



Field Trip Report

Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC),
Bangladesh

Megan Epler Wood Field Visit

January 17- February 8, 2009

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Objectives for Field Visit

Build on Nishorgo experience for the development of community-based nature tourism in Bangladesh. Review landscapes, tourism development patterns and trends, and gather all relevant stakeholder viewpoints for a community-based nature tourism strategy for the Teknaf Peninsula.

Goals for Field Visit

- Observe and review Nishorgo experience in the development of tourism in Lawachara and Satchuri parks
- Observe and review MACH experience in the development of tourism in Baikka Beel
- Meet with government policy makers presently developing policies related to the protection of landscapes and discuss how their work interacts with the development of tourism and discuss current policies
- Review potential of Teknaf peninsula for the expansion of community-based tourism, via meetings with community, government, and private sector stakeholders
- Undertake landscape review of the Teknaf Peninsula and GIS mapping reviewing existing tourism development and areas for new development

Goals for Trip Report

- Review outcomes of meetings and a write-up of field observations to provide a set of preliminary recommendations for IPAC project on development of community-based nature tourism in protected areas observed during field visit.

Upcoming Reports in Scope of Work

- A draft community-based nature tourism strategy for the Teknaf Peninsula
- A SWOT analysis of the Sundarbans National Park
- A final community-based nature tourism strategy for Teknaf Peninsula

Final Schedule of Field Visit

Date	Meetings	Goals
Jan-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival on Emirates • Briefings with IPAC and USAID CTO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define Objectives & Goals • Plan for Field Visit
Jan-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Hasan Mansur, Managing Director, Field Guides Ltd. • IPAC Partners Meeting with short EWI presentation • Meeting Abdul Khaleque, Principal Science Officer, Department of Fisheries • Meeting Ishtiaq Ahmad, Department of Forests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review goals of private sector for nature tourism development • Understand IPAC partnerships • Understand Departments of Fisheries and Forestry approaches to nature tourism
Jan-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel to Srimongol • Field visit to Baikka Beel • Meeting with Deputy District Magistrate, Mofizul Islam • Meeting with UNO & SUFO Moulvibazaar Sadar Upazila 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review community experience with nature tourism in Baikka Beel and understand wetland restoration approaches of MACH program • Review understanding of nature tourism by local policy makers
Jan-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit IPAC cluster office • Visit Lawachara National Park trails with eco-guides • Visit Khasi village • Visit UNO Kamalganj • Visit eco-cottage in Lawachara area • Visit Student Dormitory in Lawachara • Co-manager and Eco-guide stakeholder meeting Lawachara • Visit Tripuri village women's textile group • Visit Madhapur Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet cluster staff and learn about enterprise development and communications strategies • Review and understand tourism development approaches at Lawachara National Park • Understand tourism impacts on local hill tribe villages • Informal SWOT based on comments of eco-guides, community co-managers, and local business people • Develop view of larger development opportunities and patterns for northeast region
Jan-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Bangladesh Tea Research Institute Guest House • Visit Satchuri National Park to view interpretation center and Tripura hill tribe village • Meet with Deputy Commissioner, Abul Kashem Talukder for Satchuri 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand commercial development trends in Lawachara park region • Review potential for increased nature tourism in Satchuri National Park • Understand Forest Department approaches to nature tourism
Jan 23-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest and recovery from pneumonia!

Jan-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefine agenda with Nasim • Meeting with Fashir Ahmad, Director of Planning, Parjatan Corporation, National Tourism Organization • Meeting with Yves Marr, Owner, Contic, Tour & Boat Operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorganize schedule • Understand national tourism planning strategies under new government • Understand potential for traditional boat restoration and tour operations for private tour operator
Jan-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Enamul Haque, United International University & author of IUCN <i>Nature Based Tourism</i> Report • Meeting Motiur Rahman, Managing Director and Masud Hossain, Executive Director, Bengal Tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review previous research on nature based tourism in Bangladesh with author of most comprehensive and recent report • Review operations of leading national tour operator and issues of coordination between IPAC and private sector
Jan-30	Day off	
Jan-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Bob Winterbottom, COP IPAC • Evening presentation to leading stakeholders hosted by IPAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review draft powerpoint presentation and discuss agenda for meeting • Review key components of nature based tourism strategies and issues of policy development with private sector, government, and NGO leading stakeholders
Feb-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel to Cox's Bazar • Private Sector Stakeholder Meeting Cox's Bazar • Meet Cox's Bazar cluster staff • Visit Borochoira Village Conservation Group and visit trails in area • Visit Himchari Waterfalls commercial vendor area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop understanding of development patterns in Cox's Bazar and viewpoints of leading stakeholders on planning • Develop understanding of IPAC staff capacity and approaches • Visit community-based nature tourism projects developed by Department of Environment/UNDP project CWBMP program • Develop understanding of front-country Forest Department concessioning program for Himchari Park
Feb-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel with team to Teknaf along main road • Visit Kudum Cave and meet Forest Department and co-manager representatives • Visit Mochoni Park, review trails with eco-guides • CMC meeting for Mochoni Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review development patterns on main road to Teknaf • Review trail and tourism re-development prospects for Kudum Cave • Understand community/Forest Department cooperation on protection of resource and tourists in region • Review trail potential, visitation patterns, and guide capacity for Mochoni main entrance • Develop understanding of community needs from tourism development

Feb-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel by boat to St. Martin's Island • Meet with Oceanic Dive company • CMC meeting organized by CWBMP project • Dinner at Shimana Periyé, eco-resort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review boating routes, infrastructure, volume, and interpretation of route to St Martin's Island • Develop understanding of tourism's impact on coral reef system • Review impacts of tourism on community members in main village on St Martin's • Observe small scale resort on island
Feb-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit coral reef island/spit Cheradia by speed boat and tour island • Review coastal development by boat • Review tourism and village development patterns on north end of island • Teknaf Eco-cottage visit • Return to Teknaf & Cox's Bazar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review informal, unplanned tourism development on Cheradia • Review rapidity of coastal tourism development • Review unplanned development patterns on north end where village and tourism development are densely intermixed • Review status of eco-cottage rooms and addition
Feb-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Inani Forest Department Guest House • Drive on beach to Garjan Forest with Forest Department leadership • Meet with Ishtiaq Ahmad, Forest Conservator • Stay at Mermaid Eco-resort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review tourism development patterns in Inani area • Review undeveloped coastline and beaches on west coast of Teknaf Peninsula • Review potential of Garjan Forest for expanded tourism development • Discuss mapping and development approaches for Teknaf with Forest Department leadership • Discuss Teknaf tourism development with private sector, Mermaid Eco-Resort owners
Feb-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to Dhaka • Meeting with Aid to Artisans to discuss supply chain training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of supply chain approaches to tourism development
Feb-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departure on Emirates 	

Preliminary Findings

The data collected during the field visit will be discussed under the following categories. These categories of discussion and review have been tailored to the specific needs of the IPAC project.

Contributions to Resource Management

The IPAC project seeks to improve opportunities for local community support of conservation of natural resources and biodiversity through the development of community-based nature tourism

Community Benefits & Needs

IPAC seeks to improve and expand its Alternative Income Generating (AIG) activities and increase community involvement in nature tourism as a means to improve the welfare of local communities

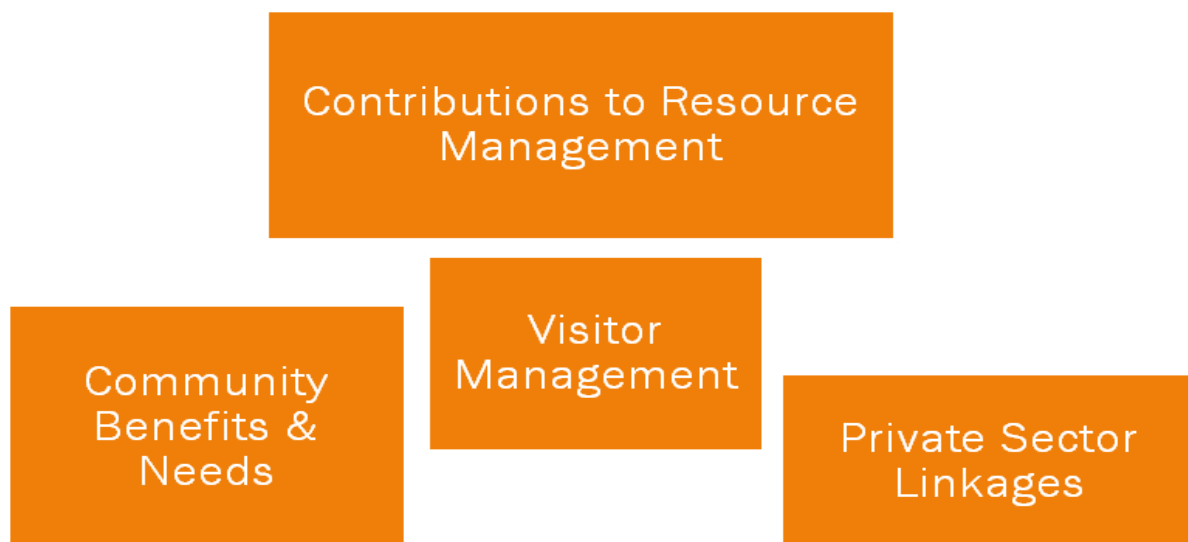
Visitor Management

IPAC seeks to improve conservation financing and use community-based nature tourism as a means to strengthen its efforts to conserve protected areas, and as such the management of visitors in parks and protected areas will need to become a core focus of the IPAC program

Private Sector Involvement

IPAC seeks to involve the private sector in nature tourism development, through public-private partnerships and to strengthen the tourism linked value chains to protected areas to create a more sustainable and long-term revenue generation strategy for protected areas.

Community-Based Nature Tourism Categories of Review



The initial field visits to Lawachara and Satchari National Parks, Teknaf Game Reserve and Baika Beel provided excellent input on the above categories of information for future reference by the IPAC Project.

A. Contributions to Resource Management

Forest Department Protected Areas

In Lawachara and Satchuri National Parks, and the Teknaf Game Reserve community-based nature tourism has an important role to play in supporting existing efforts to protect natural resources in the region. But as the parks attract more visitors, the combination of efforts to both protect the forest and offer tourism services is becoming increasingly unsustainable for local families.

- In Lawachara National Park visitor numbers have gone up 106% in one year
- In Satchuri Park visitation has increased 225%, though with much smaller total volume
- For Teknaf Peninsula, visitation is decreasing

Visitor Numbers

	Lawachara	Satchuri	Teknaf
2007	28,575	5584	11446
2008	58,946	18152	8400

The CMC in Lawachara National Park reports that activities to protect forest resources and earn a living through nature tourism are increasingly incompatible. Families are being stretched to both earn a living from new livelihood strategies such as tourism, and participate in the voluntary protection of nature-based resources as part of their participation in the co-management program.

If Lawachara can be considered a good indicator of how tourism will develop in all three protected areas visited during this field visit, it can be concluded that as tourism visitation increases, unless other measures are taken, it will increasingly undermine once successful IPAC efforts to use co-management approaches to protect natural resources.

This report will review the needs for communities to manage tourism and for visitors to be managed, presenting an overall picture to IPAC that suggests a more systematic sustainable tourism program will be required before more community-based nature tourism in protected areas is fostered.

Sales Revenues in Taka

	Lawachara	Satchuri	Teknaf
2007	141,142	24,277	11,715
2008	124,545	17,071	3,225

Sales revenue reports, which include the sales of caps, T-shirts, posters, trail brochures, guide books, indicate visitors are not yet making many purchases when visiting parks, and that sales are decreasing. Certainly, shops for selling items could be better positioned. Reports also indicate that the eco-cottages need more private sector linkages. More work can undoubtedly be done to offer increased marketing and create more marketable goods associated with the protected areas under review. However efforts to increase sales, must be combined with more professional management of tourism or the results could be deleterious to conservation activities.

In meetings with the Eco-guides, it was indicated that domestic visitors have a tendency to ignore rules and suggested guidelines for behavior. Even though revenues from more sales will be highly beneficial to local communities, the greater the number of visitors, the more tourism will begin to get out of control and harm the landscape. Efforts to generate more revenues from tourism will have to be well-managed, consistently applied and include enforcement of visitor conduct as will be discussed under Visitor Management.

At present, policies are being initiated by Nishorgo/IPAC and the Forest Department that would allow the collection of entry fees with 50% of the amount collecting going to the Forest Department and

Central Treasury, and 50% to the Co-Management Committees. An entry fee system will be critical to formalizing the management of tourism in parks. The IUCN *Nature Based Tourism Report* recommends that a differential set of fees is charged to price the most popular parks at levels that would help prevent overcrowding. A higher entrance fee for Lawachara National Park, with its rapidly growing number of visitors, would lower visitor numbers and raise revenues for the CMCs. This solution is highly recommended for implementation.

However, an entry fee system will have to be carefully launched, consistently applied and enforced or it will not be respected. Launching such a system takes planning and capital. IPAC will need to consider exactly how to apply its resources to ensure an entry fee system is successfully launched.

Further planning is also required to develop a system for the use of entry fee revenues. At present, there is no formal understanding among the CMCs or the Forest Department that tourism management requires investment, and a standard budgetary system to support planning, management and infrastructure maintenance. There appears to be little recognition among Forest Department officials that any system that introduces tourism and tourism infrastructure in parks must receive steady financing to manage tourism infrastructure, and maintain programs that prevent the destruction of natural resources that can be caused by tourism.

Meetings with the CMCs indicate that their first hand experience with visitors has quickly educated them on the need for more funds to manage tourism. However, their experience in managing tourism is understandably limited. This indicates that IPAC will have to provide technical assistance to the CMCs to make certain that the revenues generated by tourism, when entry fees are instituted, are in part devoted to the management of tourism in parks. (See section on Visitor Management).

International best practice would also strongly indicate that a portion of the 50% of entry fee funds to be received by the Forest Department should also be devoted to the management of tourism infrastructure, some of which has been built on Forest Department property and presently is not in operation. However, at present, it has been indicated by leading authorities at the Forest Department that garnering a change in the existing policy agreement – which ensures the Forest Department returns all tourism revenues to the Central Treasury – will be unlikely or impossible. IPAC will therefore have to focus on the realities of ensuring that existing tourism infrastructure built with USAID funds on Forest Department land come under the management of the CMCs. A technical assistance program will be required to ensure that these facilities are appropriately maintained and managed, or it is likely that they will begin to lose their value and fall prey to a lack of maintenance.

A conservative view of how long it will take to begin to raise revenues from tourism via entry fees and sales should be closely considered, as plans for an IPAC technical assistance program are designed to ensure resources are protected and tourism facilities are consistently maintained and managed as part of any efforts to upscale tourism in national parks.

Nishorgo achieved extraordinary gains in the development of a co-management system for Forest Department lands. In its efforts to introduce more alternative income generating benefits, Nishorgo successfully introduced community based tourism programs – with the training of eco-guides and the development of eco-cottages. However, systems to channel tourism revenues directly to parks to

ensure that tourism does not damage the resources upon which it depends is a very large responsibility that awaits further strategic design, technical assistance and implementation.

Only via systematic planning will tourism continue to contribute to the conservation of natural resources on Forest Department lands such as Lawachara and Satchuri. For Teknaf Game Reserve, the overall impacts of tourism have yet to be felt, but the issues are precisely the same.

Fisheries Department Protected Areas

One wetland, Baika Beel, was visited during the Epler Wood field visit. This Beel was restored as part of the MACH project under the management of the Fisheries Department

In Baika Beel, the communities have seen a positive change in the protection of the wetland, with fisheries dramatically improved, which they view as highly beneficial. The tourism infrastructure, in the form of the viewing tower, has been helpful to community members and visitors to gain a better understanding of the value of wildlife and natural resources in their region. This is an excellent project, with outstanding potential for further resource protection, which should be considered for replication.

Wetlands like Baika Beel represent an excellent opportunity for developing a larger, tourism program that will bring greater benefits to efforts to conserve natural wetland areas in Bangladesh. The potential of damaging the resource at Baika Beel appear to be low and the surrounding areas appear to be unlikely to be harmed by increased tourism. It is therefore tentatively concluded that Baika Beel should receive increased tourism development assistance from IPAC, including further creation of a vibrant supply chain that would bring tourists to the Beel via tours from the Srimongal area.

Local community members, operating small boats will need more training to handle larger groups, and efforts to create an orderly boating environment should be in place before more marketing and supply chain activity is introduced to the area. However, more tourism can be introduced with the technical assistance capacity that IPAC presently has in place. It is highly recommended that the IPAC team focus first on supply-chain linkages. (See supply chain linkages section). Further analysis of the potential ecological fragility of the Beel should proceed before larger-scale tourism is promoted.

B. Community Benefits & Needs

Meetings with representatives of Community Management committees in Lawachara, and the Teknaf Game Reserve at Mochoni took place, plus an informal meeting with community members at Kudum cave. There were also community meetings arranged with Hill Tribe representatives in the Lawachara buffer zone with a Khasi headman and a Tripuri women's textile cooperative. In addition, the new ecotourism officer at the Teknaf Cluster office, Muzammel Hoque, arranged community meetings with projects in DOE Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) at 1) the Bora Chora Village Conservation Group in the Himchari National Park & 2) the CWBMP project on St. Martin's Island.

Community Benefits & Needs in Lawachara region

The Community Management Committee in Lawachara provided an articulate overview of the issues related to community needs and requests for tourism management support in the area. The following key points were made.

- Tourist numbers are increasing and there must be more work to protect the forest
- An informal subcommittee was established to manage tourism which presented a written record of recommendations 1 year ago.
- The tourism subcommittee hopes there will be some retention of entry fees for the management of tourism for the following needs.
 - Tourist Shop
 - Rest room facilities
 - Seating arrangements
 - Rest shade for guides
 - Security to prevent snatching incidents
 - Formal display of information on the cultural heritage of the 3 local ethnic groups
 - More training for Eco-guides including language training
 - Waste receptacles
- The eco-guides presented further important information on community benefits and needs.
 - Eco-guides are working only on weekends
 - Tour Operators are not using eco-guides
 - Eco-guides are paying fee to CMC for license to operate, sometimes not breaking even
 - Eco-guides need back-up for security and enforcement of visitor regulations or volunteers to help
 - High numbers of visitors on trails are wreaking havoc, eco-guides are unable to control groups
 - Effort to develop rules must be phased in, as there is no compliance from visitors now
 - Enforcement needed if new or more rules put in place, either from CMC or from Forest Department which carries more authority
- At the Khasi village adjacent to Lawachara National Park, the headman gave the following feedback
 - Lawachara park is very important to the village and visitors are welcome but visitors are coming in greater and greater numbers, even 50-100 at once in the village
 - There are certain problems being caused by too many visitors
 - Interruption of necessary work
 - Visitors not seeking permission to visit village or enter homes
 - Incidents of harassment of girls
 - The Khasi village seeks to have tourism managed on their own terms
 - A gate has been introduced with support from Nishorgo/IPAC
 - Seek to have limited numbers allowed and always with guide
 - Seek to introduce visiting hours to avoid interruption of necessary work
 - Presently seeking to decide on necessary rules via consensus in village

- Would benefit from cultural heritage center not in village to present more information on their culture. Information to be included could include information on
 - Clothing and cloths
 - Food
 - Betel nut economy
 - Music and songs
 - Gardens
 - Harvesting of betel nut
- The Tripuri women's group involved in textile production are presently not involved in direct tourism visitation but are successfully marketing their cloth through the Nishorgo/IPAC project at the Radisson Hotel in Dhaka and have developed a cultural team which is starting to perform for \$3000 taka at events. The women's group presented a very positive picture of tourism's benefits and were keen to develop more tourism opportunities in concert with IPAC. Their key challenges were
 - Village not electrified which prevents doing cultural performances on site
 - Need for better facility for presentation of cultural heritage
 - Need for more market linkages to sell more textiles – supply presently exceeds demand

The picture emerging from the community meetings in the Lawachara area is that the rapidly increasing tourism activity in the area, of over 100,000 visitors per year is exceeding both a social and physical carrying capacity for the management of tourism in the park. Carrying capacity is a biological term, with limited reliable application in tourism. However, as visitor numbers increase, certain precautionary management approaches must be implemented or tourism becomes a force that can be culturally and environmentally destructive. As more tourism and visitor management systems are put in place, more tourism can be accommodated. Until these systems are in place, tourism will supercede local management capacity, cause cultural damage, and exceed local community capacity to manage tourism.

There is no disagreement from any of the parties that tourism is beneficial economically to local community members. Local government officials were fully supportive of continuing to expand opportunity for tourism development to local community members. Many spoke of the need for more educational opportunities, and the importance of revenue generation in the area to provide community members with a higher standard of living. It was clear that tourism can contribute to family incomes and help arrest illegal activities in part. Therefore in the Lawachara area it is clear, tourism is economically beneficial. But there was also a clear indication that tourism was becoming a force that the community was not able to manage effectively, and that there are increasing conflicts between efforts to service tourism and carry out other important CMC activities to protect the landscape.

IPAC must therefore make an important decision. If IPAC continues to support more community enterprise, will it be detrimental to the park? In specific circumstances, such as the Tripuri village where there is little visitation, increased tourism activity will clearly be beneficial. Technical assistance to the Kaschi village to better control and manage tourism would also be highly

beneficial. But this report highly recommends, a more strategic approach to visitor management in the park as part of IPAC's work in the coming years, in order to structure the CMC and eco-guide work properly. Further discussion of visitor management approaches will be found in the Visitor Management section.

Community Benefits & Needs in the Teknaf & St Martin's Area

Kudum Cave

A short visit was made to the Kudum Cave, which has experienced a downturn in visitation due to security problems along the road. However, community members who accompanied our team along the trail report that every weekend groups of 5-10 visit the cave during the winter season in mini-buses. The behavior of the tourists is good, but the community feels they are receiving no benefits from the visits. The community members provide assistance to the Forest Department to patrol and protect forests in this area in return for being allowed to remain on Forest Department lands. This exchange of service for basic livelihood needs more review – as at present these community members have no option but to assist Forest Department officers if they want to remain on their land. It was confirmed that these “in-holders” will never gain land rights.

This type of barter, without compensation, where the Forest Department holds all authority could lead to possible exploitation of local community members. Before further review of more ecotourism activities are undertaken, it is recommended that a more clear agreement between the FD and local landholders is hammered out, to ensure that unfair labor practices are not part of the initiative. This would be true of other landholders elsewhere, who receive implicit permission to remain on FD lands without explicit agreement of what services must be rendered to remain.

Mochoni Entrance to Teknaf Game Reserve

The meeting with the CMC in Teknaf focused on the decline of Teknaf as a tourism destination and the rise of St Martin's Island in its place. While the facilities at Mochoni have been built and are open for tourism, there has been less and less tourism traffic. The community seeks to create an environment where more tourism can be attracted. The routing of boat traffic to St. Martin's Island, north of Teknaf, has left Teknaf with few visitors. There was a good deal of discussion of how to reroute the boating traffic, south of Teknaf, to provide a steady flow of tourism into the Teknaf area.

Community members had a variety of suggestions to improve the tourism attractions in Teknaf.

- Develop Naf River cruises
- Improve hotel facilities
- Create a safari park with more animals for tourists to view
- Develop a jetty south of Teknaf or at the Mochoni entrance for journeys to St. Martins
- Create a picnic area at Mochoni
- Develop a trail over to the Bay of Bengal – the most attractive trail
- Develop a cable car
- Provide more hospitality and guide training
- Develop more activities in the park
- Develop a restaurant in the park

Overall, this region lacks tourism traffic and the community members want to see the IPAC project develop a more marketable tourism environment that will benefit local communities. The IPAC project will have to review some of the same issues raised above before proceeding. Does promoting more tourism, via development of more facilities provide a sustainable plan for tourism development in the region? The upcoming report on a strategy for community-based tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula will provide a set of scenarios for IPAC to consider on this matter.

St. Martin's Island

Four boats travel to St. Martin's Island daily, carrying a legal maximum of 350 passengers. The official number of tourists in 2007 was 83,000 and all informants agree the number doubled in 2008. The CWBMP project has been active in ecotourism development and awareness program on St. Martins Island and the new ecotourism specialist, Muzammel Hoque, for the IPAC cluster, worked previously with CWBMP on all ecotourism planning for the island. A set of reports on the CWBMP's ecotourism activities are fully available from Mr. Hoque. The following overview points are presented here.

- Tourism is polluting the water and causing erosion on the island
- Shells and corals are being collected and coral habitat is decreasing
- Lights on beach from tourism development is hampering sea turtle nesting
- There is no solid waste management on the island
- Tourism vessels are spilling oil
- Hotels are using up the island's limited ground water causing severe problems for the islanders
- Islanders are selling to land to outsiders and 90% of island is already owned by outsiders
- Islanders are not being hired by hotels
- Tourists are not respecting islanders' religious morays

The CWBMP project set about developing a regulatory environment for tourism. In particular, they have developed a tourism zoning plan with technical assistance from IUCN. Attempts to institute zoning or tourism regulation have not produced outcomes as the Department of Environment does not have the ability to enforce regulations. There is evidence that tourism development is proceeding apace without restraint.

A community meeting with the CWBMP cooperators produced the following comments.

- 250,000 tourists are presently coming
- Professional "mafia-style" shell and mollusk collectors "exploit" the poor on the island and pay poor people to collect illegally
- There is indiscriminate boating and walking on coral
- CWBMP guarding activities have stopped 70-80% of turtle egg-laying activity
- CWBMP environmental signs and messages have sent a strong message to enjoy the island but not destroy it
- Local people need more income generation urgently, they are very poorly off in the lean season needing food and rice
- There are requests for guide training and reinstatement of local boating to Teknaf
- Need for an immediate solution to fresh water and sanitation problems

- Hospitality and food preparation training needed
- Seek the adoption and enforcement of zoning proposed by CWBMP
- Request the development of eco-cottages

St. Martin's Island is a particularly negative case of mainstream tourism development without regulation. The potential harm to the island's ecosystem appears to be growing daily. Efforts to get policy action on this matter would need to reach the highest levels of government, and IPAC would need to review the issues with leading government decision makers as part of a larger sustainable tourism strategy.

The community seeks relief as they are receiving few benefits from tourism. They are losing their land, and their natural resources are being destroyed. Fresh water is disappearing. IPAC could approach this problem in two ways, support more eco-commerce and train the villagers to offer independent services – or develop the villagers' capacity to become a trained part of the growing mainstream tourism workforce.

It is unlikely that CWBMP or IPAC will be able to arrest development of tourism on the island, and villagers have reportedly lost 90% of their land to outside developers. It is therefore not entirely logical to encourage more village-based commerce, which will not be competitive with mainstream tourism. Village based eco-commerce will take a great deal of IPAC training over a long period of time to create a limited tourism economy for the villagers.

Rather it is recommended that IPAC use “pro-poor” tourism development tactics on St. Martins Island. This entails helping villagers to work within the growing mainstream tourism trade not seek to compete with it. This entails developing community capacity to work for the hotel corporations as trained employees, and to provide needed services to the growing hotel industry, from cleaning, to food, to guiding, to handicrafts.

Himchari National Park Community Projects

Muzammel Hoque, formerly of the CWBMP project, provided the opportunity to meet with the Borochoora Village Conservation Group. Our group visited this area, where the Forest Department had closed a private sector operator who was operating several trails in the village area without a permit. According the villagers, they were receiving thousands of visitors per day.

Front-country development for community-based tourism near Cox's Bazar in the Himchari National Park area appears to hold excellent potential for future community benefits from tourism, while not endangering natural resources. The meeting with the Borochoora villagers indicated that under private sector management tourists used rickshaws owned by the villagers, and purchased handicrafts and village foods. Villagers also provided maintenance to the simple facilities with 20-25 people working in the high season and 2-3 in the monsoon season. The villagers remember no particular problems, and enjoyed learning from the tourists. If tourism was started again, they suggested training for women in sewing and guide training for men. They agreed they would need management skills, and an understanding of accounting. They believed up to 50 villagers could be employed by the project. They suggested initiating craft enterprises, such as bamboo handicrafts where the village could also participate in reforestation of the region and sustainable plantations of bamboo.

Meetings with the Forest Department indicate that this project could be concessioned on an annual basis to the Village Conservation Group. It is highly recommended that IPAC develop this project, as it provides an ideal opportunity to develop enterprises and village sustainability programs – such as reforestation all in one package without endangering natural resources. Capacity building of the villagers will be required, but the IPAC cluster office is ideally suited to provide the technical assistance required.

Visitor management will be a consideration, nonetheless. Further discussions of visitor management will be provided below.

A quick stop at the waterfall concession at Himchari National Park, indicated that if the Forest Department were to license this concession to local communities, rather than to the private sector, many improvements could be made and much greater benefits could accrue to local communities. If thousands of visitors are coming each day to these sites, the potential economic benefits are great, if properly managed by the local communities involved.

It should be noted that IPAC cluster members appeared to favor building projects that included lodging and infrastructure wherever possible. General training in the planning and phasing of ecotourism projects, to be managed by local communities, will be needed to ensure the cluster does not seek to act as a development body, but rather as a facilitator of the development process. Linkages with the private sector could help to prevent some of these mistakes and will be covered in the upcoming section.

C. Visitor Management

National Policy Development for Tourism

Discussions with policy makers, with the Forest Department and Parajatan Tourism Corporation, and with the private sector – particularly Hasan Mansur of Guide Tours – indicate that the field of environmental and visitor management of tourism has not arrived yet in Bangladesh.

At the highest policy levels, the Ministry of Tourism and the Bangladesh Parajatan Corporation (BPC) have lacked the mandate to present to government a set of initiatives that would direct the process of planned tourism development.

The following article in the Bangladesh Monitor in February 09 provides an up to date view of some of the issues related to how tourism needs to be planned and managed in future.

<http://bangladeshmonitor.net/archives.news.details.php?recordID=1858> A number of relevant quotations from this recent report are highlighted below.

- *Despite development of tourism being the intention behind creation of BPC, -one of the largest sources of foreign currency earning and job creation-the sector never received the attention of the government it deserved. So, it could never discharge its responsibilities and ended up becoming a builder and operator of inefficient and low quality accommodation units and restaurants.*

- *Professionalism in regard to tourism development was the first casualty of this change of emphasis.*
- *BPC must be re-organised to make it capable of playing a role, similar to the NTOs of other countries. At present, BPC has no regulatory function. There is no law in this regard and BPC has no responsibility to regulate current haphazard growth of tourism in private sector.*
- *Unless something is done to keep up the enthusiasm of private sector as well as organize them for planned development, the main purpose of development may be lost.*
- *For instance, eco-tourism is at present primarily managed by the Department of Forest. Seemingly other relevant organisations including the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism are subordinate to the department in the field of eco-tourism development. This situation is not favorable to well harmonised eco-tourism development based on the collaboration of the relevant agencies.*
- *The situation now is ideal and time is ripe to form an authority with full power and function to develop tourism in the country.*

Observations based on discussions with government officials in Bangladesh indicate that indeed tourism management and its regulation have not been considered by existing agencies, and that the existing BPC is acting as a development agency of tourism facilities. Fashir Ahmad, Joint Secretary of Planning at the BPC indicated that the agency's top priority is Cox's Bazar. BPC has submitted an agenda of programs it seeks to undertake to the new legislature. A top priority is a new development zone in Cox's Bazar, similar to the idea of Cancun, where the government would facilitate the development of

- Golf Courses
- Sea resorts
- A special zone for foreign tourism with a special security policy force

When asked if there would be any environmental studies associated with this type of development, we were advised that no environmental impact statements would be required. When asked if environmental planning is a skill found within the department, we were advised that the hotel training institute includes some environmental planning in its diploma courses. However, our observation was that environmental planning is not yet a part of tourism development planning in Bangladesh.

The BPC was interested in further coordination between ministries. Mr Ahmad agreed that the BPC's work should be better coordinated with the Forest Department and with the Chittagong Hill Tribes Authority to appropriately develop tourism associated with these areas.

While national sustainable or ecotourism policy is unlikely to become a focus of IPAC, it should be noted that the creation of tourism initiatives in mass tourism development zones, such as Cox's Bazar, where large-scale development is already scaling up dramatically, is risky. Projects to develop nature-based tourism development on the Teknaf Peninsula are likely to be very affected by the development of unregulated, unplanned tourism in Cox's Bazar and points south.

Regional Planning

A meeting of hoteliers, tour operators, and Forest Department representatives was held on February 1 to discuss issues with mass tourism development in Cox's Bazar. Current visitation to Cox's Bazar has grown to over a million visitors annually, and continued growth is leading to a building boom in Cox's Bazar, where easily half a dozen new hotels are presently underway.

Approximately 30 representatives attended the meeting including hotel owners, representatives of the Tour Operators Association, Hotel Restaurant Owners Association, Guest House Owners Association, individual tour operators and cruise vessel managers. Interest was extremely high and hopes for leadership of a more managed process of development were avid. The following is a representative presentation of the comments made:

- High soil erosion being caused by lack of buffer plantings and building on hilltops without protection against run off
- No Master Plan has been undertaken since the early 1990s, and this plan was never implemented
- Hotels and motels are being developed without proper sewage drainage systems, no municipal sewage system available and underground septic fields for new hotels are insufficient
- A planning exercise that discussed zoning and called for full participation via the District Commissioner could make a difference
- Stream cultivation and shrimp hatcheries are causing erosion and beach pollution
- Security issues increasing
- More workers needed, and inadequate housing for workers available
- Overfishing by local fishermen and industrial fishing offshore
- Nature tourism strategy needed to bring together views with planners and architects – need to use existing Bengali expertise
- Lack of understanding of foreign markets – and land rush for mass tourism development – is undermining potential for value added nature tourism market on the peninsula
- Ecologically Critical Areas have rules and regulations that are not been enforced
- Top down approach to development being led by District Commission, local private sector interests not being represented in decision making process
- Need for technical expertise to develop tourism sustainably evident to all
- Concerns about coastal road, the Marine Drive will not be friendly to the environment
- Lack of energy and fuel to support growth of mass tourism, many establishments using wood that is illegally harvested. A gas line is the only way to preserve the area.

A meeting was held with the District Commissioner on February 4. We were informed a Master Plan is under consideration, but when asked at what stage – we were informed “preliminary.” The District Commissioner did not entirely believe that his office’s role is to guide environmental management of tourism development – and suggested we speak with the BPC. Thus, in fact there is no entity charged with guiding the environmental management of tourism at the regional level.

It was suggested that IPAC might be able to provide assistance with environmental planning in some form. We were told to coordinate with the local municipalities. This vacuum of authority in a skyrocketing tourism development environment is unusual in this day in age. Bangladesh has a very big challenge ahead and tourism will without doubt continue to spread rapidly and in an uncontrolled manner down the coast of the Teknaf Peninsula.

Visitor Management on Forest Department Lands

Ishtiaq Ahmad explains that the history of tourism on Forest Department lands began with the Inspection Bungalows for forest officers. Historically, the FD used these bungalows to house forest officers when visiting FD lands. Once good roads made bungalows unnecessary, these facilities were converted to guest or rest houses. No formal policies were established for guest house use. Informal tourism planning has proceeded to date. Ideas for ecotourism were discussed generally with a goal to benefit local communities. When asked what is necessary on FD land, Ahmad jokes, “everyone will recommend a viewing tower.”

The responsibility for community involvement on FD lands led to the Alternative Income Generation program for Nishorgo – an FD project – which encouraged the development of eco-cottages, guides, and the sale of T-shirts, hats and other small goods. The necessity of charging an entry fee was then decided upon, and that policy is in the process of final implementation. The number one gap in present arrangements for tourism on Forest Department lands is a system for Visitor Management.

Visitor Management systems are generally implemented by public land management agencies worldwide. These agencies first must legally agree that tourism is part of their mission, and that the management of tourism is part of their mandate. This has not yet transpired in Bangladesh with the Forest Department.

The next step is to discuss how tourism volume will be managed. The volume of tourism can be managed via:

- Limits to total numbers allowed to enter public lands
- Requirements for visitors to be accompanied by guides
- Recreational zoning according to the density of visitors desired in “front” and “back” country zones with a wide variety of management requirements for the many zones possible to implement.
- Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) systems that monitor impacts of tourism over time using participatory planning and monitoring involving local communities and user groups
- Licensing and permits that require tour operators and other commercial vendors to limit numbers and manage their visitors according to designated standards

The provision of infrastructure for the orderly development of tourism on public land is generally the responsibility of the public land agency. As discussed in the section on Contributions to Resource Management, at present it does not appear the Forest Department is prepared to take this responsibility. However, there will need to be provisions for the following items on public lands to make tourism sustainable.

- Solid waste management. This includes the provision of receptacles and systems for recycling or disposing of all waste brought by tourists.
- Rest rooms. This includes the provision of sanitary facilities with appropriate septic or sewage systems, which are maintained and regularly cleaned. The volume of visitors to sites must be considered when developing rest rooms, and efforts to discourage unsanitary practices must be considered to protect public areas.
- Maintenance of trails, interpretation centers, youth hostels and other facilities built for tourism
- Provisions for shops, restaurants, and other small scale offerings that maintain an orderly and sanitary environment for tourists to obtain food and services
- Provisions for permissible types of activities and developments, through licensing and permits, on FD land to encourage sustainable development of tourism under guidelines developed by the public land agency.

At present, the approach for development of tourism on FD lands has been informal. Formalization of responsibilities for all of the above duties will be required to ensure tourism is being managed in a sustainable fashion in the long-term.

D. Private Sector Linkages

Meetings were held with representatives of three major tour operators in Dhaka, Guide Tours, Bengal Tours, and Contic. A meeting with the Human Resource Manager at the Radisson, Farhad Moully was also held in Dhaka. An in-depth discussion on community-based nature tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula was also held with the owners of the Mermaid Eco-Resort in the buffer zone of Himchari National Park, and a discussion of tourism impacts on coral reefs with Atiqur Rahman, CEO of Oceanic Scuba Diving Service in St.Martins.

Tour Operators

The meeting with Hasan Mansur who is Managing Director of Guide Tours, and the chairman of the Tour Operators Association, indicate that while Cox's Bazar is now Bangladesh's # 1 tourism destination, it remains a weekend destination where visitors have expressed little interest in nature tourism to date. With St Martin's Island the other top destination in the area, he notes it will be difficult to make Teknaf Game Reserve competitive. His suggestion is to target two important markets.

- The expatriate market which is showing increasing demand for domestic destinations
- National student groups to build demand in future with mainstream customers

His thought was to position Teknaf Game Reserve as an independent destination, with 1) elephant 2) the beach 3) forest. Rough pricing for such a tour would be \$3-4000 Taka per person for 3 nights, including one night accommodation locally, the air conditioned bus trip from Dhaka, sightseeing, and meals. He noted that the Eco-cottage as developed at Mochoni is good as it is for now for the local accommodation. However, Mansur stated that he believes Teknaf Game Reserve lacks the unique selling points to make it an important destination for the country. He suggested the following hierarchy of top selling destinations in Bangladesh.

1. Sundarbans National Park
2. Chittagong Hill Treks
3. River Trips
4. Tea Plantations

Mansur has been campaigning for a more systematic set of policies for tourism development and visitor management for much of his career. His conclusion is that an independent tourism board is required that can boost international tourism interest, work closely with the private sector, and facilitate more appropriate tourism destinations in country. He raised concerns about the uncontrolled development in Cox's Bazar, and the need for government authorities to be involved and provide more direction to business. He fears bad publicity if the problem of over-development of Cox's Bazar and St Martin's Island continues unchecked. He raised the question of no oversight on sewage treatment as being a hazard and a potential time bomb to the development of more tourism in the region. Bad media will highlight the problem, he suggested. He opined that lack of tourism development experience in the country.

Discussions with Motiur Rahman, Managing Director, and Masud Hossain, Executive Director of Bengal Tours had a more positive vision of the potential for Teknaf. They suggested, "developing Teknaf can help save St. Martin's." Mr. Hossain, a younger man, suggested that the Adventure Tourism market will be the key for creating a market for Teknaf Game Reserve. He suggested targeting this younger market as a means to build demand, but he also stated, please provide "wash rooms and sinks at a minimum." Bengal Tour's existing clients do not have a "strong eco-demand." Their international client base is more interested in luxury and little adventure.

Present linkages between Bengal Tours and the Nishorgo project appeared to be lacking. Both leaders of the firm, the second largest tour operator in Bangladesh, professed no knowledge of the existence of the eco-cottages or eco-guides. When we discussed the importance of their company using the guides and cottages they were eager to learn more, but also somewhat unsurprised that they were not previously aware of these initiatives. They suggested they need packages with information for tour operators, which includes wholesale pricing. They ensured us there was plenty of demand for Lawachara and they could help to book the eco-cottages. They stated, "there are very few places to go for an overnight stay in the area." They mentioned the large new golf resort, with 5 story buildings being developed adjacent to Lawachara Forest, and were very concerned about the growing threats for overdevelopment of tourism in the area.

Bengal's viewpoint on St. Martin's Island was that "it has already been destroyed." There is not hope unless a separate place for sustainable tourism is developed.

A meeting with Yves Marr, founder of Contic provided a history of tourism development from the point of view of this French visionary who has focused on creating a living museum of the traditional boats of Bangladesh, originally by having models made, and ultimately by encouraging the building of life-scale models. This project garnered the internationally famous Rolex Award for Mr. Marr, who has focused on reviving the traditional craft of boat making, and used the award to bring traditional Bengali boat makers and their boats on a tour of France. In the process of reviving traditional boats, the family has developed an NGO, Friendship, dedicated to providing hospital services to islanders in Northwestern Bangladesh, and a tourism company, Contic, which provides day and overnight trips on

rivers near Dhaka. The company is interested in the Teknaf Peninsula and, while he calls the beach “inconsequential” Mr. Marr believes the peninsula could be a “good play.” He suggests providing boating trips that offer quality education to travelers. He believes in establishing “all the appropriate controls, and bringing visitors with the right state of mind.”

Overall, the tour operator community is an exciting and experienced group, who are managing high-end tourism, with an international market and good experience in managing educational, nature based tourism for foreigners. This is a highly unusual asset in a country, so inexperienced in developing tourism.

It is highly recommended that IPAC seek to leverage private sector linkages, improve communications with tour operators, and develop a set of initiatives that involve the tour operators in every phase of the development program. More discussion of how to involve the private sector will be presented in the Teknaf Peninsula community-based nature tourism strategy.

Hotels

Ms. Farhad Mouly, Human Resources Manager, of the Radisson in Dhaka oversaw the hospitality training that was provided by the Radisson team to eco-cottage owners in kitchen, hospitality service and housekeeping for the Nishorgo project. She has been designated by the Radisson General Manager to continue cooperation with the project, and route it through the “social committee” of the hotel that allocates time and resources for social projects. The Radisson is ready to review opportunities for renewed cooperation with IPAC. Discussing potential market linkages between the Radisson and IPAC enterprises, she routed us down to the small shop in the Radisson lower lobby which offers the Tripuri cloths, created by the women’s textile group near Lawachara. This shop has been successfully offering Tripuri goods through a local NGO that manages the shop. In terms of opportunities to market nature-based tourism opportunities to Radisson clients, Ms. Mouly was more skeptical, remarking that there is no real demand for weekend travel, as it is strictly a business hotel. More research on market outreach to hotels in Dhaka is required to review opportunities for cooperation.

The Mermaid Eco-Resort, near Himchari National Park, on the Teknaf Peninsula, offers one of the few private sector examples in Bangladesh of an eco-resort. The owners, who became well known via operating the Mermaid Café in Cox’s Bazar, are young, talented entrepreneurs with a strong motivation to build their business in cooperation with local communities. Their company operates 2 restaurants, an eco-resort and a ground tourism operation which offers day long and half-day tours to local temples, fish markets, and other cultural amenities. The Eco-resort where Epler Wood stayed for 3 nights, is still rustic but pleasant, offering good service all by trained local villagers. The owners are seeking to expand into the local village, by investing in local cottages to be run by the villagers themselves. The Mermaid Eco-resort would invest in the cottages, and the villagers would be trained to operate them, and in return for providing the services receive 20% of the direct profits. The owners are committed to reducing environmental impacts in the Himchari buffer zones, via providing alternative income to villagers who otherwise will work in shrimping and illegal logging. The hotel has many options to develop associated half-day and full day tour and activity options, including boating and trekking. Further discussions with the resort will proceed in the second field visit.

Scuba Operator

A meeting was held with Atiqur Rahman, CEO of Oceanic Scuba Diving Service in St. Martins, known as one of the pioneers of scuba diving in St. Martin's Island. He began diving off St. Martin's in 1987 when he states there were "large areas of live coral, with no sediment even after monsoon season." In recent times, he notes there is a "big difference in the coral." Branch coral appears to be disappearing and sediments increasing. Damage caused by frequent anchor drops are increasing rapidly. The biggest concern is debris underwater, which by all accounts is an enormous problem, due to the fact that St. Martin's Island has no waste pick up and all waste is being dumped into the sea. In response, Mr. Rahman began an Ocean Recovery project, where divers volunteer to pick up waste and debris on the fragile coral reef. This initiative began in 2003/4. Mr. Rahman has involved biologists, geologists, and community members in his coral conservation activities, training many individuals to dive without recompense. In the case of the CWBMP's leading expert on marine ecology of St. Martin's, Mr. Ahmad personally paid for him to get PADI certified overseas, as it presently is not possible to be PADI certified in Bangladesh.

Possible solutions to the problems he has observed, were few in his opinion. He was well aware of the efforts to create marine reserves in other countries, and the use of buoys to prevent anchor damage. His opinion was that without enforcement, none of these initiatives would work in Bangladesh. His overall view was pessimistic, his view was "ecotourism is only possible if mass tourism is arrested."

Preliminary Conclusions

This trip report's goals are to review outcomes of meetings and field observations to provide a set of preliminary recommendations for IPAC project on development of community-based nature tourism in protected areas observed during field visit.

The observations can be broken down into short-term recommendations for IPAC and longer-term recommendations for IPAC and the nation of Bangladesh.

Short-term Recommendations

Resource Protection

1. Implement a differential set of entry fees to price the most popular parks at levels that would help prevent overcrowding
2. The entry fee system will have to be carefully launched, capitalized, consistently applied and enforced
3. Further planning is required to develop a system for the use of entry fee revenues
4. An IPAC technical assistance program will be needed for the CMCs to ensure resources are protected and tourism facilities are appropriately managed, and consistently maintained.
5. For Baika Beel, more tourism market outreach is recommended with the technical assistance capacity that IPAC presently has in place, as long as resources are not impacted.

Visitor Management

1. In Cox's Bazar, the need for technical expertise to develop tourism sustainably was evident to all stakeholders
2. Formalization of duties to manage infrastructure on FD lands, including rest rooms, interpretation centers, youth hostels, trails, capacity building, and provisions for the sale of goods is required.
3. The next step is to discuss how tourism volume will be managed. The volume of tourism can be managed via:
 - Limits to total numbers allowed to enter public lands
 - Requirements for visitors to be accompanied by guides
 - Recreational zoning according to the density of visitors desired in "front" and "back" country zones with a wide variety of management requirements for the many zones possible to implement.
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Community Needs & Benefits

1. There was clear indication that tourism was becoming a force that the community was not able to manage effectively in Lawachara
 - a. Technical assistance to Tripuri & Kaschi villages to manage tourism would be highly beneficial.
2. A clear agreement between the FD and local landholders who receive implicit permission to remain on FD lands is needed to ensure nature tourism services are provided via explicit agreement
3. On St. Martin's Island, IPAC should use "pro-poor" tourism development tactics. This entails helping villagers to work within the growing mainstream tourism trade not seek to compete with it.
4. IPAC should support development of community enterprises in the Himchari region via concession with the FD, as it provides an ideal opportunity to develop enterprises and village sustainability programs.

Private Sector Linkages

1. Tour Operators need packages with information on eco-cottages and guides which include wholesale pricing, and direct contact information for booking.
2. IPAC needs to leverage private sector linkages, improve communications with tour operators, and develop a set of initiatives that involve the tour operators in every phase of the development program.
3. More research on market outreach to hotels in Dhaka is required to review opportunities for cooperation
4. Contic, which provides day and overnight boat trips on rivers near Dhaka is interested in the Teknaf Peninsula. Boating trips that offer quality education to travelers could be facilitated by working with this firm. Further discussion will proceed in the second field visit.
5. The Mermaid Eco-resort has many options to develop associated half-day and full day tour and activity options, including boating and trekking. Further discussions with the resort will proceed in the second field visit.

Long-term Recommendations

The overall level of experience for developing tourism sustainably in Bangladesh is remarkably low, and this jeopardizes efforts to develop community-based nature tourism sustainably. At the highest policy levels, the Ministry of Tourism and the Bangladesh Parajatan Corporation (BPC) have lacked the mandate to present to government a set of initiatives that would direct the process of planned tourism development. Observations based on discussions with government officials in Bangladesh indicate that indeed the environmental management of tourism, and its regulation have scarcely been considered by national agencies, and that the existing BPC is acting as a development agency of tourism facilities, with no basic requirements for environmental planning, such as environmental impact statements.

While national sustainable or ecotourism policy is unlikely to become a focus of IPAC, it should be noted that the creation of tourism initiatives in mass tourism development zones, such as Cox's Bazar, where large-scale development is already scaling up dramatically, is risky. Projects to develop nature-based tourism development on the Teknaf Peninsula are likely to be very affected by the development of unregulated, unplanned tourism in Cox's Bazar and points south.

The Bangladesh Monitor <http://bangladeshmonitor.net/archives.news.details.php?recordID=1858> reports in February 09 on the following:

- *“Eco-tourism at presently is primarily managed by the Department of Forest. Seemingly other relevant organizations including the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism are subordinate to the department in the field of eco-tourism development. This situation is not favorable to well harmonized eco-tourism development based on the collaboration of the relevant agencies.”*

The same article in the Monitor also suggests that, *“the situation now is ideal and time is ripe to form an authority with full power and function to develop tourism in the country.”*

Hasan Mansur, General Manager of Guide Tours Ltd, has been campaigning for a more systematic set of policies for tourism development and visitor management for much of his career. His conclusion is that an independent tourism board is required that can boost international tourism interest, work closely with the private sector, and facilitate more appropriate tourism destinations in country. He raised concerns about the uncontrolled development in Cox's Bazar, and the need for government authorities to be involved and provide more direction to business. He fears bad publicity if the problem of over-development of Cox's Bazar and St Martin's Island continues unchecked.

The meeting in Cox's Bazar of 30 representatives including hotel owners, representatives of the Tour Operators Association, Hotel Restaurant Owners Association, Guest House Owners Association, individual tour operators and cruise vessel managers indicated that interest is extremely high in a more managed process of development.

The relationship between managed tourism development and efforts to create economic benefits for local communities through nature tourism has been highlighted throughout this report. In the long-term, it is recommended that IPAC create a new staff position that can focus on enterprise

development at a national level, and a better tourism planning environment. This would require a national position that focuses on the management of ecotourism development that would help to foster some of the following activities:

- Intergovernmental cooperation on tourism policy
- Review of environmental laws as they relate to tourism and support for initiatives that can finance and put into active operation enforcement of these environmental laws
- Creation of a commission on tourism and the environment that immediately addresses urgent matters that affect national economic development – such as Cox’s Bazar and St. Martin’s Island
- Support for private sector initiatives that seek to link planned and managed tourism to improved economic development outcomes from tourism
- Development of municipal capacity to manage tourism growth and development – particularly in Cox’s Bazar
- Development of outreach to other finance agencies that would help to support greater capacity for the environmental management of tourism in Bangladesh

In the case of Cox’s Bazar, a program of technical assistance that is coordinated with the national program could be highly beneficial. However, management of environmental planning and regulation only at the local level will not be fruitful. This leads to a set of recommendations that are not implemented, as can be seen by the experience of CWBMP. It is therefore recommended that IPAC only consider technical support at the local level for regional planning, if it has the staff capacity to closely coordinate these recommendations with efforts similar to those bulleted above.

On Forest Department lands, systems to channel tourism revenues directly to parks to ensure that tourism does not damage the resources upon which it depends is a very large responsibility that awaits further strategic design, technical assistance and implementation.

Overall, the need for further international assistance to bring the regional and national policy environment into a set of more international best practice norms seems urgent. Other cooperating agencies, with expertise in sustainable tourism could be very helpful, including the UN World Tourism Organization and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank. Advice from IPAC to these agencies could result in greater, experienced technical oversight.

IPAC is in the position to advise and create an informed set of terms of references for support from other donors, via its existing international sustainable tourism partner EplerWood International – but this would require a larger scope of work that creates an informed and well-researched set of criteria for further investment in national sustainable tourism planning.

Long-term priorities for sustainable tourism development will have an impact on the success of short term initiatives. In the case of Bangladesh, the lack of environmental management of tourism and systems to manage visitation on Forest Department lands will undermine efforts to successfully develop community-based nature tourism and create an unstable environment for the implementation of short-term goals.