

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INCLUSIVE TOURISM PRACTICES

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Declaration We hereby declare that this paper, “Community Initiatives in achieving sustainability through Inclusive tourism practices”, is our own, unaided work. It is submitted first time for presentation in the national conference named, “Inclusive and Sustainable Growth, The role of Industries, Government, and Society” organized by IMT Nagpur. It has not been submitted before in any other journal or conference for publication.

Abstract The focus of this paper is to analyze the prospects of community inclusive tourism practices in achieving sustainability of the indigenous sections of the society, which in turn has a positive linkage with the socio economic development of these regions. The trend of development that characterises a region's dependency on tourism, however, has seen the resources of numerous communities utilised by the state and companies with community members receiving marginal benefits. Given the widespread acknowledgement of tourism as a major income generating and revenue earning service sector particularly for developing countries, for sustainable development the actual benefits of tourism should be of, by, for and with the full consent and embrace of the community. Sustainable tourism is a movement that, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, establishes suitable balance between the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism in order to guarantee its long term sustainability. The importance of community-inclusive tourism is its emphasis on active participation and empowerment of local people in the tourism opportunity. This introduces community inclusive tourism, a logical answer to the vices of mass tourism, as a means to develop the local community by blending sustainable tourism, preservation of nature with economic growth.

In our present study we try to focus on the importance of Self Help groups in community inclusive tourism practices using the case study methodology on ‘Help Tourism’ and analyze their effectiveness in terms of achieving environmental sustainability and community development.

Keywords: Community-Inclusive Tourism, Self Help Groups, Environmental Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), ‘tourism is the world’s largest industry’, contributing 9.5% of global GDP, surpassing other significant sectors like financial & business services, transport and manufacturing: tourism accounted for 266 million jobs globally (WTTC Report 2014). As the global tourism industry has grown and spread more to developing country destinations, crucial issues about assessing the impact of tourism at national level concern how benefits are created and how they are distributed in the host country.

Sustainable development which ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity is the watchword of the day, emphasizing the need to preserve existing environmental resources for the benefit of future generations. Notwithstanding all the benefits

that accrue from a booming tourism trade, the physical, cultural and social environmental costs of the host countries are significantly proving to be detrimental to its contribution to economic growth of developing nations. The major criticism cited against tourism industry is resource paradox (Williams P. F & Ponsford I. F, 2009). i.e. the tourism industry exploits and stresses environmental (natural) resources to satisfy consumers’ needs, its inherent dependence on an intact environment simultaneously requires their protection as a backdrop and ingredient in most tourism experiences. The influence of Mass-Consumerism precipitating the degradation and destruction of natural resources crucial to local communities’ livelihoods coupled with materialism and consumerism influencing and destabilizing the value systems of established social systems and cultures underlines the need for ‘environmental sustainability’ as the next great challenge that developing countries including India face along its path to development.

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The evidence of climate change resulting in major changes in “ecosystem structure and function,” leading to “negative consequences for biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services e.g. water and food supply”, reducing crop yields due to climate change associated with global warming by mid-21st century thereby increasing the intensity and extent of already existing food crisis and poverty and increasing risk of extinction 20–30 percent of plants (Gibbs W.W. 2001) and animal species making the ecosystem more fragile and thereby susceptible to exogenous shocks has produced the necessary amount of fear and imperative to rethink ways of environmental sustainability that has been carelessly handled by tourism developers. This challenge characterizes the debate of how environmental sustainability and tourism development might co-exist and profit from each other.

In order to diminish negative impacts of tourism activities, the 1999 meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development urged governments to “maximize the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in co-operation with all major groups, indigenous and local communities.” (Roe, 2001:2). An important principle is to seek to work with existing social and community structures with the focused objective of achieving broad and equitable benefits throughout the community. This emphasizes the development of a community inclusive approach involving empowerment of local people in decision-making over the level and nature of tourism in its area, making them the major stakeholders as well as beneficiaries in the tourism opportunity. Inclusive Tourism is a means of tourism development that fosters links and interaction between the different actors in the tourism industry, forms partnerships with private actors, stimulates the local economy and promotes the integration of women and active involvement of local communities emphasizing environmental, social and economic sustainability. (Leclercq, Fabrice, 2008)

The following paper, based on the case study on Help Tourism which adopts community inclusive tourism for natural resource conservation and village community development through tourism and its related activities, is divided into three chapters. Chapter one deals with the literature review and the conceptual framework used to guide this research. Chapter two deals with the methods used to collect and analyze data and Chapter three deals with the detailed discussions and conclusions reached.

Sustainability and Community-based Tourism

Sustainability is defined as that which seeks to meet the need and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

suggesting a state of balance in which human activities coexist in harmony with their natural, social and cultural environment (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). Since its inception attempts have been made to link it with virtually every aspect of development, tourism being no exception. A remarkable amount of literary work was done centering this concept in tourism and its chronological development.

Some authors analyzed sustainability as a strategy which would imply strengthening, upgrading, and even differentiation of tourist product relying on organizational & technological innovations (Coccosis, 1996). A more conservationist approach recommended the need for ecologically sustainable tourism, suggesting sustainable ecotourism principles (P.A Wight, 1993). The third approach narrates principles and practices of sustainable tourism development (Hunter, 1995). The fourth approach is based on ecologically sustainable economic development wherein tourism policies are integrated with social, economic and environmental policies so as to minimize the negative impacts and maximize tourism's ability to assist in economic, social and environmental protection (Jithendran, 2002). Sustainable tourism is an economic development model conceived to improve the quality of life for local community, and to facilitate for the visitor a high-quality experience of the environment (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). However, although sustainable tourism appears as a holistic, equitable and future-oriented development strategy, it has a largely inward, product-centered perspective. Thus, whilst it embraces the objectives of environmental sustainability, sustainable tourism does not appear to be consistent with the developmental aspects of sustainable development.” (Sharpley, 2000).

Any effort to look at environmental restructuring for achieving environmental sustainability calls for adopting responsible and sustainable tourism practices on both demand and supply sides of the tourism chain to gain local economic development, reach some form of participation, provide socially and environmentally responsible experience for visitors, and bring positive effect on the conservation of natural and cultural sources, enabling an effective response to climate change. This is closely interlinked with inclusive growth through sustainable community participation by strengthening the disadvantaged rural communities through support to capacity building and vernacular infrastructure, while laying emphasis on the role of women. Involving the community is a critically important and complex subject for successful community-based ecotourism.

Abundant literature already exists on Community based Tourism (CBT), all of which claims a good amount of community's participation in the decision making and management of tourism activities. Studies exist on the advantages of CBT in empowering local communities, improving local skills, instilling a sense of ownership among

local community members and leading to development in a locality (Leballo, 2000). CBT development has played a central role in the generation of community revenues, employment and additional benefits with local involvement in tourism being viewed as a way of providing an alternative development route to improve peoples' health, education and quality of life without compromising their natural resources (Mearns, 2003).

But the trend of this development revealed that while the state and companies accrued direct financial benefits by utilising resources of numerous rural communities, community members are becoming a commoditized component of tourism industry and received only marginal benefits from CBT. While economic factors hindering rural CBT are in form of lack of essential skills among the inhabitants, high development cost of the projects, low demand (Sharpley, 2002), the social factors affecting CBT development, are class, gender and patronage inequalities (Scheyvens, 1999). This poses threat to sustainable development of these rural areas leading to mass migration, lack of local ownership of natural resources and lack of community motivation and participation in environmental conservation. This call for differentiating what is understood by participation with the notion of leadership in the community, where ideas and projects take a more bottom-up approach, instead of top-down, where partnerships between public sector organizations, communities and private sector work together.

Conceptualizing 'community inclusive' tourism(CIT) approach:

The environmental awakening in the face of increasing global environment degradation emphasizes that for sustainable development a community inclusive approach needs to be developed with active involvement of local community and developing *local self help groups* as stakeholders in the tourism opportunities of the area. For any community participation to be effective, integrating "local community needs and ways of life with tourism developments to avoid the problems and conflicts' associated with erosion of local cultures" is essential (Shaw & Williams, 2004:182).

In this paper we wish to develop a concept called "Community inclusive' tourism. It is conceived as a community-led, community-focused as well as community-owned and the actual benefits of tourism should be of, by, for and with the full consent and embrace of the community. It should be characterized by autonomy and empowerment with regards to ownership and decision making power of the local community over the level and nature of tourism in its area, land use planning and development control over private property, making them the major stakeholders and direct benefiteres in the tourism opportunity. It involves

an understanding, and where possible strengthening, of the legal rights and responsibilities of the community over land, resources and development, particularly of the tenure of community-held lands and to rights over tourism, conservation and other uses on these lands, for ensuring 'community protection', empowering them to influence activity and earn income and thereby reap the socioeconomic benefits from tourism.

The degree of community involvement and benefit can develop over time. The private investors should play a significant role in capacity building of the indigenous sections of the economy by advising and training local communities, negotiating practices using their indigenous experience and knowledge of tourism and conservation and then involving them in the preparation of strategies for environmental protection and conservation. They can also help to identify potential leaders and people with drive who can be handed over the reign of the business as well as the provision for employment and training programme for local people after a specified period, thereby making the local community stakeholders and safeguarding their ownership of local environment protection and conservation.

Community Inclusive Tourism , as an advanced form of CBT, differs in ownership pattern and right of property. CIT, initially may take the form of private – community / self help group initiative for tourism projects development with an aim for conservation of resources and economic option for the people but gradually terminated in total self help group ownership. In CIT the tourism projects are not only managed by local people but in long run turned into community's or Self Help group's property. Localities being the stake holders could retain the total income from Tourism projects in the local economy. Private business houses may initiate the project along with funding and developing managerial competence for the project which thereafter they pass on the ownership to the participating self help group. In this model initial problem of entrepreneurial requirements i.e. fund and expertise could be addressed in a better way.

STUDY OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine the practices associated with community inclusive tourism in rural and village areas and how far these are successful in achieving environmental sustainability and generating economic benefits of the region. The other more important issue to be addressed is to find out the pattern of community or self help group involvement in decision-making processes regarding the conflict resolution, operation and improvements of the region. Essentially the aim of the study is to track the sustainability measures that have taken place through adoption of CIT by Help Tourism.

The approach to the study was case study method, which, Haralambos and Holborn (1995, 833) defines as ‘the detailed examination of a single example of something’ and may involve ‘the study of a single institution, community or social group, an individual person, a particular historical event, or a single social action’. However, the study does not seek to generalize but in fact it hopes to get a clear picture of how the communities are benefiting from CIT.

Data requirements were met mainly through primary sources. Interviews with key stakeholders of Help Tourism were conducted with help of a structured schedule to generate necessary information. The schedule was prepared on the basis of the interaction with the industry experts and refinement thereafter for in-depth interview with key persons of the Help-Tourism management and members of Self Help groups with the current projects.

This study mainly focuses on the extent of achievements of Help Tourism in implementing community inclusive tourism practices as has been defined in this paper. Through the mode of operation of Help Tourism, a significant prerogative to which is the development of Self Help group, an approach has been modeled for planning and operation of the Community inclusive tourism practices, which has been proposed in this paper. Also the analysis tries to find out the various initiatives taken by help tourism and the local Self Help groups in achieving environmental sustainability.

Case-1: Help Tourism

It is a tour operator and destination management consultant specializing in East- and North East India and was established

in 1991. Focused on tourism as a tool for conservation and sustainable development, it has supported various communities in the region in creating and establishing quality tourism destinations with a unique local flavor. From a partnership venture it has become fully privately owned enterprise since 2007 providing purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment without concealing actual threats. Ranked as one of the 158 best adventure travel companies on earth by national geographic adventure, it provides a strong platform for development of rural and village tourism. This is definitely useful for a country like India, where almost 74% of the population resides in its 7 million villages.

A major objective of this organization is to arrest village community within the periphery of forest, and thereby stop migration, to protect wild life. Help Tourism by involving local people into community tourism builds up capacity, safeguards ownership and links them globally. They regularly conduct campaigns for sustainable development at local levels, provides them with training and consultancy and encourages activities that confirm community development through tourism minus its negative effects: Linking Protected Areas and World Heritage Sites with people’s livelihood by giving them ownership through tourism is a first step towards meaningful and sustainable conservation.

PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY HELP TOURISM

Help Tourism realized that preservation of natural & cultural wonders of India in their kaleidoscopic form and sharing

Table- 1: Projects undertaken by Help Tourism

Name of project	Co-initiators	Location	Initiation
Pelling	Pelling Tourism Development Association(PTDA)	West Sikkim	1993
Lava	’Lava Biodiversity and Eco-tourism Community’	Kalimpong	1995
Garumara jungle camp	Gorumara Paryatan Unnayan Committee	Dooars, North Bengal	1996
Rishyap /Rishet	Loleygaon-Kafer Hotel Owners Association	Kalimpong	1998
Tinchuley	SERVE, WWF	Darjeeling district	1998
Bali jungle camp	Bali Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society	Sunderban, South Bengal	2002
Uttaray	S.B Subba	West Sikkim	2003
Barsey Jungle Camp	Hee Bermiok Heritage Conservation Society	West Sikkim	2003
Manas Maozigendri	Manas Maozigendri Eco Tourism community	Bodoland, Assam	2004
Kamlang & Namdhapa	INC, Tirap Development Society and SEACOW	Arunachal Pradesh	
Ziro	Apatani tribal people	Central Arunachal Pradesh	2005
Chilapata Jungle Camp	Not institutionalized	Dooars, North Bengal)	2008
Kolakham - Neora Valley	Lingsykhra Gram Panchayat	NP (Kalimpong)	2005
Dibang Valley Jungle camp	Not institutionalized	Arunachal Pradesh	2007

with like-minded people could be attained only by total community involvement through Community inclusive Tourism approach. Help Tourism initiated more than 31 projects in the adjacent vicinity of national parks, biosphere reserves, or protected areas in different parts of eastern India for realization of this goal, some of which are mentioned below –

ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATION

Two types of models have been developed for CBT in protected or reserved areas.

- A Project based CBT, initiated by national or international NGOs, local government, or National Park Management, that have developed as tourism destinations with the development of a tourism project.
- B Non project based CBT, where the national park has a unique and specific attraction for visitors, leading to spontaneous development of tourism business by the community.

CIT approaches viewed as an improvement on basic CBT development approaches differ depending on the size and characteristics of the local community as well as the process of development of the project undertaken. Help Tourism's CIT initiative can be ranked in the first category and is modeled as follows

Identification of the conflict areas

The main objective of Help Tourism is conservation of nature by sustainable practices. The village communities of India, typical traditional in characteristics, portraying self-sustaining economy, using archaic technology with high dependence on empirical knowledge and close-knit social structure attained a balanced mutually dependent relationship with forest resources for their daily needs for livelihood. The break of the mutual relation was initiated in British regime and totally enforced by Indian Government rules & regulations in form of Indian Forest Act 1971 and Wildlife protection Act 1971. Under these laws, the rights of people living in or depending on the area to be declared as a forest or protected area are to be "settled" by a "forest settlement officer" through enquiry into the claims of people to land, minor forest produce, etc. and, if the claims are found to be valid, to allow them to continue or to extinguish them by paying compensation.

Thus a 'conflict on right to forest' between the localities and forest department came into existence leading to unsustainable usage pattern which was further enhanced by the unsustainable models of forest management. The conflict is relative to the socio-economic surrounding of the place. In Sunderban and Manas of Assam, it is a struggle

to stop illegal poaching. Another dimension of this conflict in Manas is to strive against terrorism. In different parts of North Bengal and Sikkim it's a drift from Timber to tourism. In the national parks CIT is a drive to change the local population from destructor to protector.

Help tourism identifies and target those areas and tries to foster CIT as a force to bring together the apparent opposite interest of preservation of nature and community's need of economic sustenance.

CASE-2: SELF-HELP GROUP

In the process of socialization, social support systems can be classified into five different types: self-help groups, social networks, natural helpers, formal organizations, and formed groups. Self-Help groups are different from other groups because they control their own resources and policies; the group is self governing and self regulating nonprofessional organization formed by people with a common problem or situation, for the purpose of pooling resources, gathering information, and offering mutual support, services, or care. In India the Self Help group is a unique approach to financial intermediation and women empowerment in rural villages.

The self help groups formed under the leadership of Help Tourism as an agent of community involvement in practicing sustainable tourism have 2 essential characteristics.

- A They are not always gender specific, men along with women are members of these group.
- B They are rather management group than financial unit, with competence in managing day to day operation of the camps. The whole responsibility of managing the ecotourism ultimately rests on them.

Help Tourism act as a crucial facilitator in the formation and development of these self help groups. This is accomplished by providing the following supports in developing these community groups:

- i. Formation of the group: In some places like Bali and Manas Maozigendri Eco-Tourism community, already a community of youths exist who are redirected and trained by Help Tourism to foster eco tourism as an economic activity. In other areas like Lava, the group named, 'Lava Biodiversity and Eco-tourism Community' is deliberately formed to shoulder the responsibility.
- ii. Provide total training in hospitality management: Regular camp management is a key activity of these groups. They organize the rooms, provide food and maintain kitchen, initiate waste management processes, look after the guests, arrange sightseeing tours and coordinate among various activities for guest satisfaction.

- iii. Workshop and training on Capacity Building and Ecotourism products: These self help groups ultimately become the owner and manager of the camps, so it is imperative that they shoulder all responsibilities for running these projects: keeping liaison with local bodies, arranging transport, recruiting human resource and marketing of the projects.
- iv. Training in sustainable use of natural and indigenous resources and waste management: For instance the Help tourism initiative in Chilapata jungle uses trolleys to run on abandoned rail tracks for automatic patrolling of the forest resources. They organize health camps, training camps, environment camps to educate the community in sustainability practices.
- v. Organizing Kraft Exhibition like Kraft Kanchenjunga, to encourage cultural heritage and capacity building of the 'community tourism villages'.
- vi. Promotion and Marketing of tourism product: Responsible for connecting these tourism projects with the right type of market worldwide. This remains an area of help even after the ownership is transferred to the self help groups. The promotional campaign is also the sole responsibility of help tourism
- vii. They also provide the necessary funds and equipment so to enable the groups to attain their objectives. Frequently Help Tourism funded the initiation of the projects. Once the project starts, the rolling of the revenue generated and all other financial documentation and activities are done by these community groups.

Reinforcement of Round the Clock Community Protection

One key area in CIT practices is ensuring 'community protection' of the natural and cultural heritage. Communities play a crucial role in creating 'Community protection policies' to be adopted for enforcing control measures in this regard. Some such measures adopted in various projects of Help Tourism are listed as follows:

- Hunting materials not sold in the villages in an initiative to prevent poaching of many endangered species
- For protection of wild life and their conservation, Selling wildlife meat as food has been banned for tourists as well as local people.
- For conservation of trees, partial cutting of trees with less timber value is widely used in order to control complete desolation of areas which once had lush green habitat.
- The entire community socially boycotts full family if any member is found guilty of malpractices against conservation of natural heritage

Preservation and Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage

Promoting eco-tourism has an inert challenge of balancing both tourist comfort & satisfaction on one hand and preservation of ecology on other. Therefore commercial hotel type accommodation cannot be a choice. Help Tourism creates "Camps" and sometimes home stay facilities in or near the villages. For e.g., Bodo household home stay facilities are available in Manas jungle camp in Assam. The "camps" for tourists are not necessarily tent accommodation. The Garumara Jungle camp can accommodate 26 double bedded cottages. The Buxa tiger camp has 2 cottages & 2 family rooms. In Lataguri, unique accommodation is provided by converting the abandoned Timber Merchant Association Office in an eight bedded Tourist Hostel. The interior designs of the camps give highest importance to the exhibits of indigenous culture and handicrafts making maximum use of local ingredients to give a natural and ethnic look. All of them have satisfying level of functional comfort, so that the basic needs of tourists are cared for.

Guests are provided healthy food with local flavor. In Tinchuley, the major attraction is its Home Hospitality where one gets to eat bio-organic food. In camps of Sunderban village produced bio- organic rice packets are sold as souvenirs. Thus a multi-layered approach to community-led development allowing enthusiasts to develop small projects whilst having the support of the wider community to develop a holistic product is expected to emerge.

Apart from this Help Tourism also helps tourists to discover local habitats and wildlife, and celebrate and respect traditional cultures, rituals and wisdom by arranging for tribal tours, festival and culture tours along with butterfly tours and birding tours.

Environmental Sustainability Through CIT Practices

Since conservation is the main objectives, keen attention is given for waste management procedures. Special training on waste minimization as well as waste recycling practices is imparted to the villagers through deployment of local infrastructure and indigenous expertise. The key waste management practices adopted in various projects of Help tourism are listed below:

Waste Recycle & Incineration: The waste management process encompasses 3 parameters – Reduce, Reuse/ Recycle and Disposal. Since disposal method is costly, the common option adopted by Help Tourism is Reduction of waste generation in their different projects. In Sunderban and other Bio- sensitive areas which are already declared as No-Plastic Zone, special prior intimation is given to the

tourists regarding use of plastics and dumping of mineral water bottles is strictly discouraged. The wastes generated in the camps are segregated in biodegradable and non biodegradable substances.

The non-biodegradable ones like glass bottles etc are sold to local waste collectors generating an income for the Self help group. The canned drinks after consumption are used by the women folk for craft & toy making. Wrappers, thermocols etc are disposed off through the process of Incineration, adopted here in a primitive way. A big tinned covered drum is used for burning garbages. The ash is disposed in land filling.

Composting and Vermi Composting: The biodegradable waste like cardboard, papers, leaves, fruits and vegetables and any type of the kitchen waste are generally used for composting and vermi-composting purpose. This bio-compost manure are collected by the local people as high quality natural fertilizer and used in gardening and agricultural fields. The organic cereals and other products which are produced in the camp area are often sold as souvenirs to the tourist. Thus it generates extra income to the Self-Help group members.

Rain Water Harvesting: In different camps in hilly terrain and islands of South Bengal where water scarcity is acute, rain water harvesting practices of Help Tourism provides a partial solution. It involves accumulation of rainwater in catchment area (generally rooftops), where coarse mesh is used to remove the initial debris. The gutters around the roof made up of plastic or iron sheets or even bamboo trunk are used to collect rain water. Then they are stored in huge cemented tanks and filtration is done either using indigenous charcoal water filter or sand filter or using the process of chlorination and is then reused in all necessary purposes (like irrigation, domestic household chores etc)

Developing CIT Model Adopted by Help Tourism: Considering the potential conservation gain and the need for a clear initial understanding of the relationship between local communities and the use of natural resources in the area concerned, an integrated approach needs to be planned for implementing the community inclusive tourism practices. Based on the mode of planning and operation of Help Tourism, we propose to develop a schematic step by step CIT approach which is as follows:

Socio Economic Empowerment of the Community Through CIT: The growing socioeconomic importance of CIT all over the world and especially in many developing countries and the effective contribution of tourism to the achievement of several Millenium Development Goals, as already recognized by the WSSD in Johannesburg and the Brussels Programme of Action, especially those relating to poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and creation of employment opportunities for women, indigenous

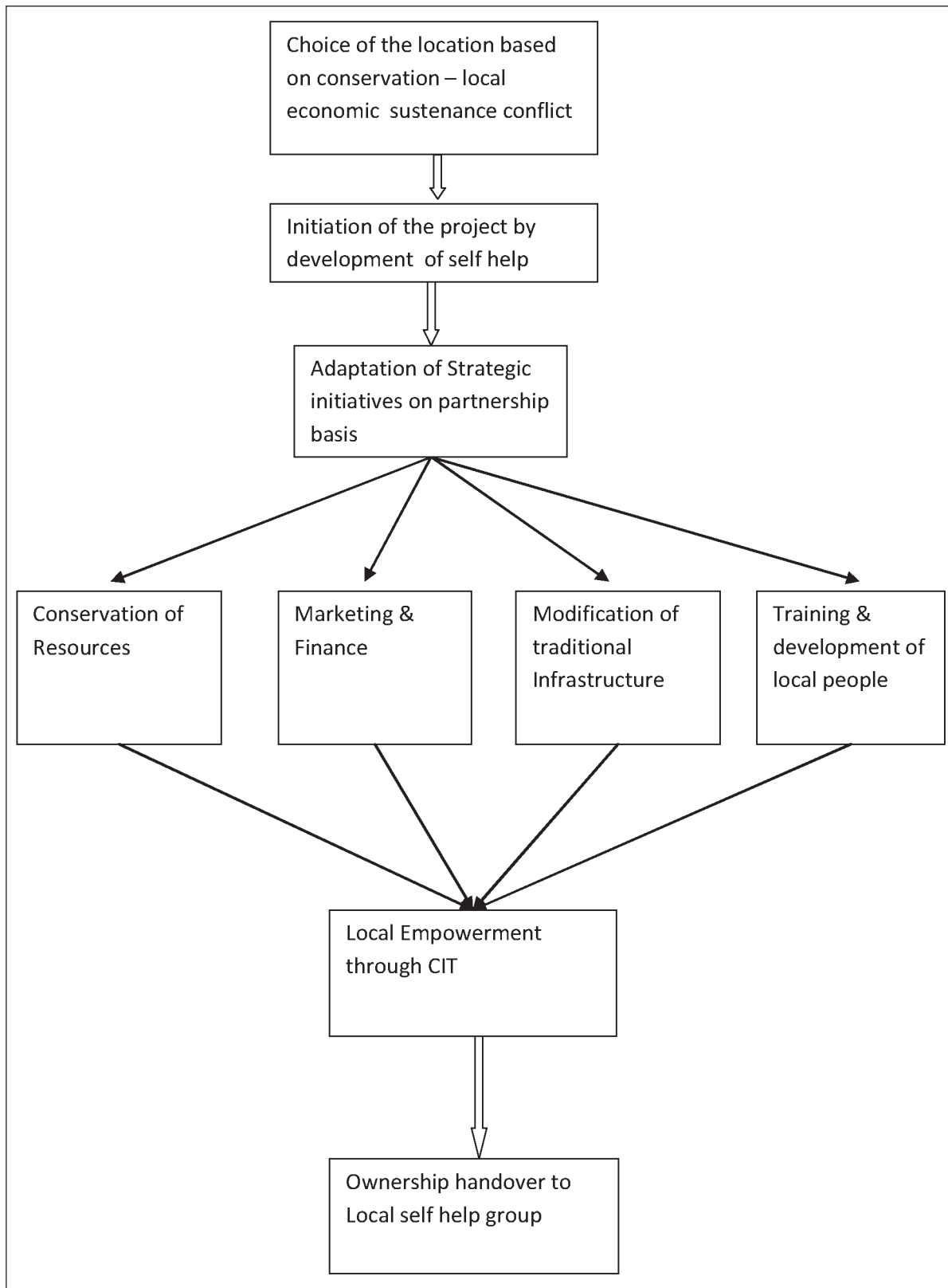
communities and young people” (WTO, 2005:1) suggests such inclusive tourism approach as more sustainable as it allows the involvement of previously marginalized groups in society, such as women (Timothy, 2002) as well as the grassroots in order to achieve community empowerment.

Inclusive Tourism opens up new opportunities to source local products and services while improving human capital. The experience of the guests is greatly enhanced due to the “authenticity” of the destination and capitalization on the growing trend of “giving back to the community”. Total and direct involvement of the Community in tourism development empower people to be more aware of the value of their community assets-their culture, heritage, cuisine and lifestyle and this will foster community based conservation of these resources. It mobilizes them to convert these into income generating projects while offering a more diverse and worthwhile experience to visitors. This type of people-centered’ tourism promotes a sense of ‘ownership’ which augurs well for the industry’s sustainability. (TPDCO, 2007:1) These tourism projects are a well-thought of livelihood option and conservation tool for the local population who otherwise may migrate or destroy the natural resources for sustenance.

With the training being imparted to the local masses and managerial ownership being transfered to the Self Help groups, every citizen of the community is now a potential business partner to be trained in small business management, environmental awareness, product development and marketing. The local people are involved in every aspect of manning the project. The residents earn income as land managers, entrepreneurs, service and produce providers, and employees. Starting from the manager to care-taker, all are appointed by the community who are managing the project. The local youths are engaged as guides and guardians of the forest. The van/rickshaw pullers or boats men are all locals. Generally depending on the size of projects the number of employees can vary from 25 to 40. Thus CIT not only brings long-term financial benefits to the destination community leading to notable improvements in local services and infrastructure but also improves community cohesion among individuals and families in building a successful industry.

CONCLUSION

The success of the community inclusive projects of Lava, Lataguri, Tinchuley and Manas show that community empowerment through tourism initiatives is a practical and powerful way of sustaining economic and environmental well being of the fringe societies near National parks. Nevertheless management ownership needs to be supported by financial ownership which the projects like Dibang, Neora or Chilapata are yet to achieve. The training and constant monitoring of the members of Self Help group becomes



crucial. Government intervention in this regard would help in strengthening the effectiveness of the process.

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