

Perceptions of Tourism by Indigenous Communities Living In and Adjoining Lawachara National Park

Md. Modinul Ahsan

Assistant Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division,
Sylhet, Bangladesh

Abstract

This paper discusses the overall perceptions of tourism and the benefits received by three communities living in and adjacent to Lawachara National Park. The study was conducted in villages populated by three different ethnic groups during February to May 2006. Two out of the three villages received benefits from tourism activities. These activities included the sale of handmade clothes, eco-tour guide services and cultural shows. On the other hand, the community receiving the fewest benefits from tourism, the Khasia, encountered the most problems caused by tourists coming to the park. The study revealed that the local ethnic communities have a general understanding of tourism, but not all of them benefit from tourism activities. The existing institutions (formal and informal) should be more actively involved in order to give more benefits to the local people, particularly those who are negatively affected by it.

1. Introduction

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as moving from one's usual place of residence for less than one year and more than 24 hours for reasons that are not related to income earning activities (Kumar 1995). Tourism is an increasingly essential element of economic, social and cultural development and it has become one of the largest global economic activities in the world (Western 1993). Today both developed and developing countries realize economic and social benefits from tourism and constantly strive to gain a larger share of its benefits (Sultana 2001).

Sekhar (2003) states that, until recently, tourism has not been viewed as a potential income generating activity by the governments of South Asia. Bangladesh, a South Asian nation, is a land of rivers, wetlands known as *haors*, hills, forests, mangroves, sandy beaches, and the diversified cultures of the Bengali people and its numerous indigenous communities. The 1994 Bangladesh Forest Policy placed great emphasis on ecotourism. The policy states that ecotourism is recognized as a forestry activity that should be promoted within the carrying capacity of nature. Every year the numbers of tourists increases, although this sector has not yet flourished. The total number of foreign tourists in Bangladesh was a little more than 244,000 in 2003, which marked a positive change of 18% from the previous year (Hassan 2006). National parks have played significant roles as tourist attractions in many countries since their establishment (Butler and Boyd 2000). Protected areas with their landscapes, flora and fauna as

well as their cultural elements form attractions for tourists (Ceballos-Lascurain 1993). Tourism, however, is highly dependent upon natural capital (e.g. wildlife, scenery) and culture (Roe and Khanya 2001). Wildlife tourism in South Asia is not very old when compared to many African countries, where wildlife based tourism is more active and has been promoted by the governments for a number of years (Sekhar 2003).

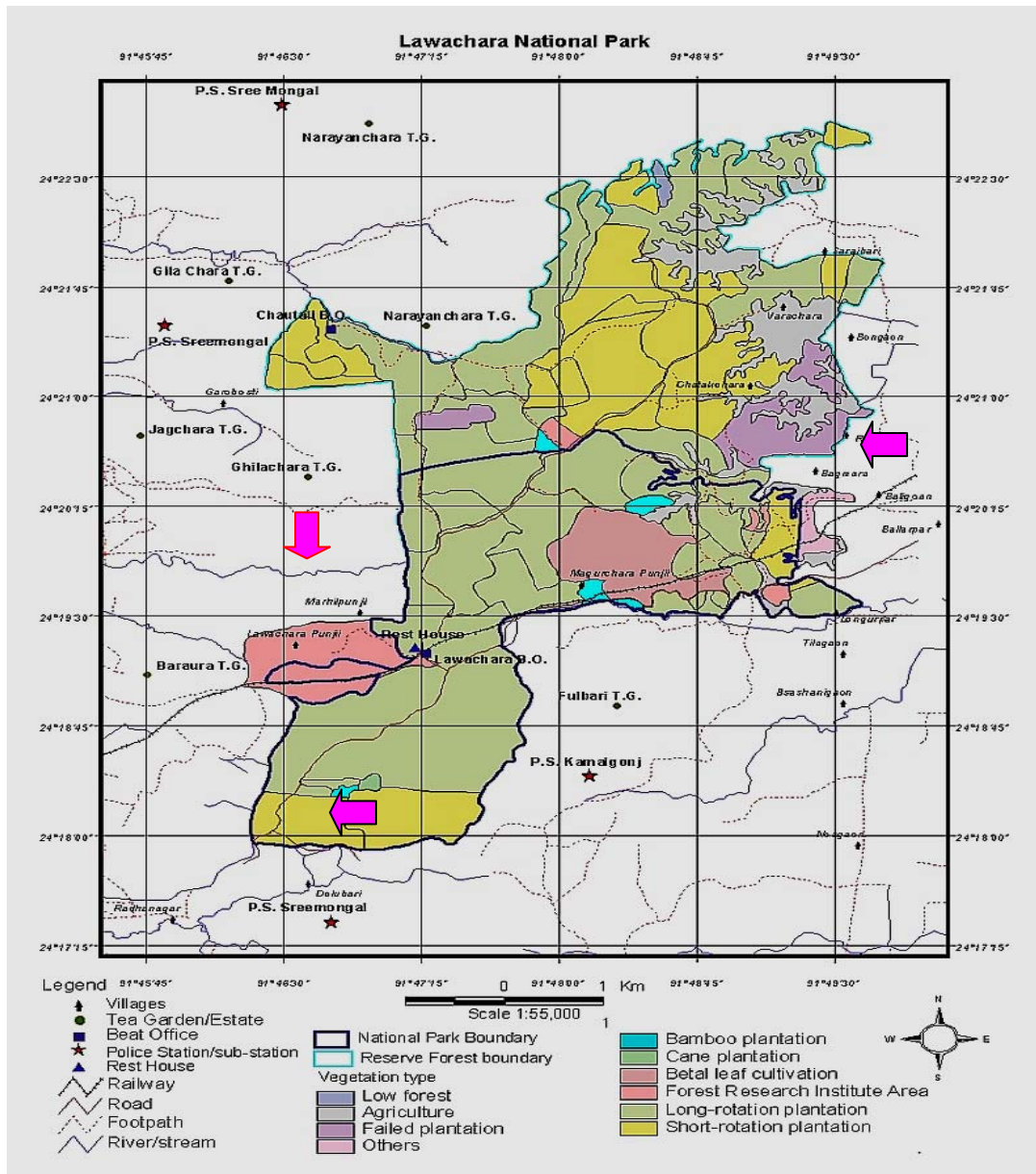
One of the most common uses of protected areas is tourism. Wildlife tourists have recognized the protected areas of the developing countries as a source of generating benefits for local people and as a source of income (Walpole and Goodwin 2001). As Lindberg (1993: p.101) states, benefits from protected areas are generated for at least three reasons:

First, it is equitable insofar as conservation of the area designated for eco-tourism may reduce or eliminate traditional resource use. Second, the eco-tourists as consumers may support the importance of tourism benefiting local residents (Eagles *et.al.*1992). Third, when residents receive benefits they are more likely to support tourism and conservation, even to the point of protecting the site against poaching or encroachment.

Lindberg et al. (1996) found that tourism related benefits were an important basis for positive attitudes towards adjacent natural areas (Wunder 1996; 1998). Conversely, if residents bear the costs without receiving benefits, they may turn against tourism and conservation and may intentionally and unintentionally damage the site. People live both inside and outside of Lawachara National Park. Members of Khasia, Manipuri and Tripura indigenous groups live inside the core area of the park as well as outside but adjacent to the park. No study has been done on tourism in the protected areas of Bangladesh. The purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of tourism by indigenous communities and to document the benefits they receive from tourism.

2. Background

The study was conducted at Lawachara National Park (24°30'-24°32'N and 91°37' - 91°39'E) (Fig. 1). The park was founded in 1996 with a total forest area of 1,250 ha. It forms part of West Bhanugach Reserved Forests, which is under the area of Sylhet Forest Division. It is one of 17 protected areas in Bangladesh. Lawachara National Park (LNP) lies between the Dholoi River on the east and the Manu River on the north. A number of sandy bedded streams and *nallahs* (channels) pass through the park, forming a riparian ecosystem. Located in a high rainfall area with evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, LNP is a mega biodiversity region with many floral species. Hoolock Gibbon and Capped Langur are keystone species located in the park (Nishorgo 2006). The park also serves as the home of several indigenous communities. Members of the Khasia, Manipuri, and Tripura indigenous groups reside within and around the forests. These communities depend on the forest resources for their livelihood opportunities (Nishorgo 2006).



**Figure 1: Map Showing the Study Area
(Source: Nishorgo Support Project, 2006)**

Lawachara National Park is situated in Kamalganj Sub-district, Moulvibazar District. It is nearly 160 km northeast of Dhaka, approximately 60 km southwest of Sylhet, and about 8 km northwest of Sreemangal. The park is very well connected by rail, air, and road transportation systems. Visitor surveys recently showed that the park received 3,874 visitors during a 45-day period. The survey was conducted during two periods. From March 24 to April 05, 2006 there

were 1504 visitors, and from May 17 to June 15, 2006 there were 2,370 visitors (Pasha 2006, Telephone interview). It should be noted that the survey was done during the off tourist season.

Lodging facilities are the heart of any protected area. A well-maintained lodging facility with quality food can attract many tourists. Studies in Latin America and Thailand show that additional revenues can be earned by developing infrastructure and services to nearby tourism attractions (Boo 1990; Dixon and Sherman 1990). These might include lodges, restaurants or snack bars, souvenir shops, visitor centers, cultural performances, etc. (Lindberg and Huber 1993). Lawachara National Park offers tourist both attended and unattended services. Attended service includes local eco-tour guides. And on the other hand unattended service includes signage, nature trails, information brochures, leaflets, guidebooks. Currently authorities are taking steps to build a visitor interpretation center and a souvenir shop in Lawachara. The park has no lodging facility exclusively for the tourists but the nearby town of Sreemangal offers a good number of lodging facilities. Other facilities like transportation are also available in Sreemangal. Lawachara National Park has 26 villages in and around it, and approximately 4,000 households reside in those villages (Mollah and Kunda, 2004). Two indigenous *punjis* (villages) composed of Khasia people, are located inside the core area of the park. Lawachara Punji named after a Lawachara stream has 23 households. The other village, Magurchara Punji, consists of 40 households. Both of the villages are on hillocks. Forest Department personnel settled people in these villages in the 1950s to assist with forestry related activities.

The Forest Department gave each household 3 acres of forestland. Most people cultivate betel leaves for their livelihood. The Khasia are a matrimonial society and most people have converted to Christianity from Hinduism. The second indigenous group, the Tripura, have lived in Daluchara (under village Dalubari) for many years. Daluchara is in Sreemangal sub-district and consists of 72 Tripura households. The Tripura mainly cultivate pineapples and lemons on their own land. They are patrilineal and Hindu. The third indigenous group, the Manipuri, have been living in North Baligaon, Kamalganj sub-district, for many years. There are 68 Manipuri households in North Baligaon. They mainly cultivate paddy on their own land. The Manipuri are Hindu by religion and Bishnupriya by caste.

Lawachara National Park has many entry points. During my visits I did not observe anyone exerting any control over tourists and an entry fee was not required. The Forest Department has not yet prepared a separate management plan for tourism nor have forest workers received any training on managing tourists. Moreover, either the department has been allocated a very limited budget for tourism or it has not been allocated to the concerned authority. Forest officials recently prepared a draft management plan for the park, still under consideration, that fails to define a tourism zone.

In order to use a Forest Department bungalow in the core area of the park, visitors have to get permission from the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) whose office is in Sylhet. Tour operators, however, bring visitors into the park without informing the local forest officials. Local people, who have been trained to serve as eco-tour guides to the forest and its landscape, are frequently deceived by this use.

3. Methods

I did my fieldwork between February and May 2006. My data collection methods included key informants interview, community mapping, transect walks, household interviews, and review of official documents and published literature. I used a semi-structured questionnaire

as the basis of my household data collection. I interviewed 39 family heads from a total of 163 households. The overall sampling intensity was 24%.

I followed simple random sampling for Khasia (10 from 23 households); systematic sampling for Manipuri (14 from 68 households). I interviewed the first household and then I took every 5th number household for interview. I did purposive sampling in Tripura (15 from 72 households) village because all the randomly selected respondents were working in the field at that time and I had to interview whoever was present. From household survey I collected demographic data related to gender, occupation, education, etc. These questions were followed by others related to dependency on forest resources, perceptions of tourism, information on handicrafts, benefits from tourism, problems caused by tourism, housing pattern and toilet conditions, and willingness to be involved in home stays. Some of the questions were closed-ended and respondents were asked to answer with either YES or NO. I used MS Excel to analyze the collected data.

4. Results and Discussion

The study reveals that 88% of sample households are engaged in earning a livelihood, while 12% of households are unemployed. The most common sources of earning a livelihood are agriculture (78%), daily laborer (5%) and small business (5%). Most of the unemployed respondent were retired from either agriculture or teaching. The study also found that 90% of the Khasia, 80% of the Tripura, and 64% of the Manipuri are farmers. Approximately 35% of the Manipuri are unemployed, whereas the Khasia and Tripura communities do not have any significant unemployment.

The Khasia mainly produce betel leaf. It is their traditional profession. The Tripura are dependent on cultivating lemons and pineapples. Survey results reveal that 80% of the Tripura community depends on this form of agriculture. Approximately 64% of the households in the Manipuri community are engaged in agriculture and paddy for their livelihoods. All three communities are more or less dependent on nearby forest resources. Among respondents 58% of Manipuri, 10 % of Khasia and 7% of Tripura households said that they are highly dependent on forest resources for fuelwood. Normally, these people do not directly collect fuelwood from the park, but rather purchase it from illicit fellers.

Members of these indigenous communities do not have much formal education. The survey results reveal that 73% of the Tripura respondents have education up to the primary level. On the other hand, among Manipuri respondents, 71% have education up to high school level (Table 1).

Table 1: Education Level in the Three Communities

Education Level	Khasia	Tripura	Manipuri
No formal education	40%	-	8%
Primary Level (class I – class V)	20%	73%	7%
High school Level (class VI – SSC)	30%	27%	71%
College level /HSC	-	-	7%
Graduate	10%	-	7%

Note: SSC = Secondary School Certificate; HSC = Higher School Certificate.

The people live in their own houses in the villages; they are not tenants. The type of the houses they lived in is of three categories, namely *kacha*, semi-*pucca* and *pucca* (see below for definition of these terms). Approximately, 70% of Khasia, 79% of Tripura and 50 % of Manipuri live in *kacha* houses. Similarly, most people do not use hygienic toilets, as 73% of Manipuri, 60% of Khasia and 36% of Tripura use *kacha* toilets (Fig. 2).

People from these three villages usually dispose their garbage in an open area, a pit, or in a near by stream. The study depicted that 80% of Khasia households dispose their kitchen garbage in a pit, and 73% of Manipuri and 67% of Tripura households dispose their garbage in open areas and nearby streams, respectively.

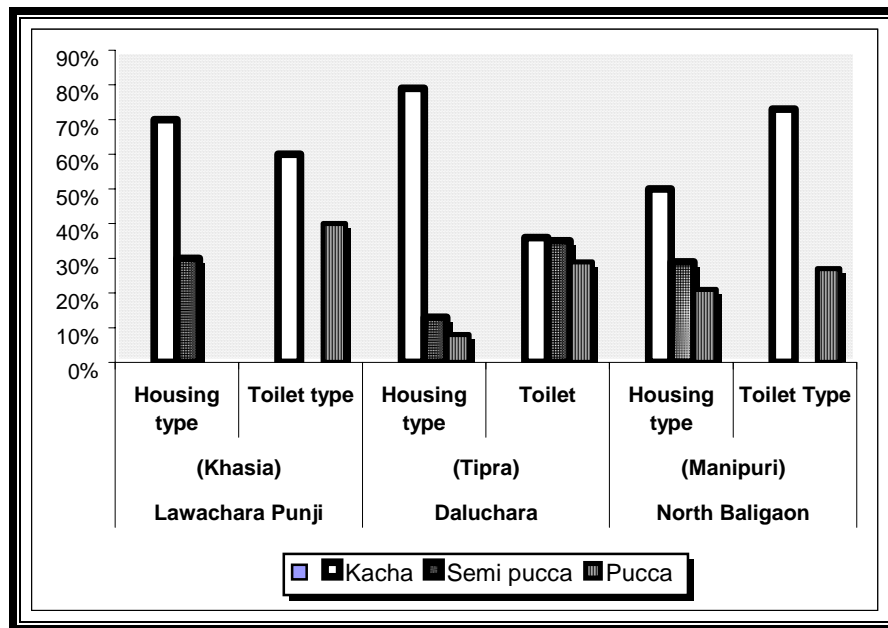


Figure 2: Housing and Toilet Types

4.1. Formal and Informal Institutions

Formal and informal institutions play a vital role in the life of people of a community. Local institutions include a wide diversity of organizational forms for resource management. These institutions have rules and a common understanding of problems and their resolution in a particular community. Sometimes they are formally established, with electoral procedures for selecting officials, specified dues for members, and rules that also outline the rights and define duties of the members. Sometimes institutions are not formally constituted but it can manage to regulate the use of resources and system of using resources over long periods of time (Ostrom 1997).

The community profile of the three villages revealed that numerous formal and informal institutions exist in the three indigenous villages. These institutions may be able to play a significant role in the development of tourism and eco tourism in LNP. In the following section, I describe these institutions. The Greater Sylhet Indigenous People's Forum (GSIPF) support members of any indigenous group in the Greater Sylhet District. The forum seeks to support education, health, and legal rights issues; agriculture; and culture preservation. It is legal entity

registered as a Joint Stock Company. The forum has a constitution and consists of two bodies, namely a general committee (101 members), and an executive committee (21 members). Member can be a member of any indigenous community in Greater Sylhet Region. The General Committee normally sits once a year. The executive committee sits two or three times in a year. The general members select the members of the Executive Committee. The committee has linkages with other NGOs. There is a provision of subscription fees for both executive and general members.

The Khasia community recognizes an informal institution known as the *Darber* Committee. The village head (*Myntry*) chairs the *Darber* Committee and has control over social, traditional and religious issues. The *Darber* Committee seeks to work on social issues, maintain relationship with the Forest Department, develop village infrastructure, and supervise religious and traditional festivals. The head of each household is a member of the committee. The *Myntry* calls for a meeting whenever he feels one is required. Each household is supposed to subscribe (contribute) to the committee's fund. Villagers select the *Myntry* and the ruling *Myntry* is the son of previous *Myntry*. There is no fixed period of service for the *Myntry*—he can remain *Myntry* as long as he wants. The Khasia community is also supported by the Khasia Welfare Trust (KWS), a formal institution for Khasia living in Greater Sylhet District. This institution seeks to perform cultural shows, develop and conserve Khasia handicrafts, work for the educational development of the community, and provide legal support for Khasias. The Trust was established in 1996. It consists of three bodies: a general council, an executive council, and an advisory council. The trust has a constitution and has been registered as a Joint Stock Company. Each household of every Khasia village in Greater Sylhet District subscribes to the committee. Some people have alleged that the Trust is not working properly because leaders of the Khasia communities lack initiatives. Moreover the trust suffers from a lack of funds, lack of democratic practices, and irregular subscription fees. The trust has linkages with other organizations. The *Myntry* of Lawachara Punji is a member of KWS by the virtue of his post.

The Tripura community in Daluchara has a formal committee, which does not have a name. The headman of the village, the *Chowdhury*, leads the committee. He is vested with the responsibility of resolving social, traditional, and other related problems in the community. The committee seeks to determine and fix social policy and rules, to look after religious taboos and traditional festivals, to look after and organize social functions like marriages and funerals, to rectify values, norms and taboos in meetings if any deviation occur; and to resolve problems that arise in the community. Committee members are notified when meeting are scheduled. All of the households in the community pay a mandatory subscription fee. When someone dies, the collected money pays for the funeral and the grieving family is given a donation from the fund. Normally the *Chowdhury* or someone who is known to be reliable is entrusted with the money. Women normally do not participate in meetings. Unresolved issues can be raised in either the Greater Sylhet Indigenous People's Forum (GSIPF) or in Adibashi Forum (Another formal institution of indigenous communities in the country).

Tripura Juba Sangstha (TJS) or Tripura Youth Organization is a formal institution in Daluchara village established in 2000. This institution consists of 20 general members, all of which must be males over 18 years old. TJS has prepared a constitution but is not yet recognized as a legal entity. TJS seeks to conserve the Tripura culture, organize Tripura cultural shows, develop and conserve Tripura handicrafts, and work for the educational development of the community. The TJS does not have a fixed meeting time whenever it is necessary the committee sits for it. The members pay a nominal subscription fee each month. The institution is

not sustaining and is currently not functional. The Manipuri community has an informal committee known as the *Singloop*. The executive body of this informal (and invisible) committee consists of 12 to 15 members. The *Singloop* seeks to control and develop customary rules; determine and fix social policies and rules; look after the religious taboos and traditional festivals, monitor and organize social functions like marriages and funerals; and rectify values, norms, and taboos in meetings, if any deviation takes place.

The Adibashi Manipuri Cultural Development Organization (AMCDO) was established in the year 1996. This institution consists of 35 general members, of which 20 are male and 15 are female. The Executive Committee consists of 7 members, of which 4 are male and 3 are female. The AMCDO seeks to conserve Manipuri culture, organize people for cultural shows, develop and conserve Manipuri handicrafts, support Manipuri weaver families, work for the educational development of the community, and support the community in legal issues. The AMCDO is not currently recognized as a legal entity but efforts to make it one are now underway. The AMCDO sits once a month and minutes of the meeting are recorded. Meetings are announced both verbally and in writing. Members pay an entry fee to join AMCDP and a monthly subscription fee.

The Indigenous Manipuri Welfare Trust (IMWT) is a visible institution that seeks to assist the unemployed, support sports and games, advance education, and promote the health of Manipuri people. The Trust consists of 25 members and has an Executive Committee of 7 members. The Trust does not have any subscription fees nor is it recognized as a legal entity, but efforts are underway.

The Nishorgo Support Project (a project of Forest Department) promoted the establishment of the Co-management Council for Lawachara National Park. The Council has 58 members. An executive committee called the co-management committee and consisting of 19 members, assists the council. This Council is a formal institution and is recognized as a legal entity. Representation from Dalucahara (Tripura) and North Baligaon (Manipuri) has been ensured. But no representative has yet been ensured from Lawachara Punji; rather representative from another Khasia village (Magurchara Punji) has been ensured. The Council seeks to work with local stakeholders to manage the park collaboratively with the assistance of the Forest Department.

4.2. Tourism in Lawachara National Park

Tourists usually come to Lawachara National Park to see forests, wildlife, and natural beauty and for picnicking. They also see the surrounding tea gardens and as an additional opportunity visit indigenous communities. Native and foreign tourists have visited the people of the three surveyed villages for many years but no data are available on how many tourists visit these villages every year.

Tourists to these villages usually come to see various aspects of people's daily life – their homes, clothing, betel leaf cultivation, betel leaf sorting, pineapple and lemon gardens, weaving, and handicrafts. I asked the respondents about their general perceptions of tourism and requested them to explain to me their ideas or concepts regarding tourism and their feelings about it. I did not direct discussions towards “good” or “bad” perceptions of tourism, but rather I wanted to get their overall impressions.

The survey result reveals that almost all of the respondents (97%) have ideas about tourism and that they feel good about the tourists and tourism. In both the Tripura and Manipuri

villages, all respondents (100%) said that they have perceptions of tourism. In the Khasia community only 93% of respondents reported that they have perceptions of tourism.

Though almost all of the respondents (97%) from these indigenous communities have perceptions of tourism, not all of them are receiving benefits. The data reveals that only 19% of households surveyed in the three indigenous communities receive benefits from tourism (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of People who Received Benefits from Tourism

Responses	Khasia	Tripura	Manipuri	Total
Benefits	-	13%	43%	19%
No Benefits	100%	87%	57%	81%

The study also reveals that among households, who received benefits from tourism, 12 % were from performing cultural shows, 7% were from weaving, and 2% were from eco-tourism guiding services (Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of Each Community Who Benefit from Tourism-Related Activities

Items	Khasia	Tripura	Manipuri	Total
Weaving	-	7%	14%	7%
Eco-tour guide service	-	7%	-	2%
Cultural Show performance	-		36%	12%

The Manipuri community received benefits from their cultural show performances and from selling their handicrafts. Almost all of the households of Manipuri have this inherited practice, but not all of them sell their woven clothes to the tourists. Normally they weave their clothes for their own use; they do not usually weave for commercial purposes. The survey shows that 51 % of the weaver of Manipuri sold their products. If a visitor indicated an interest to buy a piece of clothing, and if they have additional piece of that product available, then they sell. They produce clothes on their handlooms, not in power loom. The Manipuri usually weaves clothes for women. The name of their woven clothes are *Mathaa* (bed sheet), *Lango* (skirt for women). The *Mathaa* includes *Nayanamuna* (bed sheet) and *Lashingfi* (bed sheet made by cotton), *Chaakchabi* (good quality lango), *Inapi* (scarf). During discussion with the respondents, they informed me that problems include shortages of raw materials, insufficient capital, lack of linkages to markets, and a lack of show rooms. The Manipuri received Tk 19,200 by selling homemade woven clothing to the visitors, both domestic as well as foreigners (Table 4).

Table 4: Monetary Benefits from Tourism Earned by the Communities
(December 2005 to May 2006 – Amounts in Bangladeshi Taka)

Activity	Khasia	Tripura	Manipuri	Total
Eco-tour guide	-	11,100	-	11,100
Weaving	-	1,000	19,200	20,200
Cultural Shows	-	-	3,000	3,000
Total	-	12,100	22,200	34,300

The Manipuri are well known throughout the country and outside as well for their lively dancing. The Manipuri community performs shows in their village and also goes outside if they are invited. “We have been performing our cultural show since 2004” (Sinha 2006, personal communication). The *Adibashi* Manipuri Cultural Development Organization (AMCDO) based in the village organizes the village’s cultural performances.

The Tripura weaves clothes only for women. They had their benefits from selling weaved fabrics (Tk 1,000) and one eco-tour guide trained by Forest Department, earned Tk 11,100 within a 6-month period (Table 4). Most weaving is done for domestic uses not for commercial purposes. The main goods they weave include *Rikotoo* (long scarf), *Renai* (skirt), *Risha* (a small piece of cloth used by women) and *Kaithamri* (three piece suit of clothing for women). The Tripura weave their clothes in a handloom, which is made from locally available materials like bamboo and timber. The problems weavers face such as lack of investment funds, shortages of raw materials, lack of credit support, and lack of market linkages.

The Khasia community did not receive any benefit from tourism during the study period. The Khasia have handicrafts, which they use in their daily activities. They make such things as *Khoh* (baskets), *Chot* (small baskets), and *Khara saboon* (soap cases). These products are not sold to any one. The Khasia in Lawachara Punji do not have any weaver families. This is consistent with Patam’s (2005) claim that the Khasia of Bangladesh do not weave. The traditional dress of Khasia women includes a *Diakorcha* (top) and *Diakiangh* (skirt), which they purchase from the market. Though the Khasia did not receive any benefit from tourism, they are rather happy and feel good and proud that tourists are coming to their village. Furthermore, they are ready to receive tourists.

I asked interviewees about their willingness to be involved in home stay programs. Among respondents, 93% answered that they are ready to receive tourists in their homes if they are given the chance to do so.

Among Khasia community members, 80% of respondents showed interests in home stays. They felt, however, that they couldn’t let tourists stay in their homes and have food together until there is a unanimous decision of the *Darber* Committee. Moreover, they do not have any training on catering, or good water and sanitation facilities. In Khasia Punji only 40% of the households have *pucca* toilets, but the maintenance is not good enough for the tourists. If these things are taken care of, and if security is provided, then home stays could become a good source of income for the Khasia. Khasia Punji is suitable for home stays since it is within the

forest and one has to walk through the forest to reach it. Moreover the traditional home of Khasia attracts tourists. I spoke with several visitors from England during one of my household interviews. They told me that they “would love to stay at [that] house for one night” (March 2006, personal communication). A female member of Khasia Punji stated that her community would allow visitors, especially foreigners, to stay at their traditional homes if they were paid, and if their Darber Committee permitted it (Pothmi, S. personal communication, 2006).

All of the respondents (100%) from the Tripura community expressed that they would love to be hosts for home stays. One owner, who still possesses a traditional Tripura house in Daluchara, reported that foreigners sometimes requested to be able to stay in his home, but this depended on the committee’s decision. If people received some training in taking care of guests, and if some infrastructure facilities such as sanitation facilities, roads, and security were improved, these communities could benefit great from home stays and tourism in their villages. All of the respondents from Manipuri village also reported that they favor home stays. Their village is outside but adjacent to Lawachara National Park and lacks a good road. They do not have any training in catering, tourism, and other forms of taking care of guests.

I asked the respondents about the problems they faced from tourism activities. Most respondents (90%) told me that they have not faced any problems caused by tourists’ activities so far. In Manipuri and Tripura all of the respondents (100%) said that they have not seen any problems caused by tourism and tourists activities. Among the Khasia interviewed, 30% of them stated that they face problem with parties of picnickers that come from different areas of Bangladesh. Problems they face include people picking plants and plant parts, noisy conversations, and people entering unauthorized into the bathing pool of Khasia women. “We really feel disturbed when we see members of picnic parties picking our flowers and fruits, and talking aloud” (Phila Pothmi, personal communication 2006).

5. Recommendations

Based on the study I make the following recommendations for park management.

- **Management plan:** A separate management plan should be prepared and tourism zone should be clearly identified.
- **Build capacity:** The forest officials and the members of co-management council members should be trained in tourism management.
- **Involve institutions:** The formal and informal institution should be involved in elaborating effective ways to give more benefits to the people.
- **Linkage with other tour operators:** Locally-trained eco-tourism guides should be linked with other tour operators throughout the country in order to enhance their business opportunities.
- **Build eco-friendly infrastructure:** Eco-lodges should be built at the entry point of the park and should incorporate environmentally friendly design and practices.
- **Support weavers:** The weaver families of the indigenous communities should be provided with micro-credit services for purchasing raw materials and updating looms.

- **Link with market:** Market linkage for the handicrafts should be established for the weaver families. In this regard a show room can be established in a suitable place.

6. Conclusion

Tourism in Lawachara National Park is a very new development. In order to develop this sector further, separate management plan and an action plan for tourism should be developed. Numerous people come to Lawachara National Park every year to see forests, wild life, and natural beauty, and to visit the surrounding attractions. The park has a good potentiality for tourism and eco-tourism even though it does not offer any lodging facilities. Tourists are also eager to visit the villages of the indigenous people that inhabit or live nearby the park—the Khasia, Tripura and Manipuri. These communities have lived in or near the park for a long time

Most of the respondents in my survey have perceptions of tourism. Most households, however, do not currently receive any benefits from tourism. To the extent that they receive benefits, these benefits come from cultural show performances, selling of homemade clothing and providing eco-tour guide services. The Manipuri receive the greatest amount of monetary benefits from their cultural shows and homemade weaving. The Tripura receive benefits from selling fabric and from providing eco-tour guide services. Ironically, the Khasia, who are the only people who actually live inside the park, did not receive any benefit at all. Among all the indigenous groups, the Manipuri derived the most benefits from selling handicrafts.

A home stay program offers good hope of being successful in all three villages since most of the people interviewed were positively inclined towards receiving home-stays. Members of indigenous communities feel good and proud when they see visitors coming to visit them and to learn about their culture and livelihoods. The Manipuri and Tripura respondents had not been affected by problems caused by tourists. The Khasia, the community that lives in the forests, however, did report problems of people picking their plants, talking loudly, and inappropriately entering a bathing place reserved for Khasia women.

The benefits the communities receive from tourism are not the result of Forest Department initiatives, but are rather due to peoples' own inventiveness. The formal institution, Adibashi Manipuri Cultural Development Organization, played a positive role in the Manipuri community. On the other hand the formal and informal institutions of the Khasia and Tripura communities do not seem to have played any meaningful role in developing incomes from tourism for their communities. Since local institution can lead to a better management of natural resources (Udaya Sekhar 2000), these institutions should be involved in the tourism sector. The involvement of both indigenous and Bengali communities in the tourism is currently insignificant. In order to enhance livelihood benefits, their involvement in this sector should be ensured. This will also provide future dividends in biodiversity conservation.

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to the Bangladesh Forest Department and USAID for the fellowship. I express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Jefferson Fox, Senior Fellow at the East-West Center, who greatly assisted me in writing this paper. His sincerity and support is unlimited. I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Mohammed Osman Gani, the Chief Conservator of Forests of the Bangladesh Forest Department, who gave me the opportunity to avail of this

research program. In addition, I am deeply grateful to Mr. Manoj K. Rai, Conservator of Forests and Wildlife Management Circle of the Forest Department, for his moral support in conducting this study. My immense thanks also go to Ms. Shimona Quazi for her continuous support in the fieldwork and paper-writing. Finally I would like to express my deep gratitude to Philip J. Decosse of International Resource Group (IRG) for his appreciation in writing this paper.

References

- Bangladesh Forest Department. 2006. *Bangladesh's Protected Areas: A visitor's guide*.
- Boo, E. 1990. *Ecotourism: Potentiality and pitfalls*. World Wild Life Fund: Washington, DC.
- Brandon, K. and M. Wells. 1992. "Planning for people and parks: design dilemmas." *World Development*. Vol.20, no. 4 pp 557-570.
- Brandon, K. 1997. "Policy and practical considerations in land use strategies for biodiversity conservation." In *Last Stand: Protected areas and the defense of tropical biodiversity*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Butler W.R. and Boyd, W. S. 2000. "Tourism and national Parks: a long but uneasy relationship." In Butler W.R and Boyd W.S. (eds.), *Tourism and National Parks: Issues and Implications*. John Wiley and Sons Ltd: UK.
- Ceballos-Lascurain, H. 1993. "Ecotourism as a worldwide phenomenon." In: Lindberg, K. and Hawkins, D.E. (eds.), *Ecotourism: A guide for planners and managers*. Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, India. Vol.1 p. 12-13.
- Dixon, J and P. Sherman. 1990. *Economics of protected areas: a new look at benefits and costs*. Island Press, Washington DC.
- Fletcher, S.A. 1990. "Parks, protected areas and local populations: new international issues and imperatives." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 19:197-201.
- Hassan F. 2006. "Tourism in SAARC Countries." *The Daily Star* Vol. 5 Num 695. [Accessed online July 2006] URL: <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/05/14/d605141502108.htm>.
- Healy, R. 1994. "Tourist merchandise as a means of generating local benefits from eco tourism." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. Vol.2.no.3, pp.137-151.
- IUCN. 2005. *Benefits Beyond Boundaries*. Proceedings of the 5th IUCN World Parks Congress – Durban, South Africa, 8–17 September 2003. [Online August 2006] URL: <http://www.iucn.org/bookstore/booksonline.htm>.
- Kellert, S.R. 1985. "Social and perceptual factors in endangered species management." *Journal of Wildlife Management* 49(2): 528-675.
- Kumer, R.B. 1995. *Coastal Tourism and Environment*. S.B. Nangia, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, India. 8p.
- Lewis, C. 1996. "Managing conflicts in protected areas." IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.
- Lindberg, K. and Huber Jr. R.M. 1993. "Economic issues in ecotourism management." In Lindberg, K. and D.E. Hawkins (eds.), *Ecotourism. A guide for planners and managers, Vol 1*. Natraj Publishers. Dehradun, India.
- Lindberg, K. 1993. "Economic aspects of ecotourism." In Lindberg, K. and D.E. Hawkins (eds.), *Ecotourism: A guide for planners and managers, Vol. 2*. Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, India.

- Mehta Jai, N. and Kellert, S. R. 1998. "Local attitude toward community based conservation policy and programmes in Nepal-A case study in the Makalu-Barun conservation area." *Environmental Conservation* 25(4): p. 320-321.
- Mollah, A. R. and Kunda D.K. 2004. *Site level appraisal for protected area co-management: Lawachara National Park*. Prepared for International Resources Group (IRG). Nature Conservation Management (NACOM), Bangladesh. [Online July 2006] URL: http://www.nishorgo.org/files_pdf/site%20level%20lawachara.pdf.
- Nepal, K.S. 2000. "Tourism, national parks and local communities." In Butler W.R and Boyd W.S. (eds.), *Tourism and National Parks: Issues and Implications*, John Wiley and Sons Ltd UK. p73.
- Nishorgo 2006. Management Plans for Lawachara National Park (Draft) Vol.1 & 2.
- Panwar, H.S. 1996. "Ecodevelopment: an integrated approach to sustainable development for people and protected areas in India." Proceedings of the SAARC workshop on wildlife management, Dehradun, India, November 1996.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1997. Local Institutions for Resource Management. In *Beyond Fences: Seeking Social Sustainability in Conservation*, ed. G. Borrini-Feyerabend, sec. 4.3 in vol. 2. Gland, Switzerland: Social Policy Group, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). [Online August 2006] URL: http://www.iucn.org/themes/spg/Files/beyond_fences/beyond_fences.html.
- Pasha. K.P 2006. Telephone interview. 21 June, 2006.
- Patam, R.2005. *The Khasi People: history, heritage and culture* (in Bengali). Barsha Private Limited, Nilkhet, Dhaka. p.112.
- Pothmi, P.2006. Personal communication. 13 April, 2006.
- Pothmi, S. 2006. Personal communication. 27 April, 2006.
- Roe, D. and Khanya P.U. 2001. "Pro-poor tourism-harnessing the world's largest industry for the world's poor" [Online August 2006] URL: <http://www.iiied.org/pubs/pdf/full/11007IIED.pdf>
- Sinha, A. M. 2006. Personal communication. 10 May, 2006.
- Sultana, I.Z. 2001. "Tourism Industries in Bangladesh and World Tourism Day 2001." *The Bangladesh Observer Weekend Magazine*, Dhaka. September 28.3-6.
- Udaya Sekhar, N.2000. "Fuelwood and fodder extraction and deforestation: mainstream views in India discussed on the basis of data from the semi-arid region of Rajasthan." *Geoforum* 32(2001), 319-332.
- Udaya Sekhar, N. 2003. "Local people's attitude towards conservation around Sariska Tiger Reserve, India." *Journal of Environmental Management* 69(2003), p.340.
- Walpole, J.M. and Goodwin, J. H. 2001. "Local attitude towards conservation and tourism around Komodo National Park, Indonesia." *Environmental Conservation* 28(2) 160-166.
- Wunder, S.1998.*Forest conservation through ecotourism incomes? A case study from Ecuadorian Amazon Region*. CIFOR special paper, CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.
- Western, D.1993. "Defining ecotourism." In: Lindberg, K. and D.E. Hawkins (eds.). *Ecotourism: a guide for planners and managers*. Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, India Vol.1 p. 7.