

Pro Poor Tourism

# Nabji Tourism Trail

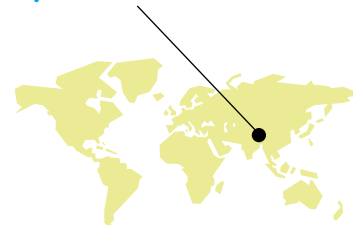
The underprivileged should get a share  
in (mass) tourism

Capacity Development Illustrated



When Sonam Lhamo heard about a plan to develop a tourism trail through her village, Korphu, she did not really know what to expect. Still, the 22 year old, grade 7 drop-out and mother of a baby girl, volunteered to use her limited knowledge of arithmetics to learn more about bookkeeping.

## Sonam Lhamo, Bhutan



**As an accountant for the Tourism Management Village Committee she is now responsible for keeping track of all contributions to the Community Development Fund.**

The Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park is located in one of the poorest districts of Central Bhutan. More than 90 per cent of the inhabitants of the six villages inside the park lack self-sufficiency in cereals, and their location inside a national park limits their opportunities for earning cash income. Traditionally, the people depended on the forests as a source of sustenance and income. Since the area was made a National Park, however, their use of its natural resources has been restricted and the forest is no longer the storeroom it used to be.

Tourism could provide supplementary income for the inhabitants of Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park. However, community involvement in tourism is new in Bhutan and there is limited experience in implementing community-based tourism initiatives.

### The SNV Approach

Instead of starting tourism projects in an ad hoc manner, SNV helps its clients to maximise the contribution of sustainable tourism towards the generation of, and participation in income by the underprivileged, in line with national development agendas. Because of SNV's expertise in sustainable and community tourism development in the Himalayas and its long involvement in integrated development programmes in Bhutan, Bhutan's Department of Tourism requested SNV's assistance in product development, organisational and institutional strengthening, and support to the private sector – particularly the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators.

### What did SNV do?

- Assist the various stakeholders in the implementation of a pilot on community tourism by training, coaching and creating market linkages;
- Offer technical assistance in product implementation, community mobilisation, trainings and private sector participation.

In 2006, SNV advisers spent a total of 120 direct advisory days on the project.

A Memorandum of Understanding with the association, which is SNV's local partner on the project provides the framework for the collaboration. The role of the association, which has been a major player in setting up the project, demonstrates that involving the private sector in tourism projects helps to ensure that all relevant areas of interest are covered and contributes to bridging the macro-micro divide.

The advisory services provided by SNV covered policy and strategy development, community mobilisation, business training and environmental conservation. With these activities SNV strengthened the capacity of Bhutan's Department of Tourism to enhance the local economic impact of tourism.

SNV also invited village representatives from Bhutan to visit other SNV-supported community-based tourism projects in Nepal. They returned to their villages not only with a better understanding of the potential of such projects, but full of inspiration to embark on their own ventures.

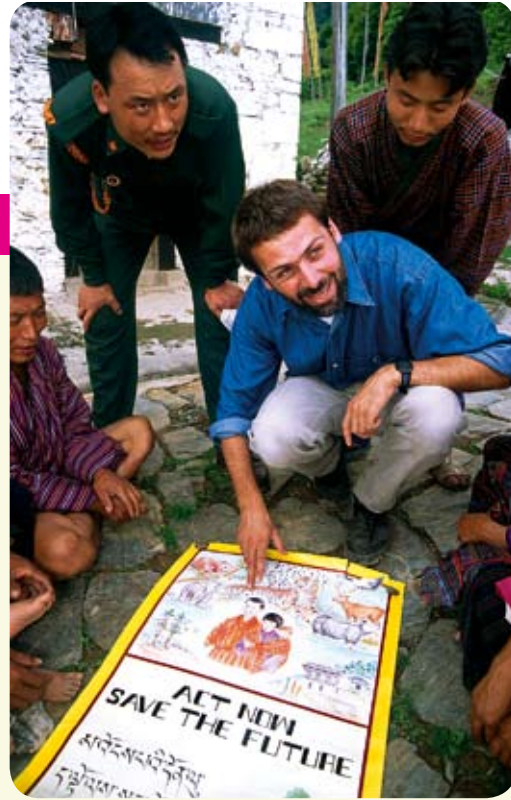


### The entire village profits

Ten villagers have been trained in basic cooking, hygiene and sanitation, five in village guiding, and another five villagers have learned basic book keeping. As a volunteer bookkeeper for Korphu's Tourism Management Village Committee, Sonam Lhamo does not earn an income to support her small family. She does, however, get the opportunity to discuss tourism development with elected representatives of her village and to voice her ideas on how the Community Development Fund needs to be managed and distributed.

#### Direct results

- In the first three months of operations, the Nabji/Korphu community tourism project in Bhutan has attracted approximately seventy tourists;
- 20 villagers have received vocational training;
- A number of villagers have generated additional income through handicraft, singing and dancing.

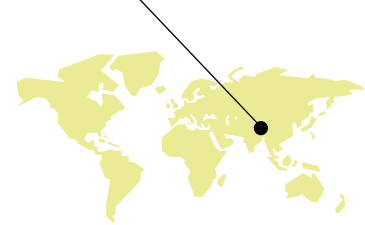


### Song and dance

After the first groups visited her village, Sonam saw an opportunity to make a little money. Between April and October, Sonam continues to plant and harvest her private supply of rice in the fields down in the Nabji valley. But in the winter months, she and her friends sometimes entertain tourists with dances accompanied by traditional love songs. Through the Tourism Management Village Committee, Sonam and her friends have also asked the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators to inform tour operators and tourists that they are willing to perform traditional welcome and farewell rituals (singing and dancing) to give the tourists an even more authentic experience.



## Sonam Lhamo, Bhutan



### Key Achievements

- In only three months, the project has generated an estimated US\$ 7,000;
- This amount is estimated to increase to about US\$ 10,000 in 2007;
- In 2006, approximately 210 households in six villages received a supplementary income from the tourist trail;
- Part of the income from the project was paid into the Community Development Funds to fund communal expenses;
- The project has shown great potential for increasing gender equality, although this is yet to be fully realised.

### The potential for gender equality

The target participation of women in village committees (33 per cent) has been met. Efforts have been made to divide the available employment equally between men and women, but this has not always been easy. In general, women were more interested in making handicrafts than working as cooks or village guides.

### Present and future

The villages are in the process of having a telephone network installed and might be able to organise themselves to receive bookings directly from tour operators in the long run. Sonam has sent her first earnings to her younger sister, who is in boarding school in Trongsa town, to pay for her new school uniform, shoes and notebooks at the beginning of the new school year.

The Department of Tourism is currently revising its tourism law to incorporate a more pronounced pro-poor focus. The private sector is currently being consulted about issues that must be addressed by the law, which will be presented to the national assembly next July.

SNV will continue its support for the Nabji Trail, providing technical assistance in monitoring the development and impact of the pilot project on community tourism, in order to upgrade the existing product and service standards. SNV will also work to implement similar initiatives at other potential project sites.