and tourism activities** within the region that visitors, tourists and residents can take advantage of.

Key Task Area 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services
This KTA focuses on the provision of a range of infrastructures and services that directly or indirectly support the tourism industry within the region. Several sets of activities focus on establishing a number of **tourism service centres** and **tourism information centres and kiosks** at strategic locations within the TDA to allow visitors and tourists to be well-informed about the tourism offer in the region. One activity is directed at providing a **visitor centre** within one of the region's two protected areas, while two other activities address the functional and symbolic need for formal **park entrance structures** to be located at the main visitor entrances to both the protected

areas. Several activities address the need for improved **access** to many tourist attractions and to some villages that may be 'isolated' by the planned new road (Koshi Highway) down the Arun River valley. Improved access through one of the region's two airports is also tackled, primarily through the provision of improved technology and selected buildings, as is the possibility of upgrading the other airport to an international one. Other activities are directed at providing a range of **utilities and services** that address the need for effective waste management, water supply and Internet communications as well as for the **safety** of visitors to the region, especially of trekkers, guides and porters in the mountainous areas in the north.

Key Task Area 5 – Environmental Management and Protection

In light of the extreme nature of the topography in the region and the very real danger posed by landslides and earthquakes, this KTA addresses the need for **building standards and regulations** to be set that govern the nature and construction of tourism-related structures. Activities also take into consideration the need for **environmental guidelines** and for tourism-related structures to be sensitive to both the natural environmental and to the cultural heritage of an area, especially with respect to architectural style. The increasingly important issue relating to the import into and disposal of bottles and other **solid waste** within the TDA is also addressed.

Key Task Area 6 – Visitor Information Provision and Management

The activities under this KTA are focused on adequately **furnishing and equipping** the tourism service centres and tourism information centres and kiosks that have been established and **providing information** to visitors to the centres and tourists attractions in a range of different forms and methods. Roadside and trekking trail **signage** is also addressed, as is the need for a range of printed and Internet-accessible **interpretative materials**. Visitor **management and safety**, especially in the mountainous areas, are also addressed.

Key Task Area 7 – Investment and Funding

Activities under this KTA are directed at setting up and operating **financing facilities** that can be used by either established tourism product owners to improve or further develop their tourism product or by emerging entrepreneurs and district and local authorities who want to establish new tourism products, attractions and infrastructures. The facilities would be aimed primarily at those individuals and communities that have difficulty in obtaining loans from commercial banks. The possibility of setting up a number of **community funds** based on income generated from local attractions is also addressed.

Key Task Area 8 – Partners and Relationships

Most of the activities under this KTA are directed at promoting better **linkages** between state and non-state bodies involved in tourism in the TDA, between private sector tourism players and various tourism attractions in the region and between TDA tourism players and various international partners with respect to tourism niches and possible mutual ties between towns and villages within the region and overseas. Some activities are focused on the establishment of **committees and associations**, while one activity is aimed at possibly reviewing and improving the **partnership agreement** and working relationship between the state wildlife conservation body and local communities.

Key Task Area 9 – Concessions and Agreements

This KTA addresses the desirability and need to establish a number of private sector concessions within protected areas in the TDA. In addition to the development of one or more **investment portfolios** that describe exactly what type of product is being sought, activities are directed at developing and launching **public tenders** and formulating, negotiating and signing mutually-beneficial **concession agreements** and memorandums of understanding.

Key Task Area 10 – Training and Awareness

There are three main groups of activities under this penultimate KTA. The first concerns **tourism awareness** with activities being directed at communities, authorities and the public-at-large, while the second is focused on the provision of **training** for tourism industry players themselves. The third group of activities is aimed at building up the **institutional capacity** within district and local government and non-government committees to better plan and implement tourism development programmes and projects.

Key Task Area 11 – Marketing and Promotion

Activities under the final KTA are directed at formulating and implementing a **tourism marketing strategy** for the TDA, establishing a **regional tourism website** and setting up an Internet-based **information portal** that can be used by all tourism players in the region and visitors and tourists, as well as the tourism industry wider afield.

The actual activities to be carried out under each KTA are listed in the tabular-format **Implementation Action Plan** (IAP) presented in *Table 1* in *Section 3.9.2* below and described in much more detail in *Annex 1* (Part 2). Some activities, especially those that are more multi-dimensional, could be placed under more than one KTA. For sake of simplicity,

however, these are put under what is considered to be the most appropriate KTA, but with reference to other related activities and KTAs being made.

Some activities form the basis of a number of Investment-Ready Projects (IRPs) that may be implemented by one or more key government stakeholders with possible support from one or more international development agencies (IDAs). These are outlined in *Table 2*.

During the practical implementation of the First TDAP, many activities will likely be broken down into a number of sub-activities. The inclusion of sub-activities in this TDAP, however, is not considered to be appropriate as, in many ways, how activities are actioned on the ground is really a feature of the more detailed planning that should be carried out by the implementing agencies themselves rather than the more strategic level planning that is included in this document. Including sub-activities here would also unnecessarily complicate the IAP and the TDAP as a whole. If there is a clear need to create sub-activities, this will be indicated in *Annex 1* as required.

3.6 Implementation agencies

Each of the activities given in the IAP will need to be implemented by one or more implementation agencies. Two types of implementing agencies are envisaged: 1) Implementation Drivers; and 2) Implementation Partners.

Implementation Drivers refer to those state or non-state agencies or bodies that will take the lead responsibility and role in implementing a particular activity under the TDAP. In essence, these are most likely to be key stakeholders or players in the tourism sector at national level, as well as, perhaps more importantly, at the regional, district and local levels. They could include, for example, the Department of Tourism, NTB, DDCs, VDCs and district/local committees, private sector associations, donor agencies, NGOs, community groups and communities, etc.

Implementation Partners refers to those agencies or bodies which will assist the Drivers with the implementation of activities under the TDAP. Activities will rarely be fully-implementable without the involvement and efforts of at least two or more agencies or bodies or other players. This supportive role that Partners play can vary from simply providing advice to the Drivers right the way through to assisting the Drivers or other Partners, or both, with the physical implementation on the ground of specific elements of an activity. Partner agencies and bodies include the very same national, regional, district, local and international stakeholders and players who may be Drivers with other activities. They may also include private sector entities, such as corporations and companies, as well as specialist individuals drawn from communities, the public service and the public-at-large.

Most of the stakeholders and players who could act as Drivers and/or Partners during the implementation of the TDAP are listed in *Section 2.1.5* above.

3.7 Funding mechanisms and budgets

The implementation of all of the activities included in the IAP requires sufficient levels of human and financial resources. The human resources will be provided by the various Drivers and Partners involved in implementation. With some activities, the cost of implementing them will be minimal or fairly low, especially where civil servants carrying out their normal day-to-day work are involved. The issue that often arises here, however, is whether or not the officials involved have the time to carry out their new duties relating to the implementation of the TDAP.

Funding for activities comes from a variety of different sources. These sources include state funding (ie. ministries, departments, district authorities, state agencies, national programmes, etc.), donor agencies and donor-funded programmes and projects, IFIs, NGOs, foundations, trusts, private sector business, communities, self-generated revenues, etc.

The actual **funding mechanisms** through which funds are provided are also varied and range from state budget allocations on an annual basis at national, regional, district and local levels to grants, bank loans, public-private partnerships (PPPs), concessions, business activities, donations, volunteering, etc.

It will not be necessary for implementation of the TDAP as a whole to rely solely on just one funding source, such as the government, or a donor agency, or the private sector. The cost of implementing the entire plan will be shared between a number of funding sources. Individual activities, of course, can be wholly-financed by a single funding source. However, for many activities the opportunity for cost-sharing between two or more funding sources does exist and should be encouraged. Many activities in the TDAP, therefore, have multiple possible sources of funding identified.

The allocation of **budgets** to individual activities and to the TDAP as a whole is fraught with uncertainties. With multiple-year plans, it is very likely that the level of budgets assigned will prove to be insufficient and that either activities will

have to be cancelled, or that they will be completed at a lower level of delivery or standard than is desirable, or that additional funds will need to be found with no guarantee that this will happen. Even if realistic and accurate budgets are initially assigned, the vagaries of inflation, currency fluctuations and economic downturns can quickly render the budgeted figures inadequate to the task in hand.

Budgets assigned to activities within this TDAP are therefore indicative with the order of magnitude of the funding requirements being more important than exact figures. Consequently, estimated budgets given in the IAP will be given in rounded figures of tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands or millions of rupees. Budgets have also been weighted on the heavier side.

3.8   Outline tourism development spatial plan for Eastern Nepal

Figure 2 is a map of the Eastern Development Region of Nepal showing the approximate geographical location of the Eastern Nepal Tourism Destination Area (TDA) as defined in this TDAP.

Figure 2 – Map of Eastern Development Region showing Eastern Nepal Tourism Destination Area (ENTDA)

More specifically, the TDA incorporates the three districts of Sankhuwasabha, Dhankuta and Sunsari, all of which fall within the Koshi Zone, as well as elements of Morang District (namely the border city of Biratnagar), Saptari District (namely that part of the KTWR that lies on the west back of the Koshi River) and Terhathum and Taplejung Districts (namely the GHT Cultural Route and rhododendron trails just to the east of Sankhuwasabha District).

For purposes of this TDAP, the TDA has been divided into three zones, namely: 1) Southern Zone; 2) Central Zone; and 3) Northern Zone, each roughly corresponding to the districts of Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha, respectively. The zones largely reflect three distinctly different parts of the TDA, mostly relating to topography, the ease of road access and the current level of infrastructural and economic development.

Gateways to the TDA are of three types, namely: 1) road gateways; 2) air gateways; and 3) trail gateways. The road gateways comprise major road routes or highways that presently exist as well as those that are likely to come online in the near future. The air gateways consist of two domestic airports, namely Biratnagar Airport in the Southern Zone and the much smaller Tumlingtar Airport in the Northern Zone. The trail gateways are primarily in the Northern Zone and to a lesser extent in the Central Zone and mainly relate to the High and Cultural Routes of the nation-wide GHT that traverse the TDA. The TDA has two state protected areas (MBNP and KTWR), whilst the neighbouring areas feature in the west, Sagarmatha NP (Everest) and to the west the Kanchenjunga CA. Some of the key towns and settlements in the TDA are given on the map.

There is little point in presenting a detailed spatial plan for the proposed tourism development in the TDA. This is because so many factors come into play in the development of tourism, not least of which are the opinions and influences of a whole host of key stakeholders and players, available finances and other resources, support from international development agencies and other partners and, very importantly, the role and actions of arguably the key driver for tourism development, the private sector.

The intention here, therefore, is to provide a broad indication and guideline as to the types of tourism infrastructures and support infrastructures envisaged for each of the three zones within the TDA, rather than produce a map with the various proposed developments plotted, especially when the exact location of many of them can only really be determined in the future by those stakeholders and players intimately involved in them.

A listing, therefore, of the key forms of tourism envisaged and the principal gateways, tourism sector support infrastructures and tourism infrastructures for each of the three zones is given below. The listings are given in the approximate order of importance and/or priority.

SOUTHERN ZONE
Comprises **Sunsari District**, **part of Saptari District** to the west and **Biratnagar** in Morang District to the east.
Key forms of tourism
1. Religious/pilgrimage
2. Nature and wildlife – especially KTWR
3. Business
Principal gateways to zone
1. By road from Kathmandu on Mahendra Highway (AH2)
2. By road from Kakarbhitta on Mahendra Highway (AH2)
3. By road from India via Biratnagar (H08)
4. By road from Central Zone via Dhankuta and Bhedetar
5. By road from Kathmandu along Sunkoshi River valley – future main road
6. By air through Biratnagar Airport – currently only domestic flights, but possible international ones in the future
Principal tourism sector support infrastructures
1. Mahendra Highway (AH2) – from Kathmandu to Kakarbhitta via Koshi Barrage, Inaruwa and Itahari
2. Koshi Highway – from Biratnagar to Kimathangka via Itahari and Dharan
3. Koshi Barrage on Koshi River
4. Improvements to Biratnagar Airport – also possible upgrading to international airport
Principal tourism infrastructures
1. Upmarket tented camp in KTWR
2. Community lodge and campsites adjacent to KTWR
3. Day-visitor facility in KTWR
4. Improved and new public tourist attractions
5. Cable-car service between Dharan and Bhedetar
6. Tourism service and information centres – Itahari and Dharan
7. Entrance structures to KTWR
8. Solid waste incineration and disposal facilities in/adjacent to KTWR

CENTRAL ZONE
Comprises **Dhankuta District**, **part of Sankhuwasabha District** to the north and **part of Terhathum District** to the east

Key forms of tourism
1.   Recreation – site-seeing, relaxation, hiking, cycling
2.   Religious/pilgrimage
3.   Culture
4.   Adventure – rafting, paragliding
5.   MICE
6.   Business

Principal gateways to zone
1.   By road from Dharan via Bhedetar
2.   By road from Bhojpur
3.   By road from Terhathum and Taplejung Districts
4.   By road from Northern Zone via Chainpur and Deurali
5.   By trail from Kanchenjunga and Taplejung District via TMJ trail
6.   By road from Northern Zone via Arun River Valley – once Koshi Highway is complete

Principal tourism sector support infrastructures
1.   Koshi Highway – from Kimathangka to Biratnagar via Hile, Dhankuta and Bhedetar

Principal tourism infrastructures
1.   Visitor parks in Hile and Bhedetar
2.   Improved and new public tourist attractions
3.   Cable-car service between Dhankuta and Hile
4.   Hiking/cycling trails around Hile
5.   Community campsite at "Three Rivers"
6.   Tourism information centres – Hile and Bhedetar
7.   Improved public tourist attractions

NORTHERN ZONE
Comprises **most of Sankhuwasabha District**.

Key forms of tourism
1.   Trekking and mountaineering
2.   Religious/pilgrimage
3.   Nature and wildlife – especially MBNP
4.   Business

Principal gateways to zone
1.   By road from Hile via Basantapur and Arun River valley
2.   By air through Tumlingtar Airport – only domestic flights
3.   By trail from Taplejung District via Milke Danda Trail and GHT Cultural Route
4.   By trail from Kanchenjunga and Sagarmatha via GHT High Route
5.   By trail from Bhojpur via GHT Cultural Route
6.   By road from Tibet via Kimathankga – once Koshi Highway is complete

Principal tourism sector support infrastructures
1.   Koshi Highway – from Kimathangka to Biratnagar via Khandbari and Tumlingtar
2.   Arun-3 HEP dam north of Num
3.   Improvements in landing and navigation equipment for Tumlingtar Airport
4.   Electrification in Arun River valley area
5.   Internet/Wi-Fi capability – especially in Makalu Barun area

Principal tourism infrastructures
1.   Recreational facilities in Num for Arun-3 HEP construction staff – to be converted for tourist/resident use after dam is completed
2.   Improved and expanded trekking trail network – GHT High and Cultural Routes
3.   High-end tourist lodge in MBNP
4.   Community lodges and campsites in Makalu Barun area and along Arun River
5.   Homestays in Makalu Barun area
6.   Day-visitor facility above Arun-3 HEP dam
7.   Signage along GHT
8.   Improved and new public tourist attractions
9.   Tourism service and information centres – Chyamtang and Num
10. Entrance structures to MBNP
11. Solid waste incineration and disposal facilities in Makalu Barun area
12. Mountain huts/shelters and helipads in Makalu Barun area

3.9   Implementation Action Plan (IAP) 2017-2021 for the Eastern Nepal TDAP

3.9.1   Introduction to the IAP 2017-2021

Central to this TDAP is the Implementation Action Plan (IAP). This is arguably the most important part of the TDAP and is likely to be the only part of the document that is used and referred to on a fairly regular basis by those tasked with implementing the Plan, either in its entirety or just elements of it.

In essence, the IAP consists of two parts. The <u>first part</u> consists of a tabular summary of all of the KTAs and Activities that are included in the TDAP. This tabular presentation, which is given in *Table 1* in *Section 3.9.2* below, lists key aspects relating to each activity in a spreadsheet format that also doubles in many ways as a Gantt chart that depicts implementation over time. Aspects summarised in the table are as follows:

➢ Unique **Reference Number** for the activity that links it to the Key Task Area (KTA) it falls under.
➢ **Title** of activity.
➢ **Priority rating** – depicted by the symbols '◆' (high priority), '◈' (medium priority) and '◆' (low priority).
➢ **Zone** – the zone or zones within the TDA in which the activity is to be implemented, ie. N = Northern Zone (mainly Sankhuwasabha District), C = Central Zone (mainly Dhankuta District and elements of Taplejung, Terhathum and Bhojpur Districts) and S = Southern District (mainly Sunsari District and an element of Morang District).
➢ **Five-Year Implementation Schedule** – split into three categories (Years 1+2, Years 3+4 and Year 5) these categories roughly equate to the short-, medium- and long-term Strategic Objectives of the TDAP.
➢ Indication of **intensity of input** – depicted by the symbols '◆' (high level of input), '❖' (medium level of input) and '◆' (standard level of input). This broadly reflects how much effort and resources would need to be applied in carrying out the activity over the entire period of its implementation.
➢ List of **Implementation Drivers** – the stakeholder or stakeholders that have overall responsibility for driving the activity and seeing that it is carried out.
➢ List of **Implementation Partners** – the stakeholders and players that assist the Drivers in implementing the activity.
➢ **Estimated Budget** – given in Nepalese rupees in broad orders of magnitude rather than exact figures.
➢ **Possible Funding Sources** – those potential sources of funds and the mechanisms through which implementation of the activity is paid for.
➢ **Related Activities** – the Reference Numbers of those other activities within the IAP that are related to or have a direct bearing on the activity in question. This helps illustrate that the successful implementation of any single activity is frequently dependent on other activities also being taken into consideration and/or satisfactorily carried out.

The <u>second part</u> of the IAP, which is presented in *Annex 1* (Part 2), consists of more detailed treatments or accounts of each of the activities listed in *Table 1*. These accounts, which are also in tabular format, give more detail on, in particular, the rationale behind the activities and descriptions of them and indications as to exactly what the deliverables are and when they are to be delivered. The accounts also expand slightly on other aspects relating to each activity, most of which will have been summarised in brief in *Table 1*. Each activity is dealt with in the same way under the following headings:

➢ Activity **Reference Number** and **associated KTA**.
➢ **Title** of activity.
➢ **Rationale** – the reasoning behind the inclusion of the activity in the TDAP.
➢ **Brief description** – an outline of what the activity involves. The possible need to split an activity into several sub-activities to make implementation easier will be mentioned here.
➢ **Principal output/s** – a brief statement on the outputs that are expected and how many of each.
➢ **Targeted zone/s** – the main geographical zones within the TDA (Northern, Central, Southern) which the activity targets.
➢ **Focal level of activity** – at what level/s (international, national, regional, district and local) implementation of the activity focuses.
➢ **Strategic Objectives addressed** – relates to the numbered Strategic Objectives listed in *Section 3.4* above.
➢ **Timing and target dates** – during which period the activity is implemented and when the principal output/s are expected.
➢ **Implementation Drivers** – the stakeholder/s with overall responsibility for implementing the activity.
➢ **Implementation Partners** – the stakeholders and players assisting the Drivers.
➢ **Estimated budget (rupees)** – in broad terms.

➢ **Possible funding sources** – brief indication of the possible funding sources and what elements of the activity they would fund.

➢ **Other related activities** – brief indication of the other activities (with Reference Numbers) that relate to the activity being addressed, especially those activities that the activity is dependent on and *vice versa*.

The overall aim of presenting the IAP in two parts and in this format is to ensure that the TDAP as a whole and, in particular, the IAP are clear and easy-to-read and can be easily followed and understood by any individual tasked with implementing one or more of the activities included in it. **Table 1** is primarily intended to act as a broad guide for implementers and to indicate the context of an activity in relation to other activities. It has been deliberately kept clear of cluttering text. Implementers can then refer to **Annex 1** for more detailed accounts of those specific activities that he/she is concerned with without having to wade through swathes of 'non-relevant' text.

Taken as a whole, the IAP 2017-2021 is a holistic and integrated action plan that, if implemented in its entirety, should result in all the Strategic Objectives and Targets of the TDAP being met within five years or well on the way to being achieved during the 10-year vision period.

For continuity- and consistency-sake, one would expect the concept and structure of the first IAP presented here to be carried on into a second 5-year IAP covering 2022-2026.

3.9.2   The IAP 2017-2021

The Implementation Action Plan for the period 2017-2021 is presented in **Table 1** below. As mentioned above, this table should be read by implementers in conjunction with the relevant sections of **Annex 1**.

Being based largely on an Excel spreadsheet, the IAP can be amended and updated at any time. For simplicity's sake, it can also be edited or reduced by individual implementing agencies to only feature those activities that they are concerned with or involved in. The table can also be expanded at will to reflect the need for more detailed sub-activities to be inserted, or to add activities that may be identified in the future and which should be included. The intention is also for the IAP to be used by the various implementing agencies to help put together their own specific annual work plans which would guide them during the implementation of their own sections of the TDAP.

Important note:
It should 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.

Table 1 – Implementation Action Plan 2017-2021

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d] 1	2	3	4	5	Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
KEY TASK AREA 1 – Policy and Planning											
Policies											
1.1 ◆ **Assist DNPWC in developing a progressive policy for piloting private sector concessions within protected areas**	N – S	◆					DNPWC	IDA; private sector, especially current concessionaires	1,000,000	DNPWC; supported by IDA	1.3; 1.4; 3.4; 3.6; 3.7; 5.1; 5.2; 9.1; 9.2 to 9.4; 9.5 to 9.7
1.2 ❖ **Coordinate with Arun-3 HEP developer to allow visitors to use water body that is created on Arun River for recreational purposes**	N – –	❖	♦	♦			IBN with SAPDC & possibly independent expert	MoFSC; DNPWC/MBNP; local communities	250,000	SAPDC; IBN; MoFSC	1.4; 1.5; 3.4; 3.16; 3.20
Tourism development plans											
1.3 ❖ **Formulate a tourism development plan for Koshi Tappu WR**	– – S	◆	❖				Independent consultant (IDA) with DNPWC	Sunsari, Udayapur & Saptari DDCs; VDCs; local committees; communities; tourism product owners; interest groups	1,500,000	DNPWC; supported by IDA	1.1; 3.1; 3.2; 3.6; 3.15; 3.23; 4.5; 4.6; 4.11; 5.1; 5.2; 6.5; 8.6; 9.6; 10.4; 10.6; 10.8
1.4 ❖ **Formulate a tourism development plan for Makalu Barun NP**	N – –	◆	❖				Independent consultant (IDA) with DNPWC	Makalu Barun tourism development committee; Sankhuwasabha &; Solukhumbu DDCs; VDCs; local committees; communities; tourism product owners; interest groups	1,500,000	DNPWC; supported by IDA	1.1; 1.2; 2.2 to 2.4; 3.4; 3.5; 3.7; 3.19; 3.26; 3.27; 4.2; 4.4; 4.7; 4.12 to 4.14; 4.15; 4.16; 5.1; 5.2; 6.3; 6.4 to 6.6; 8.4; 9.7
1.5 ❖ **Encourage the formulation of activity- & action plan-oriented district tourism development plans & associated budgets**	N C S			◆	❖	♦	Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs with possible IDA	MoFALD; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center; Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee; "Green East"; VDCs; DoT; MoFSC; DNPWC; communities;	1,500,000	DDCs; MoCTCA; supported by IDA	10.10

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d] 1	2	3	4	5	Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
							hospitality/tourism training institutions; private sector				

KEY TASK AREA 2 – Tourism Product Improvement

Existing tourist attractions

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities / Priorities	Zone	Year 1	Year 2	3	4	5	Implementation Drivers	Implementation Partners	Estimated Budget (rupees)	Possible Funding Sources	Related Activities
2.1 ◆ Improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions in the TDA by building required infrastructures	N C S	◆ ◆	❖ ❖	❖	•	•	DoT through IRP & with possible IDA	Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; VDCs; tourist attraction custodians; tourism development committees; chambers of commerce; communities; interest groups	130,000,000	IRP; Grants Fund; DDCs; VDCs; tourist attractions; sponsors; donations	6.6; 7.2; 10.1; 10.5; 10.6; 10.8.

Trekking trails

2.2 ◆ Upgrade Makalu Base Camp Trek trail between Tumlingtar & Murmidanda	N – –	◆ ◆	❖ ❖	•			Sankhuwasabha & Bhojpur DDCs through IRP	DoT; Nepaledada, Kulunga, Mangtewa, Yafu & Makalu VDCs; communities; DNPWC/MBNP	2,000,000	IRP; DDCs; VDCs	2.3; 2.4; 4.12 to 4.15; 6.3
2.3 ◆ Upgrade selected existing trails in Makalu Barun buffer zone north of Num	N – –	◆ ◆	❖ ❖	•			Sankhuwasabha DDC through IRP	DoT; Num, Makalu, Pathibara & Hatiya VDCs; communities; DNPWC/MBNP	4,000,000	IRP; DDC; VDCs	2.2; 2.4; 3.19; 3.20; 4.12 to 4.15; 6.3.
2.4 ◆ Upgrade selected existing trails within Makalu Barun NP	N – –		◆ ◆	◆	◆	❖	DNPWC/MBNP, through IRP	Sankhuwasabha DDC; Yafu, Makalu & Hatiya VDCs; communities	15,000,000	IRP; DNPWC; DDC; VDCs	2.2; 2.3; 3.19; 4.7; 4.12 to 4.15; 6.3
2.5 ❖ Upgrade Milke Danda Trail and Tinjure-Milke-Jaljale (TMJ) rhododendron route on GHT Cultural Route that runs east from Khandbari	N C –		◆ ◆	◆	❖	❖	Joint Sankhuwasabha/ Terhathum/Taplejung DDCs task group through IRP	DoT; VDCs; communities; NGOs/interest groups; tourism product owners	8,000,000	IRP; DDCs; VDCs; IDA; botanical societies	2.2; 2.6; 4.12; 6.3; 6.6
2.6 ◆ Upgrade GHT Cultural Trail between Khandbari & Makalu Barun buffer zone via Salpa Pass & Bung	N – –		◆	◆	❖		Joint Sankhuwasabha/ Terhathum/Taplejung DDCs task group through IRP	DoT; VDCs; communities; DNPWC/MBNP; tourism product owners	6,000,000	IRP; DDCs; VDCs; IDA	2.2; 2.5; 4.12 to 4.15; 6.3.

KEY TASK AREA 3 – Tourism Product Development

Community lodges, campsites and homestays

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]		Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
			1		2		3	4	5					
3.1 ◆	Establish community lodge at suitable location adjacent to Koshi Tappu WR	– – S	◆	◆	◆	❖				Community tourism task group with VDCs & possible independent advisor	Sunsari DDC; IDA; communities; tour operators	20,000,000	Grants Fund; VDCs; IDA; bank loan; private sector investor/s	1.3; 5.1; 5.2; 7.2; 7.3; 8.6; 9.8; 10.1; 10.4
3.2 ❖	Establish one or more community campsites adjacent to Koshi Tappu WR	– – S	◆	◆	❖	❖		◆		Community tourism task group with VDCs & possible independent advisor	Sunsari DDC; IDA; communities; tour operators	1,500,000	Grants Fund; VDCs; IDA; bank loan; private sector investor/s; community members	1.3; 5.1; 5.2; 7.2; 7.3; 8.6; 10.4
3.3 ❖	Establish community campsite at suitable location at junction of Arun, Sunkoshi & Tomar Rivers	– – S	◆	◆						Community tourism task group with VDCs & possible independent advisor	Dhankuta DDC; Sunsari Tourism Development Committee; rafting tour operators; communities; IDA	1,500,000	Grants Fund; VDCs; community members; IDA; bank loan; private sector investor/s	5.1; 5.2; 7.2; 7.3; 9.8; 10.1; 10.4
3.4 ❖	Support establishment of community campsites & lodges in selected villages within Makalu Barun buffer zone & in Makalu Barun NP	N – –	◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	❖	❖	Makalu Barun tourism development committee' with community tourism task groups' & possible independent advisor	VDCs; IDA; DNPWC/MBNP; communities; Sankhuwasabha DDC	15,000,000	Grants Fund; VDCs; communities; IDA; DoT; bank loans	1.4; 3.26; 5.1; 5.2; 7.2; 7.3; 8.4; 8.5; 10.1; 10.4; 11.3
3.5 ❖	Support establishment of homestays in buffer zones around TDA's two state-protected areas	N – S	•	•	❖	❖	❖	•	•	Homestay owners with Sunsari Tourism Development Committee or 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee', possible independent advisor & DoT	VDCs; IDA	2,000,000	Personal capital; Grants Fund; SMME Financing Facility; bank loans; DoT	7.1; 7.2; 8.4; 8.5; 10.1; 10.4; 10.9; 11.3
Up-market private sector concessions														
3.6 ◆	Establish upmarket tented camp at suitable location within Koshi Tappu WR	– – S			◆	◆				Grantee with DNPWC/KTWR	Independent advisor with IDA; VDCs; communities & individuals	10,000,000	Grantee; DNPWC	1.1; 1.3; 3.1; 3.23; 3.24; 4.5; 4.11; 5.2; 8.6; 9.3; 9.6; 9.8; 11.2; 11.3

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
3.7 ◆ **Establish high-end tourist lodge at suitable location within Makalu Barun NP**	N – –		♦	♦			Grantee with DNPWC/MBNP	Independent advisor with IDA; VDCs; communities & individuals	30,000,000	Grantee; DNPWC.	1.1; 1.4; 4.10; 4.14; 5.1; 5.2; 9.4; 9.7; 11.2; 11.3.
Tourism niches											
3.8 ❖ **Encourage development of selected tourism niches within TDA**	N C S		❖ ♦	♦	❖	❖	DoT/NTB with possible IDA	Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism development committees; associations; tourist attractions custodians; tourism product owners; business; interest groups	2,500,000	DoT/NTB; IDA	1.5; 3.1; 3.9 to 3.14; 3.22; 7.1; 7.2; 9.8; 10.3; 10.5; 10.6; 11.2; 11.3
3.9 ◆ **Encourage & support development of unique tourism products based on locally-produced foods & materials & intangible assets**	N C S		❖ ❖	❖	♦	♦	Sunsari & Sankhuwasabha tourism development committees & Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce with independent advisor with IDA	Entrepreneurs; communities; interest groups; VDCs; DDCs; local businesses	7,500,000	SMME financing facility; Grants Fund;; self-funding; bank loans; VDCs; communities; donations; sponsorships	3.8; 3.14; 7.1 to 7.3; 10.1; 10.9; 11.2 to 11.4
New tourist attractions											
3.10 ❖ **Support development of visitor park in or near to Bhedetar**	– C –	♦ ♦	♦ ❖				Vedetar VDC with planner/advisor possibly with IDA	Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Dhankuta Tourism Development Committee; local businesses	10,000,000	DoT; Dhankuta DDC; Vedetar Municipality; Grants Fund; possibly through an IRP; local tourism product owners.	2.1; 3.12; 3.15; 4.3; 7.2; 10.6; 11.2 to 11.4
3.11 ◆ **Support development of visitor park adjacent to Hile**	– C –	♦ ♦	♦ ❖				Dhankuta Municipality with planner/advisor possibly with IDA	Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Dhankuta CCI; local businesses	10,000,000	DoT; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta Municipality; Grants Fund; possibly through an IRP; local tourism product owners	2.1; 3.13) 3.15; 4.3; 7.2; 10.6; 11.2 to 11.4

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
3.12 ❖ Promote building of cable-car service between Dharan & Bhedetar	– – S		◆ ◆	◆	❖		Dharan Municipality with Vedetar Municipality	Sunsari & Dhankuta DDC; Sunsari Tourism Development Committee; Sunsari CCI; DoT; affected communities; private sector investors; experts; contracting companies	30,000,000	Private sector; bank loans; Dharan & Vedetar Municipalities; Sunsari & Dhankuta DDCs; DoT; Grants Fund	3.10; 3.13; 7.2; 9.8; 11.2 to 11.4
3.13 ◆ Promote building of cable-car service between Dhankuta & Hile	– C –		❖ ❖	◆	❖		Dhankuta Municipality	Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta Tourism Development Committee; Dhankuta CCI; affected communities; private sector investors; experts; contracting companies	20,000,000	Private sector; bank loans; Dhankuta Municipality; Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Grants Fund.	3.11; 3.12; 7.2; 9.8; 11.2 to 11.4
3.14 ❖ Encourage & support development of range of selected tourist attractions throughout TDA	N C S		❖ ❖	◆	◆	❖	Sunsari & Sankhuwasabha tourism development committees (& Dhankuta CCI with interest groups	Communities; VDCs; DDCs; experts & specialists; local businesses; entrepreneurs	20,000,000	SMME Financing Facility; Grants Fund; VDCs; communities; self-funding; bank loans; donations; sponsorships	2.1; 4.8; 5.1 to 5.3; 6.4; 6.6; 7.2; 10.1; 10.6; 11.2 to 11.4
Outdoor recreational facilities											
3.15 ◆ Establish day-visitor facility within Koshi Tappu WR	– – S	◆	◆ ❖				DNPWC/KTWR with IDA	Prakashpur, Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha & Sripurjabdi VDCs; Sunsari DDC; communities; local committees	1,000,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.3; 3.1; 3.2; 3.5; 3.6; 3.22; 3.23; 4.5; 4.6; 4.11; 5.1; 5.2; 9.8; 10.6; 11.2 to 11.4
3.16 ◆ Establish day-visitor facility at suitably-accessible site overlooking Arun-3 dam wall	N – –				❖	◆	DoT & Sankhuwasabha DDC with SAPDC & IDA	IBN; Num VDC; local communities	500,000	SAPDC; IRP; IDA; DDC; VDC; local business	1.4; 3.18; 3.20; 3.27; 5.1; 5.2; 9.8; 10.6; 11.2 to 11.4
3.17 ◆ Establish range of recreational facilities in & around Num to serve dam construction staff & workers & local residents & visitors	N – –	◆	◆ ◆				SAPDC with IBN & through IRP & with private sector	Sankhuwasabha DDC; Num VDC; local communities; interest groups; tourism product owners; business	10,000,000	IRP; SAPDC; IBN; private sector; SMME Financing Facility; Grants Funds; bank loans	1.5; 2.3; 3.20; 3.16; 3.18; 3.26; 4.3; 4.12; 5.1; 5.2; 7.1; 7.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1		2		3	4	5					
3.18 ◆ **Convert accommodation, catering & recreational facilities developed for dam construction staff/workers in & around Num to serve local residents & tourists after construction of Arun-3 HEP dam has been completed**	N – –						◆	❖	IBN through IRP & with possible IDA	Num VDC; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center; private sector; communities; interest groups; tourism product owners; business	3,000,000	IRP; IDA; private sector; SMME Financing Facility; Grants Fund; bank loans	1.5; 2.3; 3.20; 3.16; 3.17; 3.22; 3.26; 3.27; 4.3; 5.2; 6.1; 7.1 to 7.3; 9.8; 10.1; 10.3 to 10.5; 11.2 to 11.4
Trekking trails													
3.19 ◆ **Establish within Makalu Barun NP new & alternative trekking trail along suitable route between Barun Dhovan-Hatiya area & Yangri Kharka on existing main Makalu Base Camp Trek trail**	N – –	◆	◆	❖	❖				DNPWC/MBNP through IRP	Sankhuwasabha DDC; Hatiya & Makalu VDCs; communities.	6,000,000	IRP; DNPWC; DDC; VDCs	2.3; 2.4; 4.7; 4.12 to 4.15; 6.3; 11.2 to 11.4
3.20 ◆ **Establish new & alternative trekking trail along eastern bank of Arun River above new dam between Num & Barun Dhovan**	N – –					◆	◆	❖	Sankhuwasabha DDC through IRP	DoT; Num & Pawakhola VDCs; communities	7,500,000	IRP; DDC; VDCs	4.12; 4.13; 4.14; 4.15; 6.3; 11.2 to 11.4
3.21 ❖ **Establish network of day-visitor hiking & cycling/ mountain-biking trails in vicinity of Hile**	– C –			◆	◆	❖	◆	◆	Dhankuta Municipality with local hotels	Dhankuta DDC; DoT; Dhankuta CCI; local schools; interest groups; businesses; volunteers	3,000,000	DoT; DDC; Municipality; tourism product owners; Grants Fund; donations; sponsorships.	3.11; 3.28; 7.2; 11.2 to 11.4
Tours and tourism activities													
3.22 ❖ **Encourage tour operators to develop short & longer site-seeing excursions that take in expanded range of different tourist attractions within TDA**	N C S	❖	❖	◆	◆	◆	❖	◆	Sunsari Tourism Development Committee & Dhankuta DDC with DoT	Tour operators; tourist attraction custodians; tourism product owners; KTWR; VDCs; NTB	500,000	Tour operators	2.1; 3.1 to 3.3; 3.5; 3.10 to 3.15; 3.23 to 3.25; 4.1 to 4.5; 9.8; 11.2 to 11.4
3.23 ❖ **Encourage further development of bird-watching opportunities in Koshi Tappu area**	– – S	❖	❖	◆	◆	❖	❖	◆	BCN with wildlife/bird-watching tour companies	DNPWC/KTWR; WWT; WWF/Hariyo Ban; local	250,000	Wildlife/bird-watching tour operators	3.1; 3.2; 3.5; 3.6; 3.14; 4.5; 6.5; 6.6; 10.1;

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1		2		3	4	5					
										tourism product owners; DoT; NTB; communities; VDCs			10.8; 11.2 to 11.4
3.24 ❖ **Encourage development of river boating activities on Koshi River around Barahachhetra**	− − S	❖	◆	❖	◇	◇	❖	◇	Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee with Sunsari Tourism Development Committee	Sunsari DDC; river boating operators; entrepreneurs; "Three Rivers" community campsite; communities	250,000	Private sector; SMME Financing Facility; Sunsari DDC	2.1; 3.3; 3.23; 7.1; 7.2; 11.2 to 11.4
3.25 ❖ **Encourage tea estates to develop tours & day-visitor & overnight facilities for visitors**	− C −	◆	◆	❖	❖	❖	◇		NTB with independent advisor with IDA	Dhankuta Municipality; hotel & tourism association & CCI; tea estate company; tourism product owners	250,000	Private sector; SMME Funding Facility	6.6; 7.1; 7.4; 8.2; 10.1; 10.4; 10.8; 11.2 to 11.4
3.26 ◆ **Promote development of rafting & power boat tours between Arun-3 dam & Tumlingtar & beyond**	N − −			◇	◇	❖	◆	◆	Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Committee with business & entrepreneurs	Sankhuwasabha DDC; river-rafting/power-boat operators; entrepreneurs; communities	250,000	Private sector; SMME Financing Facility	3.4; 3.16; 3.17; 7.1; 7.2; 11.2 to 11.4
3.27 ◆ **Encourage development of appropriate water-based activities on Arun River upstream of Arun-3 HEP dam**	N − −							◆	Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Committee through IRP	SAPDC; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Num & Pawakhola VDCs; private sector; entrepreneurs; communities	250,000	IRP; private sector; SMME Financing Facility; Grants Fund	3.16; 3.20; 5.1; 5.2; 7.1; 7.2; 10.1; 11.2 to 11.4
3.28 ◆ **Encourage provision of bicycles for mountain biking trails in selected areas within TDA**	− C −	◇	◇	◇	❖	◆	❖	◇	District-level tourism development committees &/or CCIs with NCA	Tourism product owners; entrepreneurs; communities	250,000	Private sector; entrepreneurs; communities; NCA; SMME Funding Facility; Grants Fund	2.2 to 2.6; 3.19 to 3.21; 7.1; 7.2;; 11.2 to 11.4
KEY TASK AREA 4 – Tourism Support Infrastructure and Services													
Tourism service centres													
4.1 🔴 **Establish tourism service centre at suitable central location in Itahari**	− − S		◆	◆	❖				DoT/NTB with IDA	Itahari Municipality; Sunsari DDC; tourism product owners	3,500,000	DoT/NTB; IDA; IRP; Municipality; DDC	4.2 to 4.4; 6.1; 6.4 to 6.6; 9.8; 10.4; 11.2
4.2 ◆ **Establish tourism service centre in Chyamtang**	N − −					❖	◆		DoT/NTB with IDA	Sankhuwasabha DDC; Chepuwa VDC; tourism product owners	2,500,000	DoT/NTB; IDA; IRP; VDC; DDC	4.0; 4.3; 4.4; 4.14; 6.1; 6.4 to 6.6; 9.8; 10.4; 11.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
Tourism information centres and kiosks											
4.3 ❖ **Establish tourism information centres in Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile & Num**	N C S	◆	◆	◆			DoT/NTB with IDA	Dharan, & Dhankuta Municipalities; Vedetar & Num VDCs; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism product owners	8,000,000	DoT/NTB; IDA; IRP; Municipalities; VDC; DDCs	4.1; 4.2; 4.4; 4.14; 6.1; 6.4 to 6.6; 9.8; 10.4; 11.2
4.4 ♦ **Establish tourism information kiosks at Biratnagar & Tumlingtar Airports & at other strategic locations within TDA**	N C S		◆	◆	❖	❖	DoT/NTB with IDA	Biratnagar & Tumlingtar Airports (CAAN); tourism product owners; Khandbari Municipality; Basantapur & Hatiya VDCs; Terhathum & Sankhuwasabha DDCs.	1,500,000	DoT; IDA; IRP; CAAN; Municipalities; VDCs; DDCs	4.1 to 4.3; 4.10; 4.14; 6.1; 6.4 to 6.6; 9.8; 10.4; 10.6; 11.2
Visitor centre											
4.5 ❖ **Establish visitor centre in Koshi Tappu WR**	– – S	❖	◆	◆	❖		DNPWC/KTWR with IDA	Interpretation experts; Prakashpur, Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha & Sripurjabdi VDCs; Sunsari DDC; communities; local committees	2,500,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.3; 3.1; 3.2; 3.5; 3.6; 3.15; 3.22; 3.23; 4.6; 5.1; 5.2; 10.6
Park entrance structures											
4.6 ♦ **Design & erect new entrance facilities to Koshi Tappu WR**	– – S		❖	❖			DNPWC/KTWR	Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha & Sripurjabdi VDCs; communities	500,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.3; 3.15; 4.5; 5.1; 5.2; 6.1; 6.2
4.7 ♦ **Design & erect official entrance structures at appropriate entry points to Makalu Barun NP**	N – –		❖	❖		❖	DNPWC/MBNP	Makalu, Hatiya, Chepuwa & Yafu VDCs; communities.	350,000	IRP; DNPWC	1.4; 2.3; 2.4; 2.20; 5.1; 5.2; 6.1; 6.3
Access											
4.8 ❖ **Improve access roads to selected tourist attractions within TDA**	N C S	❖	❖	❖	❖	♦	Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee, Sunsari Tourism Development Committee, Sunsari & Dhankuta CICs, Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center with DoT.	DoR; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; IDA; tourist attractions custodians; communities; tourism product owners; businesses	1,000,000	GoN/DoR; DDCs; WB; ADB; donor agencies; international NGOs	1.5; 2.1; 3.14; 5.3; 6.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1		2		3	4	5					
4.9 ◆ Promote construction of access roads to settlements located along 'Koshi Highway' between Kimathangka & Num	N – –	◆	◆	❖	❖	❖	◆	◆	IBN with Pathibara, Hatiya & Chepuwa VDCs, Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center & DoT	DoR; Sankhuwasabha DDC; IDA; communities; businesses; tourism product owners	250,000	GoN/DoR; DDC; WB; ADB; donor agencies; international NGOs	1.4; 1.5; 3.4; 3.5; 5.3; 6.2
4.10 ◆ Encourage selected upgrades & improvements to be made to Biratnagar & Tumlingtar Airports	N – S		◆	◆	◆	❖			MoCTCA & CAAN in with DoT and with possible IFI- or IDA	Biratnagar & Tumlingtar Airports; Biratnagar & Khandbari Municipalities; Morang & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; business	10,000,000	MoCTCA/CAAN; ADB through SATIDP; IDA; Municipalities; DDCs; business	3.7; 4.4; 4.16; 6.1; 6.4; 6.7; 11.2
Utilities and services													
4.11 ❖ Install reserve- or community-run incineration & solid waste disposal facilities at suitable locations within & adjacent to Koshi Tappu WR	– – S			◆	❖				DNPWC/KTWR & Madhuwan, PaschimKasuha & Sripurjabdi VDCs	Sankhuwasabha DDC; community groups; tourism product owners	200,000	DNPWC/KTWR; VDCs; DDC	3.1; 3.2; 3.5; 3.15; 4.5; 5.2; 6.1; 6.5; 10.1; 10.5
4.12 ◆ Install community-run incineration & solid waste disposal facilities at suitable locations within Makalu Barun area	N – –			◆	❖	❖	❖	◆	Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya & Chepuwa VDCs with 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' through IRP	Sankhuwasabha DDC; DNPWC/MBNP; community groups; community members; tourism product owners	600,000	IRP; VDCs; DDC	2.2 to 2.4; 3.19; 3.20; 4.2; 4.3; 4.13; 5.2; 5.4; 6.1; 6.3; 6.5; 10.1; 10.5
4.13 ◆ Establish community-run ozone purified safe drinking water stations at suitable locations within Makalu Barun area	N – –			◆	❖	◆	❖	◆	'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' through IRP	Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya & Chepuwa VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC; DNPWC/MBNP; community groups; community members	4,000,000	IRP; DDC; VDCs; DoT	2.2 to 2.4; 3.19; 3.20; 4.2; 4.3; 4.12; 5.2; 5.4; 6.1; 6.3; 10.5.
4.14 ❖ Establish Internet & Wi-Fi capacity & availability within Makalu Barun area	N – –				◆	◆			IRP with DNPWC/MBNP and possible IDA	Internet service provider/s; TAAN; NMA; Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya & Chepuwa VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC	5,000,000	IRP; IDA; TAAN; NMA; DDCs; VDCs	2.2 to 2.4; 3.19; 3.20; 4.1 to 4.3; 4.15; 6.3; 6.4; 6.6; 6.7; 11.2
Visitor safety													

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d] 1		2		3	4	5	Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
4.15 ◆ Construct mountain huts/shelters at selected locations along trekking trails within Makalu Barun NP	N – –				❖	❖	•		DNPWC & NMA, through IRP	Sankhuwasabha DDC; VDCs; communities; trekking & mountaineering operators	1,500,000	IRP; DNPWC; NMA; DDC; trekking & mountaineering operators	1.4; 2.2 to 2.4; 3.19; 3.20; 4.14; 4.16; 5.2; 6.3; 6.4; 6.7
4.16 ◆ Construct emergency response helipads within Makalu Barun NP & buffer zone	N – –				❖	❖	•		DNPWC & CAAN, through IRP	Sankhuwasabha DDC; VDCs; communities; tourism product owners	1,500,000	IRP; DNPWC; DDC; VDCs	1.4; 2.2 to 2.4; 3.7; 3.19; 3.20; 4.15.
KEY TASK AREA 5 – Environmental Management and Protection													
Building standards													
5.1 ◆ Promote enforcement of National Building Code & develop voluntary building standards code for all tourism-related infrastructures within TDA	N C S	◆	◆	◆	❖	❖	❖	❖	Most appropriate lead ministry with other relevant government ministries; also MoCTCA/DoT with IBN and with possible building standards expert through IDA	MoFALD; DDCs; VDCs; communities; tourism industry private sector	1,000,000	GoN; IDA; tourism industry private sector	1.3 to 1.5; 3.1 to 3.4; 3.7; 3.16 to 3.18; 4.1 to 4.3; 4.15; 5.2
Environmental guidelines													
5.2 ❖ Develop set of environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures & operations within protected areas & elsewhere in TDA	N C S		◆						MoCTCA/DoT with environmental guidelines expert through IDA	DNPWC; ICIMOD; WWF Nepal; TAAN; hospitality associations; specialists; communities; tourism industry private sector	1,500,000	MoCTCA/DoT; IDA	1.3 to 1.5; 2.1; 3.1 to 3.4; 3.6; 3.7; 3.10 to 3.18; 3.22 to 3.28; 4.1 to 4.3; 4.5 to 4.7; 4.11; 4.12; 4.15; 5.1; 5.3; 6.1 to 6.3; 9.5 to 9.8; 10.1 to 10.3; 10.5; 10.6
Heritage protection regulations													
5.3 ◆ Promote enforcement of regulations protecting local heritage sites & traditional	N C S	◆	◆	◆	◆	❖	❖	❖	MoCTCA/Culture Division/DoA with built heritage preservation expert through IDA	MoFALD; DDCs; municipalities & VDCs; state & private museums; communities; interest groups; heritage &	1,500,000	MoCTCA/Culture Division/DoA; IDA; DDCs	1.5; 2.1; 3.14; 5.1; 5.2; 10.1 to 10.3; 10.6

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	1	2	2	3	4	5					
buildings & landscapes within TDA										building specialists; tourism industry private sector players			
Solid waste control													
5.4 ◆ **Conduct feasibility study on how to control import into & disposal of bottles & other non-biodegradable materials within Makalu Barun area**	N − −			◆					Independent consultant through IDA with DoT	DNPWC/MBNP; 'Makalu Barun tourism development committee'; Num, Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya & Chepuwa VDCs; waste disposal/ recycling companies	2,000,000	DoT; IDA	1.4; 4.13; 5.2; 8.4; 10.5
KEY TASK AREA 6 – Visitor Information Provision and Management													
Signage													
6.1 ◆ **Design, produce & erect locality-specific tourism information boards at key locations within TDA**	N C S		❖	❖	◆			◆	DoT/NTB/CAAN with IDA &/or IFI	DoR; DoI; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism development committees; municipalities; VDCs; tourism product owners	3,000,000	DoT/NTB; IDA; IFI	1.5; 4.1 to 4.4; 4.10; 6.4; 11.1; 11.2
6.2 ◆ **Design, produce & erect branded roadside directional signage for selected tourism attractions & products within TDA**	N C S		❖	❖	◆	◆		◆	DoT/NTB with IDA &/or IFI	DoR; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism development committees; municipalities, VDCs; tourist attraction custodians; tourism product owners	2,500,000	DoT/NTB; DoR; IDA; IFI	1.5; 2.1; 3.9 to 3.18; 3.24 to 3.27; 4.1 to 4.3; 4.8; 4.9; 11.1
6.3 ❖ **Design, produce & erect appropriately-branded trail signage along GHT High Route & Cultural Trail within Makalu Barun area & elsewhere**	N C −			◆	◆	❖	❖	◆	IDA with IRP	DNPWC/MBNP; Sankhuwasabha, Terhathum & Taplejung DDCs; VDCs; settlements; tourism product owners; interest groups; DoT	5,000,000	IRP; IDA; DNPWC; DDCs; VDCs	1.4; 2.2 to 2.6; 3.4; 3.5; 3.16 to 3.20; 4.7; 4.9; 4.13; 4.15; 6.1; 6.4; 6.5; 8.4; 8.5; 11.2
QR codes													
6.4 🔴 **Develop & establish a QR code-based tourist/visitor information system for TDA**	N C S	◆	❖	◆	◆	❖	❖	◆	DoT/NTB with IT specialists through IDA	DNPWC; tourist attractions custodians; tourism product owners; communities; VDCs; DDCs; Meteorological Forecasting Division; others	2,000,000	IDA; DoT/NTB; tourist attraction custodians; private sector sources	3.1; 3.2; 3.4; 3.15 to 3.18; 4.1 to 4.4; 4.6; 4.7; 4.14 to 4.16; 6.3; 6.5 to 6.7; 11.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
Interpretative material											
6.5 ◆ Develop small guide booklets & other informative material for Koshi Tappu WR & Makalu Barun NP & buffer zone	N – S		◆	❖ ❖	◆		DNPWC with specialist support through IDA	DoT/NTB; BCN; Bird Watching Club of Nepal; birdwatching clubs; WWT; WWF Nepal; individual specialists; local residents; interest groups	2,000,000	IDA; DNPWC; DoT/NTB; NGOs; Sunsari & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; interest groups; private benefactors	3.15; 3.22; 3.23; 4.5; 4.14; 6.4; 6.6; 11.2
6.6 ◆ Develop range of small guide booklets on various aspects of TDA	N C S		◆	❖ ❖	◆	◆	DoT/NTB with specialist support through IDA	DNPWC; NTNC; BCN; Bird Watching Club of Nepal; birdwatching clubs; botanical societies; WWF Nepal; DDCs; VDCs; municipalities; local committees; religious organisations; specialists; local residents; interest groups	2,000,000	IDA; DoT/NTB; NGOs; interest groups; Sunsari, Dhankuta, Sankhuwasabha & Terhathum DDCs; private benefactors	2.1; 2.5; 3.8; 3.9; 3.14; 3.15; 3.25; 6.4; 6.5; 8.2; 11.1; 11.2
Visitor management and safety											
6.7 ❖ Establish Internet-based register of trekkers, mountaineers & support teams entering Makalu Barun area	N – –			◆			DNPWC with TAAN through IDA & IRP	NMA; Yafu, Makalu, Pathibhara, Hatiya & Chepuwa VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC	1,500,000	IRP; IDA; DNPWC; TAAN; NMA	1.4; 2.2 to 2.4; 3.19; 3.20; 3.4; 3.5; 4.7; 4.14; 4.15; 6.3; 6.4
KEY TASK AREA 7 – Investment and Funding											
Financing facilities											
7.1 ◆ Establish & administer Small & Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Financing Facility for existing tourism entrepreneurs in TDA	N C S	◆	◆ ❖	❖ ❖	◆	◆	MoCTCA/DoT/NTB with MoFALD, MoFSC & IBN through IRP & with IDA	TIDP; SATIDP; donors; IFIs; international NGOs; commercial banks; tourism product owners; tourist attraction custodians; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; VDCs; communities	8,000,000 (administrative cost of NPR 160 million Facility)	GoN; IRP; SATIDP; TIDP; other state-funded community development programmes; IDAs; banks	2.1; 3.5; 3.8; 3.9; 3.14; 3.17; 3.18; 3.24; 3.26; 3.27; 7.2; 8.2; 11.2
7.2 ◆ Establish & administer Grants Fund for emerging tourism players & public tourist attractions & infrastructures in TDA	N C S	◆	◆ ◆	◆ ❖	❖	◆	MoCTCA/DoT/NTB with MoFALD, MoFSC & IBN through IRP & with IDA	TIDP; SATIDP; donors; IFIs; international NGOs; commercial banks; tourist attraction custodians; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha	10,000,000 (administrative cost of NPR 200 million Fund)	GoN; IRP; SATIDP; TIDP; other state-funded community development programmes; IDAs	2.1; 3.1 to 3.5; 3.8 to 3.14; 3.17; 3.18; 3.21; 3.24; 3.26 to 3.28; 7.1; 8.2; 11.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1		2		3	4	5					
										DDCs; VDCs; communities; emerging entrepreneurs			
Community tourism cooperatives and funds													
7.3 ❖ **Facilitate establishment of community cooperatives linked to community-owned &-run tourism operations**	N C S	❖	❖	❖	❖	❖	◆	◆	DoT/NTB with independent advisor through IDA or NGO	NGOs; community-owned tourism products; tourist attraction custodians; tourism development committees; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs	500,000	DoT/NTB; IDA	3.1 to 3.4; 3.9; 3.18; 7.4; 9.8
7.4 ◆ **Promote establishment of visitor-supported workers' or community funds & associated trusts at Guranse Tea Estate near Hile & Agricultural Research Centre in Pakhribas**	– C –	❖	❖						NTB with independent advisor through IDA	Tea estate company; NARC; agricultural research centre; Dhankuta hotel association & CCI; tourism product owners; Dhankuta DDC	250,000	NTB; IDA; tea estate company; NARC; agricultural research centre	3.14; 3.22; 3.25; 7.3; 8.2; 11.3
KEY TASK AREA 8 – Partners and Relationships													
Linkages													
8.1 ❖ **Establish PPP mechanism whereby NTB, local authorities & private sector tourism operators run tourism service centres & tourism information centres & kiosks effectively & sustainably**	N C S	◆	❖	◆	◆	❖	◆	◆	NTB with independent consultant through IDA	Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; municipalities; CAAN; hotel & tourism associations; tourism product owners; community-owned tourism products	1,000,000	DoT; NTB; IDA	4.1 to 4.4; 9.8
8.2 ◆ **Encourage local hotels in & around Hile to liaise with & organise paid-for tours to local attractions**	– C –	❖	❖	◆	◆	◆			Dhankuta DDC with independent advisor through IDA; also Sunsari & Sankhuwasabha DDCs	Tourism product owners; district tourism development committees; local & district hotel & tourism associations; district CICs; interested communities	250,000	Custodians of touristic sites; private sector; SMME Financing Facility; Grants Fund	6.6; 7.1; 7.2; 7.4; 9.8
8.3 ◆ **Encourage possible development of twinning agreements between selected towns, villages & interest groups within TDA & similar ones in foreign countries**	N C S	❖	❖	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs assisted by one or more independent consultant/s through IDA	VDCs; private sector businesses; NTB	500,000	Self-funded; possible IDA for facilitation	3.14; 3.25; 11.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
Committees and associations											
8.4 ❖ Establish tourism development committee for Makalu Barun area with membership drawn from relevant VDCs	N – –	◆ ❖					DNPWC/MBNP with independent advisor through IDA	VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Committee; Department of Water Affairs; tourism product owners; communities	250,000	VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC; DoT/NTB; IDA	10.10
8.5 ◆ Establish association of hotels, community lodges & campsites & homestays in Makalu Barun area	N – –	• ❖ ❖					'Makalu Barun tourism development committee' with Independent consultant through IDA	Tourism product owners; HAN; NATO; TAAN; DNPWC	250,000	Self-funded by tourism product owners; IDA; DoT/NTB; VDCs; Sankhuwasabha DDC	8.4; 10.4
Partnership agreements											
8.6 ◆ Review existing agreement between DNPWC & communities living in Koshi Tappu buffer zone & make appropriate recommendations	– – S	◆ ◆ ❖ •					DNPWC/KTWR with independent advisor through IDA	Sunsari, Udayapur & Saptari DDCs; VDCs; community leaders; community members; NGOs; interest groups	1,500,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.1; 1.3; 3.1; 3.2; 3.5; 3.15

KEY TASK AREA 9 – Concessions and Agreements

Investment portfolios											
9.1 ◆ Draw up tourism investment portfolios for Koshi Tappu WR & Makalu Barun NP	N – S	◆					DNPWC, KTWR & MBNP with independent advisor through IDA	Commercial brochure designer	1,000,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.3; 1.4; 3.6; 3.7; 9.3; 9.4
Tendering											
9.2 ◆ Draw up standard national/international tender document for use by DNPWC in attracting potential private sector investors in protected areas	N – S	◆					DNPWC with independent advisor through IDA	Advice from appropriate NGO &/or private sector	500,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.1; 9.1; 9.3 to 9.5
9.3 ◆ Draw up & launch national/ international tender for establishment of upmarket	– – S		◆				DNPWC with independent advisor through IDA	Advice from appropriate NGO &/or private sector	150,000	DNPWC; IDA	3.6; 9.1; 9.2; 9.5; 9.6

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1		2		3	4	5					
tented camp within Koshi Tappu WR													
9.4 ♦ **Draw up & launch national/ international tender for establishment of high-end tourist lodge within Makalu Barun NP**	N – –		♦						DNPWC with independent advisor through IDA	Advice from appropriate NGO &/or private sector	150,000	DNPWC; IDA	3.7; 9.1; 9.2; 9.5; 9.7
Concession agreements													
9.5 ♦ **Draw up model concession agreement for private sector-owned & -managed tourism operations within protected areas under jurisdiction of DNPWC**	N – S	♦							DNPWC with independent advisor through IDA	Advice from appropriate NGO &/or private sector	1,500,000	DNPWC; IDA	1.1; 9.6; 9.7
9.6 ♦ **Draw up, negotiate & sign concession agreement for upmarket tented camp in Koshi Tappu WR**	– – S		♦	❖					DNPWC with independent advisor through IDA	Advice from appropriate NGO &/or private sector; communities	500,000	DNPWC; IDA; Grantee	3.6; 9.3; 9.5
9.7 ♦ **Draw up, negotiate & sign concession agreement for high-end tourist lodge in Makalu Barun NP**	N – –		♦	❖					DNPWC with independent advisor through IDA	Advice from appropriate NGO &/or private sector; communities	750,000	DNPWC; IDA; Grantee	3.7; 9.4; 9.5
9.8 ❖ **Advise on & facilitate drawing up of Memoranda of Understanding between communities, district authorities & private sector tourism operators**	N C S			❖	❖	♦	♦	♦	DDCs with independent advisor through IDA	Community-owned tourism entities; NGOs; tourism development committees; authorities; private sector operators	1,500,000	DDCs; IDA; community-owned tourism entity; private sector partners	3.1 to 3.5; 4.1 to 4.4; 7.3; 9.5
KEY TASK AREA 10 – Training and Awareness													
Tourism awareness													
10.1 ♦ **Design & deliver tourism awareness courses for selected communities & for district authorities within TDA**	N C S	♦	♦	❖	❖		❖		Tourism colleges/ schools through IRP & with IDA	Tourism development committees; DDCs; CCIs; VDCs; communities; tourist attraction custodians; hotel associations; CBOs; NGOs	2,500,000	IRP; IDA; CCIs; hotel associations; DDCs	1.5; 2.1; 3.1 to 3.5; 3.9; 3.14; 5.2; 7.3; 8.4; 10.2; 10.3; 10.5; 10.6; 10.9; 11.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]							Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1		2		3	4	5					
10.2 ❖ **Develop & launch tourism awareness campaign for public-at-large in TDA**	N C S	❖	❖	⬩	⬩		❖		NTB through IRP & with IDA	Tourism development committees; DDCs; CCIs; CSIDB; FNCSI; public news media; social media	3,000,000	IRP; IDA; NTB; CCIs; tourism-related associations; DDCs	1.5; 5.2; 10.1; 10.3; 10.5; 10.7; 11.2
Tourism-related training													
10.3 ❖ **Design & deliver basic, intermediate & advanced tourism training courses to interested tourism product owners & staff in TDA**	N C S	◆	❖	◆	❖	◆	❖	❖	Tourism colleges/ schools through IRP & IDA	Tourism-related associations; CCIs; tourism development committees; DDCs; municipalities; VDCs; community/private sector tourism product owners	5,000,000	IRP; IDA; NTB; tourism-related associations; CCIs; DDCs; tourism product owners	2.1; 3.1 to 3.9; 3.14; 3.24 to 3.27; 7.3; 10.5; 10.6; 11.2
10.4 ❖ **Design & deliver basic courses on waste management, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation & hygiene to communities & individuals in Koshi Tappu & Makalu Barun areas & elsewhere in the TDA**	N C S	◆	❖	❖	❖	⬩	⬩	❖	NGOs & specialists through IRP & with IDA	VDCs; DDCs; DNPWC; buffer zone committees; tourism development committees; communities; community tourism product owners	3,000,000	IRP; IDA; DDCs; VDCs	2.1; 3.1 to 3.5; 3.8 to 3.18; 3.24; 3.26; 3.27; 4.5; 4.11 to 4.13; 5.2; 5.4; 10.1; 10.2; 10.5; 11.2
10.5 ❖ **Build up capacity of staff & custodians of selected tourist attractions to improve visitor experience & manage tourists better**	N C S	◆	◆	❖	❖	◆	❖	◆	Tourism colleges/ schools through IRP & with IDA	Tourist attraction custodians; VDCs; DDCs; tourism development communities	2,500,000	IRP; IDA; NTB; DDCs	2.1; 3.14; 4.8; 5.1 to 5.3; 6.2; 6.6; 10.1; 10.4; 11.2
10.6 ◆ **Provide support to entrepreneurs & players for them to take more comprehensive & accredited courses in regional tourism training institutions**	N C S	❖	❖	⬩	⬩	❖	⬩	❖	Tourism colleges/ schools through IRP & with IDA	Tourism-related associations; CCIs; tourism development committees; DDCs; municipalities; VDCs; community/private sector tourism product owners	5,000,000	IRP; IDA; NTB; tourism-related associations; CCIs; DDCs; tourism product owners	3.1 to 3.9; 10.3; 10.7; 11.2
10.7 ◆ **Design & deliver training courses for tour & trekking guides**	N C S	❖	⬩	❖	⬩	❖	⬩	❖	TAAN, NATO & NMA through IRP & with IDA	Tour/trekking/mountaineering guides; community/private sector tourism product owners; NATHM, MAN, communities	3,000,000	IRP; IDA; tourism-related associations; tourism product owners	3.1; 3.4 to 3.9; 3.14; 3.22 to 3.26; 10.5; 11.2
10.8 ◆ **Design & deliver range of training courses for community**	N C			◆	❖	⬩		❖	FNCSI & specialists through IRP & with IDA	DADO; craft producer associations; VDCs; buffer	2,000,000	IRP; IDA; DDCs; VDCs	3.1; 3.4; 3.5; 3.9; 10.2; 11.2

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
members wishing to grow or rear produce for tourism operations or to manufacture crafts & souvenirs	S							zone committees; communities; vocational training bodies			
Institutional capacity-building											
10.9 ❖ **Build up capacity within district development committees & local tourism development committees to better plan & implement tourism development in their geographical areas of operation & focus**	N C S	◆	❖ ❖	◆		◆	Specialists through IRP & with IDA	DoT; DDCs; tourism development committees; CCIs; DNPWC; tourism associations	1,500,000	IRP; IDA; DDCs	1.3 to 1.5; 2.1; 3.10 to 3.14; 3.18; 4.1 to 4.3; 5.1 to 5.3; 8.1; 8.4; 10.1; 11.2
KEY TASK AREA 11 – Marketing and Promotion											
Regional tourism marketing strategy											
11.1 ❖ **Formulate & implement 4-year marketing strategy & plan to promote tourism in TDA**	N C S	◆	❖ ❖	❖	❖	❖	DoT/NTB with IDA	DNPWC; TAAN; NMA; HAN; NATTA; REBAN; key tourism product owners; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; VDCs	2,000,000	DoT; IDA	3.1 to 3.28; 4.1 to 4.4; 6.1 to 6.6; 10.1; 10.2; 11.2 to 11.4
Internet-based marketing & promotion & information provision											
11.2 ◆ **Establish website & associated Internet-based tourism information portal to promote Eastern Nepal region as a specific tourist destination within Nepal**	N C S	◆ ◆	❖				NTB with IDA	Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism-related associations; tourism product owners; community-owned tourism product owners; Internet service provider/s	2,500,000	DoT/NTB; IDA; advertising revenue; subscriptions from tourism product owners; DDCs	2.12 to 2.6; 3.1 to 3.28; 4.14; 6.1; 6.3; 6.4; 7.1 7.2; 8.3; 9.3; 9.4; 10.1 to 10.8; 11.1; 11.3; 11.4
11.3 ❖ **Encourage & support tourism product owners to advertise & promote their products through TDA website & to interact with visitors through information portal**	N C S		◆	❖	❖		NTB	Tourism-related associations; tourism product owners; community-owned tourism product owners; tourist attractions custodians; DDCs; municipalities; VDCs; tourism	1,000,000	NTB; sale of advertising space on website	2.1; 3.1 to 3.28; 11.2; 11.4

KEY TASK AREAS (1-11) Activities (1.1, 1.2, etc.) Priorities [a]	Zone [b]	5-Year Implementation Schedule (2017-2021) [c & d]					Implementation Drivers [e]	Implementation Partners [e]	Estimated Budget (rupees) [f]	Possible Funding Sources [g]	Related Activities [h]
		1	2	3	4	5					
								development-related committees.			
Cross-border destination area liaison & marketing											
11.4 ◆ **Establish East Nepal-India cross-border destination area liaison & marketing group**	N C S		❖	❖	❖		DoT with NTF; Indian counterpart bodies; IDA	Tourism-related associations; tourism product owners; community-owned tourism product owners; of tourist attraction custodians; DNPWC; DoI; DDCs; municipalities; VDCs; tourism development-related committees	2,000,000	DoT/NTB; NTF; Indian counterpart bodies; IDA; Sunsari, Dhankuta & Sankhuwasabha DDCs; tourism product owners	1.5; 4.1; 4.3; 4.4; 8.3; 11.1 to 11.3

[a] – Activities: ◆ = high priority; ❖ = medium priority; ◆ = low priority.

[b] – Eastern Nepal TDA zones: N = Northern Zone (mainly Sankhuwasabha District plus part of Bhojpur District); C = Central Zone (mainly Dhankuta District plus parts of Terhathum and Taplejung Districts); S = Southern Zone (mainly Sunsari District).

[c] – Divided into Short-term (Years 1 and 2 – 2017-2018), Medium-term (Years 3 and 4 – 2019-2020) and Long-term (Year 5 and onwards – 2021 and beyond) implementation periods.

[d] – Intensity of input of each activity over time denoted by: ◆ = high; ❖ = medium; ◆ = standard.

[e] – Implementation Drivers and Partners: eg. Government ministries, departments and committees, communities, private sector associations, business, donor/IFI community, NGOs, etc. [Please refer to list of Acronyms and Abbreviations.].

[f] – Estimated budget: in rupees, these are given in broad terms and as realistic as possible.

[g] – Possible funding sources: eg. Government budgets (national, regional, DDC, VDC levels), donor/IFI community, business, private sector, community, foundation, self-generated, etc. [Please refer to list of Acronyms and Abbreviations.].

[h] – Related Activities: related activities within the IAP are listed using the IAP numbering system.

3.10   Outline of proposed projects for investment-ready support

3.10.1   Introduction to Investment-Ready Projects (IRPs)

Some of the activities included in the IAP presented in **Table 1** could be supported and funded as so-called 'investment-ready projects', or IRPs. These are projects that might be funded by, for example, the Government of Nepal, and/or one or more international development agencies (IDAs), or some other entity through the provision of funding that has already been set aside through prior agreement or pre-existing funding mechanisms in order to help finance specific projects that meet certain criteria.

Under the Arun-3 HEP project, for instance, 0.5% of the total cost of the construction of the dam (ie. $6.5 million of $1,300 million) has been set aside within the financing agreement to fund community-related projects deriving from the HEP project. These projects would be administered by the IBN on behalf of the Government of Nepal. Some of these IBN-supported projects will be related to tourism development in the Arun-3 development area and wider afield and fall under the TDAP.

In addition, the IFC/World Bank Group also has funds set aside through its overall Nepal project to help facilitate or catalyse private or public of public-private partnership (PPP) investment. Some of this funding could be allocated to help fund selected activities or projects throughout the Eastern Region under the TDAP. Other IDAs, such as donor agencies, international financing institutions (IFIs) and NGOs, may also be willing to help fund and support IRPs.

The TDAP features 97 individual activities. Some of these activities on their own could be selected as IRPs. It may also be possible to group together several similar activities into one or more potential IRPs, so increasing the geographical spread and impact of the activities. In doing this, however, consideration must be taken of *inter alia* exactly who the beneficiaries are and how the projects are to be managed and implemented by the chosen Implementation Drivers and Partners. Importantly, the projects and their results need to be feasible, market-led and enjoy the full ownership of the beneficiaries as well as the Government of Nepal.

3.10.2   Possible Investment-Ready Projects under the Eastern Nepal TDAP

A total of 13 possible 'investment-ready projects', or IRPS, have been identified under this TDAP. The possible IRPs are listed in **Table 2** below, together with an indication of the activities included in the IAP (see **Table 1** above) which would be covered by them, possible principal support bodies and funding sources, indicative budgets and the strategic objectives which would be addressed. The possible IRPs that have been listed are considered to be fundamental to or pilots of most of the other activities included in the IAP.

The total indicative budget for the 13 IRPs is NPR 604,750,000 (approximately US$ 5.5 million) to be spent over a period of five years.

Table 2 – Possible Investment-Ready Projects (IRPs) for priority implementation

Possible Investment Ready Projects (IRP) Activities within the Implementation Action Plan (IAP) covered by the IRPs		Possible support bodies & funding source/s	Indicative budget (rupees) [US$]	Strategic Objective/s addressed
IRP #1 – Formulation of policies that are supportive of tourism development				
1.1	Assist DNPWC in developing a progressive policy for piloting private sector concessions within protected areas	GoN	1,250,000	S-1, S-5, S-6, S-9, L-4, L-5
1.2	Coordinate with Arun-3 HEP developer to allow visitors to use water body that is created on Arun River for recreational purposes			
IRP #2 – Improvements to 4-5 selected public tourist attractions				
2.1	Improve visitor experience at selected tourist attractions in the TDA by building required infrastructures (eg. Barahachhetra, Ramdhuni, Koshi Barrage, Budha Subba, Namaste Jharna)	IDAs	130,000,000	L-2, L-3, L-14, L-17
IRP #3 – Upgrading and development of selected GHT trekking routes in Makalu Barun area				
2.3	Upgrade selected existing trails in Makalu Barun buffer zone north of Num	GoN, IDAs	25,000,000	M-4, L-1, L-13
2.4	Upgrade selected existing trails within Makalu Barun NP			
3.19	Establish within Makalu Barun NP new and alternative trekking trail along suitable route between Barun Dhovan-Hatiya area and Yangri Kharka on existing main Makalu Base Camp Trek trail			
IRP #4 – Development of 2-3 pilot community lodges/campsites				
3.1	Establish community lodge at suitable location adjacent to Koshi Tappu WR	GoN, IDAs	23,000,000	S-7, L-3, L-4, L-15
3.2	Establish one or more community campsites adjacent to Koshi Tappu WR			
3.3	Establish community campsite at suitable location at junction of Arun, Sunkoshi and Tomar Rivers			
IRP #5 – Promotion of development of 1-2 upmarket tourism products in protected areas				
3.6	Establish upmarket tented camp at suitable location within Koshi Tappu WR	Private sector		S-3, S-9, M-5, L-3, L-4, L-13
3.7	Establish high-end tourist lodge at suitable location within Makalu Barun NP			
IRP #6 – Development of 2 day-visitor recreational facilities				
3.15	Establish day-visitor facility within Koshi Tappu WR	GoN, IDAs	11,000,000	S-10, L-4
3.11	Support development of visitor park adjacent to Hile			
IRP #7 – Development of recreational/tourism facilities in Num				
3.17	Establish range of recreational facilities in and around Num to serve dam construction staff and workers and local residents and visitors	GoN	10,000,000	S-11, L-4, L-5
IRP #8 – Development of 2 tourism service and information outlets in Itahari and Bhedetar				
4.1	Establish tourism service centre at suitable central location in Itahari	GoN, IDAs	11,500,000	S-3, M-1, M-2, M-3, M-6, L-18
4.3	Establish tourism information centres in Dharan, Bhedetar, Hile and Num			
IRP #9 – Feasibility studies on upgrading of Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports				
4.10	Encourage selected upgrades and improvements to be made to Biratnagar and Tumlingtar Airports	GoN, IDAs	10,000,000	M-4, M-6, L-10, L-17

Possible Investment Ready Projects (IRP) Activities within the Implementation Action Plan (IAP) covered by the IRPs		Possible support bodies & funding source/s	Indicative budget (rupees) [US$]	Strategic Objective/s addressed
IRP #10 – Enforcement of National Building Code and promotion of preservation of architectural heritage and landscapes				
5.1	Promote enforcement of National Building Code and develop voluntary building standards code for all tourism-related infrastructures within TDA	GoN	4,000,000	L-13, L-14, L-16
5.2	Develop set of environmental guidelines for tourism-related infrastructures and operations within protected areas and elsewhere in TDA			
5.3	Promote enforcement of regulations protecting local heritage sites and traditional buildings and landscapes within TDA			
IRP #11 – Development of Internet-based and integrated tourism information system				
6.4	Develop and establish a QR code-based tourist/visitor information system for TDA	GoN, IDAs	6,000,000	S-9, M-1, M-3, M-4, M-6, M-7, L-1, L-3, L-7, L-8, L-16, L-18
6.7	Establish Internet-based register of trekkers, mountaineers and support teams entering Makalu Barun area			
11.2	Establish website and associated Internet-based tourism information portal to promote Eastern Nepal region as a specific tourist destination within Nepal			
IRP #12 – Establishment of tourism-related financing facilities and mechanisms				
7.1	Establish and administer Small & Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Financing Facility for existing tourism entrepreneurs in TDA	GoN, IDAs	360,000,000	S-2, S-7, S-8, S-10, L-2, L-3, L-4, L-7, L-8, L-11, L-12, L-17
7.2	Establish and administer Grants Fund for emerging tourism players and public tourism attractions and infrastructures in TDA			
IRP #13 – Provision of tourism awareness and skills training for DDCs, tourism committees and selected communities and tourism SMEs				
10.1	Design and deliver tourism awareness courses for selected communities and for district authorities within TDA	IDAs	13,000,000	L-2, L-13, L-14, L-15, L-16, L-17
10.3	Design & deliver basic, intermediate & advanced tourism training courses to interested tourism product owners & staff in TDA			
10.4	Design & deliver basic courses on waste management, provision of safe drinking water, sanitation & hygiene to communities & individuals in Koshi Tappu & Makalu Barun areas & elsewhere in the TDA			
10.5	Build up capacity of staff & custodians of selected tourist attractions to improve visitor experience & manage tourists better			

It will up to the coordination and management body responsible for implementing the TDAP (see **Chapter 4** below) to decide on which IRPs will be selected and supported and also exactly which of the activities described in the IAP will be included in each IRP. It is quite possible and for a variety of reasons that not all of the 13 IRPs proposed above can be implemented as priority projects from the beginning of 2017. Various criteria and factors will be at play which determine whether or not an individual IRP is chosen for implementation and whether that implementation begins on time and in the manner expected. These criteria and factors could include, for example:

- Perceived degree of ownership of the IRP by the Government of Nepal.
- Perceived degree of local ownership of the IRP or elements of it.
- Degree of interest shown in the IRP from potential international development agencies and/or investors.
- Cost of implementation of the IRP.
- Availability of funding for each IRP.
- Degree to which the IRP or elements of it act as a pilot.
- Perceived chance of the IRP or elements of it being successfully implemented.
- Perceived contribution of the IRP to the overall development of tourism in the region.
- Perceived priority and importance of the IRP or elements of it to affected or involved communities.
- Perceived degree of the wider impact of the IRP on the local community and the region as a whole.
- Degree to which the IRP is market-led.
- Timescale within which the IRP can be implemented.

Some of the proposed IRPs could be expanded to include tourism development-related programmes, projects and initiatives in other geographical areas within Nepal. Whether or not this happens is again up to discussion and decision by the coordination and management body and/or structure chosen to implement the TDAP.

3.11   Assumptions and risks

A number of assumptions apply to the implementation of the Eastern Nepal TDAP, some of these being very similar to those included in *Tourism Vision 2020*. Key assumptions for the TDAP are as follows:

- Tourism continues to be a priority in the Government's economic agenda.
- There is continued commitment to the tourism sector from central government.
- Key state stakeholders in the implementation of the TDAP are all willing and committed to working together.
- Good linkages exist between authorities at national and district and local levels.
- No apathy towards tourism and tourism development exists amongst district and local government officials.
- Willingness exists amongst other economic sectors within Nepal to engage in mutually-beneficial tourism development.
- Sufficient state funding is allocated to tourism development.
- The private sector is willing to engage with government and vice versa in a partnership approach.
- Willingness exists amongst all stakeholders at national, regional, district and local levels for tourism development to be guided by strategic, holistic, integrated and action-oriented plans.
- International development partners are willing to be involved in and to support the implementation of the TDAP.
- No personal vested interests are allowed to deflect the goal and objectives of the TDAP or the implementation of the Plan.
- Nepal enjoys improved safety, security and political stability.
- Nepal enjoys an improved and stable economy.

It should be noted that if one or more of the above assumptions do not hold, then they can become significant risks to the successful implementation of the TDAP.

4   COORDINATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOURISM DESTINATION AREA PLAN (TDAP) FOR EASTERN NEPAL

4.1   Need for effective coordination

The Eastern Nepal TDAP presented above contains no fewer than 97 different activities. Many of these will need to be split into two or more sub-activities to make implementation easier for those involved in translating the activities into action on the ground. All these activities and sub-activities need to be implemented in full and on time if the holistic and integrated TDAP as a whole is to fully-achieve its objectives and the vision that is developed.

The TDAP may appear to some readers as being quite daunting to implement. The danger is that this then translates into inaction and the planning document itself simply becomes another shelf-filler. With the number and variety of activities to be implemented, it must be recognised that to expect all of the many implementation drivers and partners to unilaterally take up all the activities they are responsible for and to carry them out according to what is set out in the TDAP without there being some degree of encouragement, coercion and coordination exerted on them by a 'higher' body is very unrealistic. Without this pressure and authority from above, it is very likely that many prospective implementers will quietly choose not to fully engage with the plan, or to ignore it completely. If this happens, certain activities will not be implemented, while others will be carried out in a piecemeal or incomplete manner or in the wrong order. The overall plan will quickly be undermined and start to fall apart and its potential for delivering key results and benefits will not be realised.

What is very much needed to successfully implement a complex development 'programme' such as this is to put in place a good and authoritative overall driver, or 'structure', that can coordinate, manage, monitor and, if necessary, adjust the implementation of activities and the delivery of the 'programme' as a whole. Such a coordination and management 'structure' will help to ensure that implementation of activities will take place in the right order and on time and that they will not drift away from intended targets or be unnecessarily delayed. Implementation agents who perhaps don't engage as fully as they should or as expected could be encouraged to perform more effectively by the 'structure' and be influenced to engage much more in the development 'programme' through peer pressure being exerted by other implementation agents.

In essence, no matter how good or bad the TDAP is, the mechanism that is adopted to coordinate and manage its implementation is in many ways more important than the plan itself and is the key factor that will determine whether the plan is successfully implemented or not. Too often plans fail because there is no suitable structure in place to implement them, or the structure that is there is not appropriate to the task in hand. This applies not just to this TDAP but to all plans in general. The main aim is to ensure that the plan that has been formulated is in fact implemented on the ground and not just tacitly acknowledged, checked off and placed on a shelf.

4.2   Proposed Five-Year 'Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme' ('ENTDP')

The use above of the term 'programme' is deliberate. This is because the implementation of the TDAP in its entirety can only really be successfully done if the activities are viewed and carried out as part of and under the umbrella of an overall sector-specific development programme. In essence, the development programme that is being proposed here is the 'structure' that has also been referred to above.

This TDAP covers the five years from 2017 to 2021. It follows that the development programme intended to implement the plan should also cover the same 5-year period. For purposes of this document, the development programme being considered is referred to as the '**Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme**', or 'ENTDP'. This programme would be tasked with steering, coordinating, managing, overseeing, monitoring and, if necessary, adjusting the implementation of the TDAP in order to ensure that both the plan and the programme deliver fully on their objectives for the benefit of tourism development in the TDA and for Nepal as a whole.

It is envisaged that the ENTDP would require a specific coordination and management entity being set up to carry out these tasks. For several reasons, it is also envisaged that this entity would be centred in Kathmandu. One key reason for locating the entity within Kathmandu is that many of the key implementation agents, especially at top level, are based in the capital and it is in the capital where many of the key decisions will be taken, despite the programme being largely regionally focused. Implementation of the ENTDP, of course, would take place almost entirely at regional, district and local levels within the Eastern Nepal TDA.

Another key reason for placing the coordination and management entity in Kathmandu is that this same body could also coordinate and manage the implementation of the parallel and 'sister' tourism destination area development initiative

that is being carried out in the Karnali region of western Nepal – tentatively referred to here as the '**Western Nepal Tourism Development Programme**', or 'WNTDP'. Most if not all of the key national players involved with the ENTDP would also have to be represented in the 'WNTDP' and be carrying out similar work for western Nepal. There would therefore be obvious merit and benefit in having a coordination and management entity that deals with two pilot TDA-oriented development programmes at roughly the same time, assuming that both programmes will extend for the same five-year period.

Exactly how the ENTDP programme could be structured is dealt with below. Regardless of whatever programme structure is decided for the ENTDP, however, there would need to be an overall '**programme steering committee**', or 'PSC', established. This PSC would likely be made up of senior representatives from key stakeholder bodies at national level, but also include some representation from the three targeted districts. The bodies that would be represented on the PSC would probably include MoCTCA/DoT, NTB, MoFALD, MoFSC/DNPWC, IBN, TAAN, NATO, tourism private sector and the Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs. The PSC would most likely also include *ex officio* representatives from any involved IDAs, such as donor agencies, IFIs and international NGOs. Other stakeholders could be co-opted onto the PSC as and when required. The PSC would likely be chaired by a top official from the MoCTCA.

Although the above-suggested PSC is specifically focused on steering the ENTDP, with obvious changes being made to reflect the different district-level and perhaps international-level players, it could also steer the 'WNTDP'. If that were to be the case, then one would expect separate meetings of the PSC to be held for each programme, but PSC members would be fully aware of what happens in each of the programmes and be able to apply the knowledge and experience and lessons learnt from both.

4.3   Coordination mechanisms and structures for the 'ENTDP'– possible options

Three (3) possible options on how the proposed Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme (ENTDP) could be structured present themselves. Each of these is briefly outlined below by highlighting the participating key national and international stakeholders and players and how they relate to one another and function and listing both the benefits/advantages and, perhaps more importantly, the drawbacks of each option.

4.3.1   Option 1: Coordination by Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA)

The ENTDP is focused almost entirely on the development of the tourism sector within Nepal. As such, the lead government body in Nepal responsible for seeing that the TDAP and the ENTDP are implemented successfully is the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA). This first option therefore sees the **MoCTCA** taking sole and full responsibility for implementing the ENTDP and, by implication, the TDAP that is presented here. In this instance the MoCTCA also infers the involvement of the ministry's daughter institutions, the **Department of Tourism** (DoT) and the **Nepal Tourism Board** (NTB), as well as other bodies, such as the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), Mountain Academy Nepal (MAN) and the Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management (NATHM).

Without going into any detail, the broad roles of the three main state tourism bodies in implementing the ENTDP would differ slightly from one another.

➢   **MoCTCA** – the Ministry, which would be the political head and primary beneficiary of the programme, would address all issues at national level, this including liaison and coordination with sister ministries, such as the MoFALD, MoFSC (in particular the DNPWC) and other government bodies or agencies, such IBN, as well as with any donor agencies, IFIs or international NGOs who may be involved in the programme. It would need to liaise on a day-to-day basis with the DoT and NTB in particular. Much of what the Ministry would do during the ENTDP, however, would most likely be delegated to the DoT and NTB and in some cases to the other daughter bodies.

➢   **DoT** – the Department would act as the principal executing or implementing body acting on behalf of the MoCTCA largely through its head office in Kathmandu and the regional or branch office in Kakarbhitta in far-eastern Nepal on the border with India. The branch office would be responsible for coordinating and working with all of the government and non-state stakeholders and players, including NGOs and the private sector, at district level within the Eastern Nepal TDA. It would likely also have to liaise with stakeholders and players at the local level, such as with KTWR and MBNP and other specific tourism destination custodians. The branch office would also be responsible for liaising very closely with its head office back in Kathmandu.

➢   **NTB** – this state tourism agency would also act as one of the implementing bodies, primarily with respect to interactions with the private sector and matters to do with product development and marketing and

promotion. With its head office in Kathmandu and with it not having any regional representation in or close to the Eastern Nepal TDA, much of its work would have to be conducted from the capital.

This option would require the MoCTCA setting up a 'programme coordinating task group' that would require the full-time appointment and involvement of at least one senior official or member of staff from each of the Ministry itself, the DoT and NTB, supported by an administrative secretariat and other support staff. This committee would also need to be sufficiently resourced with respect to offices and equipment and, very importantly, have access to finances dedicated to the overall coordination and management of the ETNDP.

Within the Eastern TDA itself, this 'task group' would require at least some local representation, supported with the necessary resources, to undertake coordinating and management activities on the ground. Ideally, this local representation within the TDA would be organised along the lines of having up to three district 'sub task groups', each comprising government and non-government officials and representatives drawn from the DDC, other district committees (especially district-level tourism development committees) and selected participating VDCs and other stakeholder bodies. In this way, the 'sub task groups' would in effect be made up largely of district and local implementation drivers and partners, exactly what is needed if the regionally-focused ENTDP is to be implemented on the ground.

There are several benefits or advantages to this first option, but in reality these are very much outweighed by the many and varied and sometimes serious drawbacks to this structure.

Benefits/advantages of Option 1
➢ The state body responsible for the tourism sector would enjoy full ownership of the ENTDP.
➢ Opportunities for good inter-ministerial liaison exist, especially as the ministries are located very close to each other.
➢ The head offices of most of the key state and non-state stakeholders are located in Kathmandu.
➢ Potential strong linkages exist or could be established between the Ministry/DoT/NTB and national tourism-related private sector associations (eg. TAAN, NATO, NATTA, NMA, etc.).

Drawbacks of Option 1
➢ Lack of capacity exists at ministry level to drive such a major programme, especially if the 'WNTDP' is also to be effectively coordinated and managed at the same time.
➢ Lack of human resources exists at both central (MoCTCA and NTB) and regional (DoT) levels to dedicate to the ENTDP on a full-time basis.
➢ Lack of available financial resources within the Ministry/DoT/NTB to dedicate specifically to the ENTDP.
➢ Annual budgeting and allocation of state funding may affect the ability of the Ministry/DoT/NTB to focus on the ENTDP.
➢ Lack of exposure to and experience of coordinating similar-sized and complex multi-stakeholder programmes exists.
➢ The DoT branch office in Kakarbhitta lies almost 100 km to the east of the Eastern Nepal TDA.
➢ No on-site representation of the MoCTCA/DoT/NTB presently exists within the TDA and this would need to be established very early on.
➢ No direct formal linkage exists between the MoCTCA/DoT/NTB and district authorities working within the TDA, other than what exists at national and ministry level, meaning that any inter-departmental and inter-ministry liaison within the TDA has to be referred to Kathmandu for decisions.
➢ Each of the Ministry, DoT and NTB has responsibilities and activities that cover and apply to the whole of Nepal and not just Eastern Nepal.
➢ Lack of confidence exists within the region in the ability of the DoT and NTB to deliver on promises given.
➢ Likely that the private sector would not want to work much with the DoT and/or NTB, preferring rather to carry on their businesses without them.
➢ Frequent changes in personnel within the Ministry/DoT/NTB take place, meaning that continuity and consistency of the programme could be seriously affected.
➢ Changes in senior positions may affect how the priority of the programme is viewed and how it would be coordinated and managed.
➢ Funding for this programme coordination and management role would need to be found almost entirely from within the MoCTCA budget or from elsewhere within the Government of Nepal.
➢ Very little outside technical assistance and impartial and non-partisan external advice would be available to the Ministry, DoT and NTB and the implementing agents on the ground.

Overall, and despite ownership of the ENTDP at national state level being very strong, Option 1 does not come across as being overly-promising. If the ENTDP were to be implemented using this structure, it is likely that it would quickly begin to fail. *[Suggested score of 4/10.]*

4.3.2   Option 2: Joint coordination by MoCTCA, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) and Investment Board of Nepal (IBN)

In many ways, this second option is an expansion of Option 1 outlined above. In effect, it sees the 'task group' described above being expanded to include the three key national ministry stakeholders of the **Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation** (MoCTCA), **Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development** (MoFALD) and **Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation** (MoFSC) all working together but being assisted and facilitated by the **Investment Board of Nepal** (IBN).

The broad roles of the four national-level task group members in coordinating and managing the implementation of the ENTDP would be as follows:

➢ **MoCTCA** – this principal state agency for tourism, which would still be the principal beneficiary of the programme, would again address issues at national level, including liaison and coordination with sister ministries, other government bodies and agencies, donor agencies, international NGOs and IFIs who may be involved in the ENTDP. The Ministry would be assisted in this liaison by working together with other ministry members on the 'task group'. The MoCTCA would also be able to call on the DoT in Kathmandu and Kakarbhitta and the NTB in Kathmandu, both of which will play major roles as implementation drivers at regional, district and local levels within the TDA.

➢ **MoFALD** – the involvement of this Ministry in the coordination and management of the ENTDP recognises the very important role that local government plays in the development of tourism in the TDA. The three DDCs within the TDA, as well as the DDCs in those selected neighbouring districts which may become involved at times, will play a crucial part in many of the tourism development activities included in the TDAP, both as implementation drivers and as implementation partners. Having the support of their parent ministry and knowing that the MoFALD is involved in the ENTDP at high level will result in the DDCs being much more confident in their expected role and make implementation of the ENTDP and the TDAP much easier. As with the MoCTCA, the MoFALD would also help address issues at national level, especially inter-ministry ones and with other government bodies and agencies, donors, IFIs, NGOs, etc.

➢ **MoFSC** – much the same can be said for the parent ministry of the DNPWC, the latter being responsible for the two state protected areas that are located in the TDA. With both KTWR and MBNP being see as major assets and players in the development of tourism in the TDA, it is important to have representation of the MoFSC on the ENTDP task group. The Ministry can also assist in inter-ministry liaison and with working with other key national stakeholders.

➢ **IBN** – IBN as a key 'task group' member would be an important and influential government agency to assist with and facilitate the coordination and management of the ENTDP. IBN's past and continued involvement in the Arun-3 HEP would help bring a valuable dimension to the ENTDP, especially as many of the programme's implementers have been working with IBN in the past and enjoy good working relations with it. The fact that IBN may also help to direct much-needed financing to the implementation of the TDAP cannot be ignored.

As mentioned above, this ENTDP coordination and management option would require the 'task group' described under Option 1 to be expanded. In doing this, however, there would still be the need for the full-time appointment of a number of senior officials and members of staff from the four group member institutions. Some of these may be able to be taken on part-time, but this would certainly still require the full commitment of the institutions and individuals over the full five years. Again, there would need to be a dedicated administrative secretariat together with other support staff. The expanded 'task group' would still need to be adequately resourced and sufficient finances either ring-fenced or at least guaranteed for the full five years of the programme.

Again, local representation within the Eastern TDA would be needed, with this being partly achieved through the DDCs and the management bodies for two DNPWC protected areas. This local representation would again be best organised through the creation of up to three district 'sub task groups' comprising government and non-government officials and representatives drawn from the DDC, other district committees (eg. district-level tourism development committees) and selected participating VDCs and other stakeholder bodies.

With this option, there are certainly many more benefits and advantages than for Option 1, but there are still a number of drawbacks or gaps with this structure. A number of the benefits/advantages and drawbacks are similar to those for Option 1.

Benefits/advantages of Option 2
- The state, and especially the three participating ministries, would enjoy wide and full ownership of the ENTDP.
- Opportunities for excellent good inter-ministerial liaison exist, especially between the participating ministries and also because most of these and the other ministries are physically located very close to one another.
- The head offices of most of the key state and non-state stakeholders are located in Kathmandu.
- Potential strong linkages exist or could be established between the MoCTCA (including the DoT and NTB) and national tourism-related private sector associations (eg. TAAN, NATO, NATTA, NMA, etc.).
- IBN would also be able to bring a strong business approach into the ENTDP.
- IBN brings to the table a strong knowledge and technical capacity and capability relating to the TDA and especially to the Arun-3 HEP.
- IBN has long and good working relations with a number of the Sankhuwasabha District state and non-state stakeholders, players and affected communities.
- IBN has influence over and access to significant funding for the implementation of parts of the TDAP and therefore possibly also for the ENTDP.
- IBN's Board comprises a range of very senior politicians and officials from a number of key ministries and government agencies who have the potential for positively influencing the implementation of the ENTDP.
- Coordination and management of the ENTDP can be shared between the key 'task group' bodies, as can the human, material and financial resources necessary to do this.
- The possibility of the 'task group' also being able to address the coordination and management needs of the 'WNTDP' is increased.
- The TDA will have on-site representation from two of the key 'task group' member bodies, namely the MoFALD (ie. district government and administration through the DDCs) and MoFSC (ie. DNPWC through KTWR and MBNP).

Drawbacks of Option 2
- Lack of capacity exists at ministry level to drive such a major programme, especially if the 'WNTDP' is also to be effectively coordinated and managed at the same time.
- Lack of available human resources exists within the participating ministries at national, regional and district levels to dedicate to the ENTDP on a full- or near-full-time basis.
- Shortage of available financial resources within the three ministries to dedicate specifically to the ENTDP.
- Annual budgeting and allocation of state funding may affect the ability of the ministries and IBN to focus on the ENTDP.
- Limited exposure to and experience of coordinating similar-sized and complex multi-stakeholder programmes may exist amongst the 'task group' members.
- The DoT branch office in Kakarbhitta lies almost 100 km to the east of the Eastern Nepal TDA.
- No on-site representation of the MoCTCA/DoT/NTB presently exists within the TDA.
- No direct linkage exists between the MoCTCA/DoT/NTB and district authorities working within the TDA, other than what exists at national and inter-ministerial level.
- The three ministries and the IBN each have responsibilities and activities that cover and apply to the whole of Nepal and not just Eastern Nepal, meaning that none of them may be able to direct as much time and resources to the ENTDP as is required.
- Lack of confidence exists within authorities and communities in the region on the ability of the MoCTCA, DoT and NTB to deliver on promises given. Such a situation may also exist with regard to delivery on undertakings by the DDCs, VDCs and the DNPWC.
- Likely that the private sector would not want to work much with the DoT and/or NTB, preferring rather to carry on their businesses without them.
- Frequent changes in personnel with the ministries take place, meaning that continuity and consistency of the programme could be seriously affected.
- Changes in senior positions within the 'task group' and the three ministries and IBN may affect how the priority of the programme is viewed and how it would be coordinated and managed.
- Funding for this programme coordination and management role would need to be found almost entirely from within the budgets of the participating ministries and IBN or from other Government of Nepal budgets.
- A limited amount of outside technical assistance and impartial and non-partisan external advice would be available to the 'task group' Ministries and the implementing agents on the ground.

Overall, and despite there still being a fairly large number of drawbacks, Option 2 is definitely a big improvement on Option 1. There are many more positives than with Option 1 and many of the negatives are less of a problem than with the first option. If the ENTDP were to be implemented using this structure, it is likely that much of it would succeed, but many aspects would likely be tackled poorly and results will be limited. Overall, the ENTDP would be considered as being partially successful. *[Suggested score of 6.5/10.]*

4.3.3   Option 3: Joint coordination by MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC, IBN and one or more international development agencies (IDAs)

This third option is largely an expansion of and an amendment to Option 2 outlined above. In this case the four state stakeholders that go to make up the 'programme coordinating task group', ie. **Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation** (MoCTCA), **Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development** (MoFALD), **Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation** (MoFSC) and the **Investment Board of Nepal** (IBN) would be joined by one or more **international development agencies** (ie. donor agency, IFI or international NGO).

The big difference between this option and the other two is that, with the key involvement of one or more IDAs, the implementation of the ENTDP effectively becomes a state programme which is greatly supported by one or more IFAs and is dedicated specifically to the full implementation of the TDAP. It would be largely driven by a technical assistance (TA) team working in very close collaboration with and on behalf of its Nepalese government partners.

With this option effectively being an IDA 'project', the 'task group' referred to above would become a project team. It is envisaged that this would consist of a group (3-4 individuals in total) of international TA experts headed by a team leader working in close collaboration with seconded counterparts drawn from each of the principal partner ministries and their departments and possibly also the IBN. At this stage, it is foreseen that the TA team would be made up of long-term key experts in the fields of, for example: ♦ tourism product development; ♦ appropriate financing mechanisms; and ♦ tourism awareness and training. These would be supported as required using short-term experts on, for example: ♦ protected area and tourism planning; ♦ partnerships, concessions and agreements; ♦ tourism information provision; ♦ information technology; ♦ marketing and promotion; ♦ etc.

The TA team would require offices, preferably located within the premises of the MoCTCA, with administrative and logistics support staff. Other than the provision of the office space itself and basic facilities, the office would be resourced through IDA support. This IDA support would be entirely ring-fenced and cover the full five years of the project. Financial support in monies and in kind would be provided by the Nepalese partners.

Local representation for the project within the Eastern TDA would still be needed and may best be achieved by adapting the three 'sub task groups' referred to under Options 1 and 2 into project structures, perhaps called 'district project task groups'. These groups would be similar to those already described, but they would have unrestricted access to key and non-key (long- and short-term) experts from the project team. These would regularly consult and work with local partners, especially during field visits. The TA team members would also play an important role in building up the capacity of district bodies and officials to better plan and implement tourism development in their areas of jurisdiction.

The broad roles of the five project members in coordinating and managing the implementation of the ENTDP would be as follows:

> ➢ **IDA partner** – the TA team contracted by the IDA partner would provide the principal drive behind implementing the ENTDP. In addition to working closely with project counterparts in Kathmandu, the TA team would provide advice and guidance to all participating stakeholders and players at national and, in particular, at regional, district and local levels, and especially through the three 'district project task groups'. Although based in Kathmandu, team members would frequently undertake field visits to the TDA to interact and work with TDA stakeholders and players, striving at all times to promote good partnerships and building up capacity within the various state and non-state bodies that are involved. The former would include, in particular, the DDCs, municipalities and VDCs, while the latter would include community organisations, communities, the public-at-large and private sector associations, especially at local and district levels, as well as interested tourism private sector enterprises.

> ➢ **MoCTCA** – this ministry would be a key partner in the project and would remain as the principal beneficiary of the ENTDP. Although it would still help to address issues at national level with sister ministries and other state bodies and agencies, the MoCTCA could perhaps concentrate more on securing and holding onto good political ownership and commitment to the programme rather than concerning itself with the day-to-day supervision and management of the project-focused activities of the DoT and the NTB. Being represented on the proposed PSC (see *Section 4.2* above), it would not be necessary to appoint a full-time or even part-time Ministry

counterpart to the project. Having one or more representatives from its daughter institutions, the DoT and NTB, working as direct counterparts to the TA team may suffice, but the Ministry would always retain overall authority over the inputs from both institutions.

- **MoFALD** – including this ministry as one of the project partners is still vital, especially as it will be through and with the assistance of the district and local government bodies within the TDA that many of the tourism development-related activities under the ENTDP will be implemented. Not needing to be one the physical key drivers of the ENTDP at national level, however, also means that, as with the MoCTCA, the Ministry can direct its contribution to the programme much more through its district structures, delegating responsibilities and duties where necessary to the DDCs and relying on the TA team to ensure good coordination. The Ministry, however, would also have representation on the proposed PSC. The Ministry would as before also help address issues at national level, but through its district structures it can also help facilitate liaison with other state and non-state bodies at that level. In many ways, therefore, it will be the key actions of the DDCs which will be the manifestation of much of the Ministry's commitment to and involvement in this programme. For this reason, it is believed that a suitable senior member from each of the three DDCs, preferably the person to whom the tourism portfolio has been assigned, should be appointed as a counterpart to the TA team. Bearing in mind the other duties that these individuals would need to carry out as part of their normal job, it is recognised that this would probably only be on a part-time basis. However, the opportunities and benefits to the DDCs and individuals of being closely involved in such a project should not be ignored.

- **MoFSC** – this ministry would also still form a vital part of the project, though it could delegate much of its involvement to the DNPWC. It will certainly be important for the project to have direct links with the DNPWC at national level, especially as some of the activities to be undertaken through the ENTDP using the TDAP will very likely require discussion and policy decisions to be made at the top. For this reason a national counterpart from DNWC should be appointed to work with the TA team, though probably on a part-time basis. The Ministry, as with the MoCTCA and MoFALD, would be represented on the proposed PSC. On the ground, the TA team will work closely with the DNPWC through the management of KTWR and MBNP in the TDA itself. Again, the Ministry as a whole can also assist in inter-ministry liaison and working with other key national stakeholders.

- **IBN** – IBN's involvement in the project under Option 3 is also still very crucial, especially as the Board is integrally involved in the Arun-3 HEP in Sankhuwasabha District and again brings a valuable dimension, knowledge, experience and contribution to the ENTDP and to the project that would implement it. IBN would also be represented on the PSC. If it is decided to incorporate the proposed 'WNTDP' into this project, IBN's involvement with the Upper Karnali HEP in western Nepal will also be of great benefit.

With Option 3, there are clearly many benefits and advantages of involving a donor partner on a project basis when compared with Options 1 and 2. Many of these positive factors are similar to those given in the first two options, but there are also several new ones. In general, the latter tend to negate many of the drawbacks listed under Options 1 and 2. Under Option 3, however, there are still some drawbacks.

Benefits/advantages of Option 3
- The state as a whole and especially the three participating ministries and the IBN would enjoy wide and full ownership of the ENTDP.
- Opportunities for excellent good inter-ministerial liaison exist, especially between the participating ministries and IBN and also because most of these and the other ministries are physically located very close to one another.
- The head offices of most of the key state and non-state stakeholders, including private sector tourism associations, are located in Kathmandu.
- IBN's involvement is particularly valuable in that it brings strong, knowledge, experience and technical capacity, good working linkages and relationships with a number of affected areas and stakeholders and potential influence at high level.
- The possibility of linking the ENTDP with the 'WNTDP' and the project jointly addressing the coordination and management needs of both is significantly increased.
- The TDA will have on-site representation from two of the key project member bodies, namely the MoFALD (ie. district government and administration through the DDCs) and MoFSC (ie. DNPWC through KTWR and MBNP).
- Much more reduced reliance on DoT and NTB being able to coordinate implementation of the ENTDP at TDA level.

➢ Most of the financial cost for implementing the ENTDP would lie with the IDA and not with government ministries and agencies, meaning that ENTDP does not have to rely on very limited and fickle state funding to be implemented.

➢ The fact that the ministries and IBN have responsibilities elsewhere in the Nepal will have less impact on the implementation of the ENTDP as, instead, the TA project team together with their counterparts will be concentrating on the Eastern Nepal (and possibly Western Nepal) TDA.

➢ Ministries would not need to assign limited and valuable human resources to overseeing the implementation of the ENTDP.

➢ The uncertainties of annual budgeting for ministries have less of an effect on ENTDP implementation.

➢ Lack of onsite representation of the MoCTCA and in particular the DoT and NTB within the TDA is no longer such a major issue as DoT and NTB counterparts and the TA team experts will help fill the gap during many project-focused field visits to the region.

➢ With there being much more chance of the activities under the ENTDP and TDAP being successfully undertaken, confidence amongst stakeholders and players within the TDA in the MoCTCA, DoT, NTB and other government bodies being able to deliver will increase.

➢ The TA team will be able to promote and facilitate engagement between government institutions and the tourism private sector, especially at district and local levels.

➢ Considerably more technical assistance and impartial and non-partisan external advice would be made available to implementing agents and other stakeholders and players.

➢ Being an IDA-funded project, the implementation of the ENTDP would require intensive monitoring and external assessment of the performance of the project in the form of appropriate monitoring systems and mid-term and final evaluations or reviews.

Drawbacks of Option 3

➢ It may take some time to fully-engage one or more interested IDAs to support the ENTDP. This means beginning the implementation of an IDA-supported project from 1 January 2017 may be delayed, so holding back the initial implementation of some of the activities. The Nepalese Government partners would need to temporarily steer the programme.

➢ The reliance on an IDA to support and help implement what is a regional development plan that belongs to the Government and people of Nepal may not have the full political support and backing that it requires.

➢ Lack of available human resources exists within the participating ministries and their departments at national, regional and district levels to dedicate to the ENTDP on a full- or near-full-time basis.

➢ Possible changes amongst senior personnel within the ministries and IBN and with government project counterparts may affect the continuity and consistency of the programme as well as priorities.

➢ A danger exists with the project that it may become too result-oriented (ie. the focus being on project outputs and deliverables) rather than also being focus on process and systems (ie. development and institutionalising of systems, capacity-building, etc.). Both are required, but they need to be well-balanced with the emphasis always being placed on long-term sustainability.

In considering this option, the question that immediately arises relates to which IDA would be involved in the coordination, management and implementation of the ENTDP through the proposed project. Examples of possibilities include *inter alia* the Department for International Development (DfID), European Union (EU), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Financing Corporation/World Bank Group (IFC/WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). All these agencies have worked or are currently working with the Government of Nepal in a range of sectors, with some interventions being focused specifically on the tourism sector (eg. SNV's past support of the GHT Development Programme, current tourism portfolio of DfID's Samarth/NMDP, assistance from IFC with developing TDA plans, etc.).

There is no real reason why more than one IDA cannot be involved in the ENTDP, even if only in a contributory role with respect to specific support for aspects of the programme. However, it is more likely that IDAs would prefer to run an entire programme than share it with other agencies that may have entirely different corporate objectives or *modus operandi*, but efforts to include more than one IDA should be taken.

Overall, Option 3 is probably the best of the three options that have been presented. Although there are some drawbacks with the project-based approach that is being proposed, in particular the delay in getting fully off the ground, these are generally very much outweighed by the benefits and advantages that the option presents. If the ENTDP were to be implemented using this project-based structure, it is likely that much of it would succeed with most, hopefully all,

of the TDAP's strategic objectives and those of the ENTDP being more than satisfactorily achieved. Overall, the ENTDP would be considered as being largely successful. *[Suggested score of 9/10.]*

4.3.4   Recommended option

From the above, it is clear that the best option or structure that has been suggested for implementing the proposed ENTDP is **Option 3: Joint coordination by MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC, IBN and one or more IDAs**. The IDA, or IDAs, is as yet unspecified.

In summary, the key reasons for selecting this option are as follows:

➢ Through the integrated involvement of one or more donor agencies/IFIs/international NGOs there is an ensured five-year window for the implementation of the ENTDP.
➢ There is a much better chance of the ENTDP and the TDAP being implemented in full and as intended.
➢ There is increased merit in combining the coordination and management of both the ENTDP and the 'WNTDP', perhaps also with other regional tourism development programmes.
➢ The day-to-day operations of the participating ministries and departments are not unduly interrupted.
➢ Any personnel changes that take place within the participating ministries and agency will have much less effect on the implementation of the ENTDP.
➢ A good opportunity exists for improving working relations between key participating ministries with respect to the tourism sector, facilitated where possible by the donor-supported project.
➢ Significantly more impartial and international best practice and advice is brought into the ENTDP.
➢ An excellent opportunity exists to build capacity at district/TDA level.
➢ The project is a good mechanism by which long- and short-term technical expertise and advice can be provided to all involved stakeholders and players.
➢ An opportunity exists for multiple donor agencies, IFIs and international NGOs to become involved in the tourism sector in Nepal.

4.4   Next steps!

The following steps need to be taken in order to implement the TDAP. Ideally these should all be undertaken within a three-month period.

➢ Translate the TDAP into Nepali.
➢ Lobby for the TDAP to be approved by the appropriate authorities.
➢ Convene a working group to begin driving the implementation of the TDAP – possibly comprising of at least the MoCTCA, MoFALD, MoFSC and IBN.
➢ Agree upon Investment-Ready Projects (IRPs) and priority activities to be implemented from January 2017.
➢ Approach potentially interested IDAs with regard to their being involved in and supporting the implementation of the TDAP and the proposed 'Eastern Nepal Tourism Development Programme (ENTDP) or elements of it.
➢ Establish a Programme Steering Committee (PSC) for the ENTDP – possibly comprising of senior representatives from MoCTCA, DoT, NTB, CAAN, MoFALD, DNPWC, IBN, TAAN, NATO, tourism private sector, Sunsari, Dhankuta and Sankhuwasabha DDCs and participating IDAs, chaired by the MoCTCA and facilitated by IBN.
➢ Set up a SME Financing Facility and mechanism for existing tourism entrepreneurs in the Eastern Nepal TDA – if possible use an existing financing structure.
➢ Set up a Grants Fund and mechanism for public tourism attractions and infrastructures and emerging tourism players in the eastern TDA.
➢ Incorporate the ENTDP into ministry budgets and work plans.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:   List of stakeholders consulted during formulation and validation of the TDAP

The following is a list of individuals and organisations consulted during this formulation mission:

Mr Khumkant Acharya	District Police Officer; Sankhuwasabha District Administrative Office; Khandbari
Mr Krishna Prasad Acharya	Director-General; DNPWC; Kathmandu
Mr Shankar Acharya	Secretary and Acting-Chairman; Prakashpur VDC; Sunsari District
Mr Bishma Adhikari	Chairman and President; Fencing Security Committee and Fish-Farming Committee; Koshi Tappu, Sunsari District
Mr Koshnath Adhikari	Senior Divisional Engineer; DoT; Kathmandu
Mr Subash Adhikari	Statistics Officer; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta
Mr Kamal Ali	Assistant Administrative Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa
Mr Niyamar Ansari	Manager; Koshi Tappu Birdwatching Camp; Koshi Tappu, Sunsari District
Mr Sumit Baral	Tourism Manager; Samarth/NMDP; Kathmandu
Mr Bharat Basnet	Owner/Managing Director; Explore Nepal Ltd; Kathmandu
Mr Basu Dev Bharaj	Secretary and Managing Director; Sunsari Tourism Development Committee and Hotel Sechha; Dharan
Mr Bishnu Bhattarai	Chairman; Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee; Chatara, Sunsari District
Mr Bishnu Bhattarai	Marketing and Communications Manager; TAAN; Kathmandu
Mr Ravi Bhattarai	Joint-Secretary; IBN; Kathmandu
Ms Srijana Bhattarai	Consultant and Manager, Local and Social Benefits; IBN; Kathmandu
Mr Padam Bhujel	Sub Engineer; Basantapur Municipality; Basantapur, Terhathum District
Mr Kagandra Kumar Bista	President and Representative; Hotel Association of Dhankuta and Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce; Hile
Mr Ganga Bisth	Journalist; NTV
Mr Dukhi Ram Chaudhary	Naturalist; Explore Nepal Ltd; Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp, Sunsari District
Mr Harshalata Chaudhary	Chief of Planning Division; Ramdhuni; Sunsari District
Mr PK Chaudhary	Police Officer; Tumlingtar Airport; Tumlingtar, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Ganesh Prasad Dahal	Local Development Officer; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta
Ms Ujjwala Dali	Officiating Director, Tourism Marketing and Promotion; NTB; Kathmandu
Mr Sudarshan Prasad Dhakal	Director General; DoT; Kathmandu
Mr Tirtha Prasad Dhital	Chief Executive Officer; Dhankuta Municipality; Dhankuta District
Mr Sanjay Dhungel	Senior Divisional Engineer; IBN; Kathmandu
Mr Dipkiran Gaule	
Mr Ananta Kumar Gauli	President; Sankhuwasabha Chamber of Commerce and Industries; Khandbari, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Navin Gauli	Owner/Manager; Arati Hotel; Khandbari, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Basanta Gautam	Barracks Head; Shri Shri Maher Barracks, Dhankuta
Mr Sitaram Gautam	Social Development Officer; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta
Mr Bheshraj Ghimire	Executive Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa
Mr Bishnu Ram Ghimire	Tourism Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa, Sunsari District
Mr Danduraj Ghimire	Joint Secretary; MoCTCA; Kathmandu
Mr Kalammani Ghimire	Secretary; Num VDC; Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Keshab Ghimire	President; Nepal Journalists Federation
Mr Purushottam Ghimire	Executive Director; Khandbari Municipality; Khandbari

Mr Rajan Ghimire	Administrative Assistant; Sankhuwasabha District Administrative Office; Khandbari
Mr Teg Nath Ghimire	Senior Vice-President; Dhankuta Chamber of Commerce and Industries; Dhankuta
Mr Binod Gurung	Secretary; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center; Khandbari, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Gyan Bahadur Gurung	Hotel owner and community representative; Simma; Sankhuwasabha District
Prof Leon Hugo	Writer and Green Flag hiking trail auditor and trail planner, Chair of Hiking Organisation of South Africa and Consultant for Samarth/NMDP; Kathmandu
Mr Chandra Sekhar Kapri	Army Officer; Shradiya Barracks, Khandbari
Mr Deep Nasingh Karki	Operations Officer, Private Equity Funds; IFC; Kathmandu
Mr Govinda Karki	Chief Executive Officer; Greater Barahachhetra Development Committee; Chatara, Sunsari District
Mr Nabin Karki	Resort Manager; Hotel Mountain Resort; Hile, Dhankuta District
Mr Sunil Kumar Karna	Assistant Forest Officer; Sankhuwasabha District Forest Office; Khandbari
Mr Ram Bahadur Katuwal	Senior Scientist; Pakhribas Agricultural Research Station; Pakhribas, Dhankuta District
Mr Narayan Prasad Khanal	Secretary; Vedetar VDC; Dhankuta District
Mr Prem Khanal	Consultant and Senior Community Relations Officer; IBN; Kathmandu
Mr Ram Koirala	Member; Rhamduni Area Conservation Committee; Sunsari District
Mr Subash Chandra Kuikel	Executive Director; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Khandbari
Mr Gautam Kumar K.C.	District Police Officer; Sankhuwasabha District Police Office; Khandbari
Mr Man Bahadur Limbu	President; Sankhuwasabha Tourism Development Center; Khandbari, Sankhuwasabha District
Ms Alina Magar	Managing Director; Sechha Travelling; Dharan, Sunsari District
Mr Ramesh Mahat	Station Manager; Tumlingtar Airport; Tumlingtar, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Binod Mishra	Administrative Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa
Mr Shankar Nepal	Under-Secretary; Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development; Kathmandu
DSP Dhirendra Neupane	Company Commander; Area Police Force; Dhankuta
Mr Ganesh Neupane	Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) Nepal; Dhankuta
Mr Narayan Neupane	Chief Executive Officer; Pakhribas Municipality; Dhankuta District
Mr Bibhuti Raj Pandey	Superintendent of Police; Dhankuta District Police Office; Dhankuta
Mr Chetnath Parajuli	Secretary; Diding VDC; Sankhuwasabha District
Dr Prasad Parajuli	President; Sankhuwasabha Hotel Association; Khandbari
Mr Mahendra Kumar Parajuli	Secretary; Pawakhola VDC; Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Ashok Pokharel	President; Nepal Association of Tour Operators; Kathmandu
Mr Cholraj Pokharel	Planning Officer; Dhankuta DDC; Dhankuta
Mr Shyam Poudel	Administrative Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa
Mr Sagar Prasai	Health Officer; Sankhuwasabha District Health Office; Khandbari
Mr Jun Kumar Rai	Secretary; Yaphu/Makalu VDC; Sankhuwasabha District
Ms Maya Rai	Social Development Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa
Mr Rudra Prasad Rai	Secretary; Riwad VDC; Dhankuta District
Mr Shushil Rai	Co-owner; Tomar River Side Resort & River Park; Mulghat, Dhankuta District
Mr Tilak Prasad Rai	Vice President, VDC, National Federation; Dhankuta
Mr Chandra Prasad Rijal	President; TAAN; Kathmandu
Mr Saurabh Rijal	Investment Facilitation Expert; IFC; Kathmandu
Mr Indranand Sah	Acting Office Head; Inaruwa Municipality; Sunsari District
Mr Galeo Saintz	Founding Chair of World Trails Network and Consultant for Samarth/NMDP; Kathmandu

Mr Chudaraj Sapkota	Section Officer; DoT; Kathmandu
Mr Ratnesh Shashi	Section Officer; IBN; Kathmandu
Mr Manoj Kumar Shah	Chief Warden MBNP; DNPWC; Khandbari, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Bhakti Raj Sharma	Information Officer; Dharan Sub-Metropolitan Municipality; Dharan, Sunsari District
Mr Rajendra Sharma	Manager; Horizon Mountain Resort; Hile, Dhankuta District
Mr Sumil Sharma	Officiating Director, Public Relations and Publicity; NTB; Kathmandu
Mr Gelu Sherpa	Hotel owner; Gadhidanda; Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Govind Bahadur Shrestha	Under-Secretary; MoFSC; Kathmandu
Mr Manish Shrestha	Owner; Hotel Buddha; Tumlingtar; Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Rosan Shrestha	Manager; Hotel Kanjirowa; Hile, Dhankuta District
Mr Shiva Raj Shrestha	Chairman; Sunsari Tourism Development Committee; Dharan
Mr Subarna Shrestha	President and Member of Sunsari Tourism Development Committee; Dharan
Mr Suresh Man Singh	Director; Biratnagar Airport; Biratnagar, Morang District
Mr Krishna Prasad Subedi	Local Development Officer; Sankhuwasabha DDC; Khandbari
Mr JB Tamang	Police Officer; Tumlingtar Airport; Tumlingtar, Sankhuwasabha District
Mr Anil Thakur	Conservation Officer; KTWR; Koshi Tappu, Sunsari District
Mr Udaya Chandra Thakur	Secretary; MoFSC; Kathmandu
Mr Chandra Krishna Thakuri	Secretary; Dhankuta Tourism Development Office; Dhankuta
Mr Deepak Kumar Thapa	Section Officer; IBN; Kathmandu
Mr Ram Bahadur Thapa	Secretary; Rajrani VDC; Dhankuta District
Mr Bishnu Prasad Thapaliya	Assistant Management Officer; DNPWC; Kathmandu
Mr Arun Kumar Timilsina	Sub-Inspector; Khandbari Security Base Camp; Khandbari
Mr Prem Prakash Upreti	Police Officer; Dhankuta District Administrative Office; Dhankuta
Mr Ram Prasad Wagle	Local Development Officer; Sunsari DDC; Inaruwa
Mr Devendra Yadav	Chef; Hotel Mountain Resort; Hile, Dhankuta District

<u>Names not recorded</u>

Estate Manager; Guranse Tea Estate; Hile, Dhankuta District

Home owner; Yakuwa, Sankhuwasabha District

Police Officer at road checkpoint; Deurali, Dhankuta District

Restaurant owner and community representative; Num Bazar; Sankhuwasabha District

Appendix 2:　　　Bibliography

The key documents referred to during the formulation of this TDAP are listed below. A large number of websites were also consulted.

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