

Terms of Reference *for* **Promoting Community Managed Ecotourism in CHAL and TAL**

1. Background

The Hariyo Ban Program is a 5 year USAID funded program. The goal of the program is to reduce adverse impacts of climate change and threats to biodiversity in Nepal. Major objectives of the program are to reduce threats to biodiversity in target landscapes; build the structures, capacity and operations necessary for effective sustainable landscape management, with a focus on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) readiness; and increase the ability of targeted human and ecological communities to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. Hariyo Ban Program is being implemented by a consortium of NGOs: World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (lead), Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and the Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal (FECOFUN). The Government of Nepal (GoN) is a key partner and beneficiary of Hariyo Ban, as are local communities. The program will also partner with other NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector. Hariyo Ban Program is being implemented in two landscapes: Chitwan-Annapurna (CHAL) and Terai Arc Landscapes (TAL) where three thematic components biodiversity conservation, sustainable landscapes, and climate change adaptation, and three cross-cutting components livelihoods, governance, and gender and social inclusion are being implemented.

Of the two landscapes, CHAL falls within the Sacred Himalayan Landscape stretched between Bhutan in the east and Gandaki River in the west. CHAL's high biodiversity value and rich natural and cultural heritage make it a perfect ecotourism destination in Nepal. It contains a number of existing popular tourist destinations including the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), ranked among the top 20 trekking destination in the world. The scenic beauty of the trans-Himalayan and snowcapped mountain range in the north, coupled with rich culture and biodiversity including snow leopard and red panda are among the attractions of CHAL. In the recent past, a few villages have developed community managed tourism. Sirubari is one such village where guests are taken to an unspoiled natural and cultural destination and tourists spend a few days living with the local people and being treated as honored family guests.

Similarly, TAL is the first conservation landscape in the region and stretches between the Bagmati River, Nepal and Yamuna River, India. In Nepal TAL expands between Bagmati and Mahakali Rivers and accommodates 6 protected areas and 2 Ramsar sites. TAL is home for tiger, rhinoceros, elephant, gharial and Gangatic dolphin. The landscape is also a home for over 45 different ethnic groups including indigenous Tharus, Bote, Sonaha, Mushar and Chepang with diverse culture and religion. Rich biodiversity and cultural settings make TAL one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region where Chitwan alone receives over 250 thousand tourists annually. Furthermore, a few community forests outside the protected areas have evolved as a role model for community managed ecotourism. Of these, the Bagmara community forest in Chitwan demonstrates a successful example of community managed eco-tourism.

The rich natural and cultural resources in both landscapes are under immense threat due to various anthropogenic pressures such as rapid population growth, unsustainable land uses, influence of western

culture and rampant poverty. Impacts of climate change are increasingly becoming an additional threat to the natural and cultural heritage over time. Traditional livelihood options are being affected, resulting in some cases in unsustainable agriculture and outmigration to urban areas and other countries for labor. Ecotourism is a possible alternative form of livelihood for many rural communities. However, apart from a small number of pilot ecotourism projects, local communities are not benefiting from the tourism potential that these natural and cultural resources could support from community-run tourism operations.

Ecotourism can provide a viable livelihood alternative to unsustainable practices and out-migration, while at the same time promoting sound management of land and resources and helping to build community and ecosystem resilience to climate change. This is demonstrated in Ghandruk, a trekking tourist hub in ACA, where local people began to return to their own villages as tourism boomed, and brought in health and education facilities and services to their door steps.

The goal of this consultancy is to learn lessons from existing successful community ecotourism pilots, identify 4 sites (two in CHAL and two in TAL) with potential to promote community based ecotourism and produce site-specific ecotourism plans. The consultancy requires a consulting team or firm to carry out a rapid assessment of one of the successful community managed eco-tourism destinations in each landscape and based on that prepare site specific eco-tourism management plans for the new identified sites which will aim to: i) promote improved land and sustainable resource management practices, ii) contribute to the local economy by capacitating communities for managing it, and iii) increase the adaptive capacity of local people in face of the climatic and anthropogenic impacts by increasing better access to various livelihoods assets. There will be strong emphasis given to gender needs and social inclusion aspects. Eco-tourism increasing negative impacts on lives of marginalized communities with respect to their livelihood and dignity will not be promoted. In a nutshell, a community managed ecotourism attempts to strike a balance between natural resource conservation and diversification of livelihood options with specific consideration of gender and social inclusion agenda. Considering such potentiality in ecotourism, this study intends to explore and identify two feasible community based ecotourism sites in CHAL and two in TAL.

During this consultancy the consultants will liaise as feasible with the team undertaking a separate consultancy on a rapid assessment of the CHAL landscape. This is a multidisciplinary study with a much broader approach to tourism, looking at the whole landscape and not getting down into the detail of tourism potential in individual communities. The two consultancies are complementary, and the CHAL rapid assessment may be able to inform the community based ecotourism consultancy (these terms of reference) in broad terms on regional attractions, markets, tourism routes etc, and help to pinpoint specific areas for the detailed community tourism work.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To rapidly assess the environmental and economic sustainability, gender and social inclusion, benefit sharing and governance issues in minimum of two (preferably contrasting sites) successful community based ecotourism sites in each of TAL and CHAL and document lessons on successes and challenges
- To explore and identify new high-potential community based ecotourism sites (TWO in each landscape) based on economic feasibility, social acceptability and environmental sustainability in

CHAL (Seti and Marsyandi river basins) and in TAL (Karnali and Rapti river basins) preferably Hariyo Ban's first year intervention sites.

- To identify potential tourism products/attractions within the sites vis a vis other livelihood options and community capacities to manage ecotourism.
- To identify current and potential impacts of climatic and anthropogenic impacts on community based ecotourism and suggest ways to increase community and ecosystem resilience and adaptive capacity (this should be done in consultation with Hariyo Ban core team and the CHAL rapid assessment team)
- Extensive community consultations to map their willingness to initiate community based ecotourism and make them aware on all the consequences.
- To prepare site specific, participatory community based ecotourism development and management plans (4) for both sites

3. Expected Outcomes

Following outcomes are expected by the study.

- Lessons documented from existing pilot community managed ecotourism enterprises in TAL and CHAL
- High potential sites (two in each landscape) for community managed ecotourism with adequate justification identified
- Community tourism products (natural and cultural) within the proposed sites explored and documented
- Site specific community based ecotourism development and management plans prepared

4. Methodology

The methods to be used for the study are, but not limited to:

- Preparation of plan of action with detailed framework of activities, criteria, schedule etc, to be agreed with Hariyo Ban Program
- Interaction/interview with tourism experts, tourism entrepreneur. organizations engaged in tourism sectors (TAN, HAN, Hotel Associations) in TAL and CHAL
- Desk top study to review all relevant literature and other available information
- Stakeholder consultations at district, region and national level including Nepal Tourism Board
- Selection of existing ecotourism sites for rapid review(Hariyo Ban Program will provide inputs in selection of sites)
- Rapid assessment of existing community ecotourism sites through field visits, focus group interviews, etc that examines community benefits including benefit sharing that is sensitive to gender, social inclusion and economic status; costs to the community (economic, cultural, etc); and environmental costs/benefits
- Documentation of successes, challenges and lessons from the rapid assessments, including case studies of individual community ecotourism programs
- Identification of potential new sites based on ecotourism attractions, accessibility and location of suitable communities
- Focus group discussions, key informant surveys, interviews in selected communities to determine initial potential and interest
- Community consultations in potential sites

- Participatory planning with communities to identify in detail opportunities, community attitudes, capacity, governance structures, challenges etc.
- Regular consultation and coordination with the CHAL and Sacred Himalaya Landscape, TAL and Hariyo Ban team
- GIS based mapping of the tourism potential (natural and cultural heritage)
- Preparation of draft and final plans for proposed community ecotourism developments

5. Process

- Consultation and coordination with the Hariyo Ban team throughout the study period
- GIS based mapping of the tourism products (natural and cultural heritages)
- Sharing of outputs at regional and national level
- Incorporate comments/suggestions
- Submission of the final report

6. Deliverables

The deliverables of the study are:

Plan of action with detailed framework of activities, criteria, schedule etc

Draft report documenting successes, challenges and lessons from the rapid assessments of existing programs, including case studies of individual community ecotourism programs

Final report documenting successes, challenges and lessons from the rapid assessments of existing programs, including case studies of individual community ecotourism programs

Draft site-specific community based ecotourism development plans for four sites
Final site-specific community based ecotourism development plans for four sites

Maps, GIS layers, photographs, negatives and other relevant documents procured or produced under this contract, in digital and/or hard copy as appropriate, with related analysis, model, and diagrams

Final technical report

Financial report with supporting invoices

Reports will be written in English. Final deliverables will be provided in 2 hard copies and digital copy.

7. Duration and Time Frame

The duration of the study will be of FIVE months. Detailed time frame is given in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Detailed time frame

| S.No | Task | Time |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | Preparation of inception report including detailed plan of action and sharing with Hariyo Ban team | 10-15 April |
| 2 | Literature review | 15 - 25 April |
| 3 | Consultation with stakeholders at different levels and field visits, assessment of existing successful sites | 25 April - 25 June |
| 4 | Draft report including lessons from existing sites and site specific plans preparation and submission | 25 June – 20 August |
| 5 | Comments by Hariyo Ban team | 20 August - 31 August |
| 6 | Incorporate comments and submit the final technical report | 1 - 5 September |

8. Team composition

The management plan development team will include, but is not limited to:

- a) Tourism expert with adequate knowledge on community based tourism
- b) Natural resource management/biodiversity expert
- c) Socio-economist

9. Supervision

The consultant will undertake the assignment under the coordination and supervision of Coordinator, Biodiversity Conservation, Hariyo Ban.

10. Budget

The budget ceiling of the study is USD 23,000 (including travel, per diem, community/stakeholders consultation cost).