Workshop Report

Context for the Workshop: Tourism is increasingly being located in natural areas and often with fragile ecosystems, like mountains, hills, coasts, forests and wetlands. Different tourism products like ecotourism, wilderness, wildlife tourism, are growing rapidly in pristine and less accessible forest areas - the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Tourism is emerging as a key economic activity in the Western Ghats due to the rich biodiversity and verdant landscapes acting as the natural resources for tourism to thrive in this region. The Western Ghats are home to diverse social, religious, and linguistic groups. There is high cultural diversity of rituals, customs, and lifestyles in the region including a significant population of adivasis and forest dwellers.

Tourism has recently received much adverse criticism due to its perceived threat to the environment of the Western Ghats, an ecologically sensitive region and biodiversity hotspot of global importance. This derives mainly from the perception of tourism as high-end tourist development, such as resource-intense 5-star hotels, and low-end mass tourism that can blight landscapes. Added to this are the aspects of unplanned and unregulated urbanization that tourism promotes, often far beyond the carrying capacity of a locality. These create huge pressures in the context of scarce drinking water sources and vastly inadequate sewage treatment facilities, air pollution caused by the massive influx of thousands of vehicles, new roads (and upgradation of existing ones) through prime forest areas in the name of tourism, which pose a grave hazard to ecological integrity.

Tourism can have adverse social impacts, including displacement of people, changing social structures, loss of culture and traditional livelihoods, increase in alcohol and drug abuse, sexual exploitation of women and children and commoditisation of cultural practices.

The aim of the workshop was on sharing of ground realities and experiences of current tourism developments in the Western Ghats, the role of different stakeholders in tourism. It intended to create a ‘charter’ to spell out our vision for tourism in Western Ghats. The workshop was organised by Save Western Ghats Movement in collaboration with Keystone Foundation, Spice Route Souharda Sahakari, Prakruti and EQUATIONS.

Day 1: 4th November 2011
Session 1: Overview of Tourism in the Western Ghats
Speakers: Vidya Selvamony and Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma.
Chairperson: Prem Subramaniam

The workshop started with self introduction of delegates and participants. The participants came with a broad range
of experience and expertise from diverse cultures, environments and backgrounds. They were from the local communities, people’s movements, tourism practitioners, NGOs, the media and individuals (see Appendix A for List of Participants).

After the introduction, Vidya Selvamony from EQUATIONS presented an overview of sustainable tourism in the Western Ghats, speaking on the concept and ideology of sustainable tourism, the impacts of the different types of tourism as seen in the Western Ghats: ecotourism, nature- and wildlife-tourism, pilgrim tourism. She highlighted current policies and legislations, its implementation and gaps. She then raised issues on the way tourism is being conceived and developed, using current examples and debates, such as declaring the Western Ghats as a world heritage site and the elephant corridor case.

The overview presentation was followed by Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma, who mentioned that Uttara Kannada district looked very prosperous and wealthy from outside but that this was not true in reality. When he conducted a small project of creating Balance Sheets at a household level they found that many families were on a negative balance and very few had savings. Farmers from this region are suffering as there is no market for the local rice. We need to understand tourism within the larger context of what is currently taking place. He spoke about how in Goa the local Goans feel that they have been reduced to the ‘ABCD’ of tourism - Aayah, Butler, Cook and Driver. This is the case in many other tourist destinations. He spoke about exploring ways of linking and integrating tourism, on the implementation of legislations, the importance of conducting stakeholder meetings for tourism projects, considering tourism as an alternative livelihood. He concluded by emphasizing that for branding, an important aspect is putting in place a 25 year perspective plan, as well as the need to have our own set of indicators for tourism that would be based on local realities.

Prem Subramaniam summarized the two presentations and shared with the group a few additional points, "What you cannot measure, you cannot manage". Therefore valuation of the product is very important. Tourism can be both inclusive and exclusive. While planning for tourism we must ensure that we take the good that tourism has to offer and negate the bad. He spoke about the Rio+20 conference which is to take place in India. The buzzword seems to be ‘green economy’, which operates within the capitalist model. He questioned: “Can you colour something green and make it green?” Tourism is one such area which believes it can. He focused on the concept of valuation and that the valuation of travel has not yet been computed in India. He also mentioned that we need to start discussing on what is the brand of tourism that we want for this region. Uttara Kannada should have its own branding and a unique tourism model that attracts a ‘particular’ group of tourists that people would like to have in this area. He concluded by saying that responsible tourism is the need of the hour in the Western Ghats.

After the presentations, the participants shared their views on the possibility of setting up green counters at tourist sites and if, by focusing on policies, are we scaring away the entrepreneurs? On the latter there were different opinions. Some felt that strict legislation and regulation were important to prevent damaging mass tourism whereas some felt that entrepreneurs should be encouraged.
Session 2: Appraising Models of Tourism

Speakers: Keith Virgo, Nirmal Kulkarni and Vishwas Soans.
Chairperson: Bhaskar Rao

Keith Virgo presented the model of Village Ways, which was established to promote responsible tourism within village communities in India. It is a socially responsible and commercially viable tourism initiative that was first started in Uttarakhand, and has now expanded to the Hulgol village in Uttar Kannada, in the backwaters of Kerala and in Rajasthan. He spoke in great detail on the Village Ways model – looking at this as a 30 year plan, creating partnerships with the villages, community ownership, systems of loans & grants, setting up of a village development funds, forward and backward linkages created, community participation and involvement in decision-making, the benefit-sharing model, skill development, marketing, etc. He also spoke about the different institutional mechanisms at each place that would be involved in the operational functioning of the tourism. According to him, involving local communities in tourism is the most important step towards sustainable tourism.

Nirmal Kulkarni shared with the group his experience as an ecologist, about how his friends and he were disturbed because of the influx and increase in mining activity in Goa and their struggle to protect an area as private forest. He spoke about how, over the years, slowly they were able to acquire close to 450 acres of land and to start the ‘Wildernest’ and ‘Swapna Gandha’. He presented the tourism model, focusing on local community involvement. He spoke about the challenges they faced – where does one position oneself - because tourists associate Goa with its beaches and not its forest areas? They started with experimentations on a small scale and are regularly monitoring the impacts of their activities with the use of indicators. He concluded by sharing the idea of a hand over of ‘Wildernest’ to the local community a few years down the line.

Vishwas Soans presented his experiences of ‘Soans Island’ in Kundapur, a 54-room resort located on an island and promoted as an ecotourism initiative. He wanted to create a private space for smaller groups that was high-end and saw profitability in this venture. According to him there is not much local community involvement – just some by way of guides, hiring local taxis, etc. His biggest challenge is to prevent water pollution and to keep the water clean.

Bhaskar Rao summarized the 3 presentations and mentioned a few examples of government inefficiency in controlling and managing tourism. He gave the example where the government had given permission to construct a helipad at a resort. Constructing a helipad will kill all the wildlife in a 10 km radius. He concluded by saying that government should be careful and responsible while taking decisions and should avoid giving permission for such constructions. He also mentioned that there is a need for a law that would regulate tourism and that tourism needs to be looked at more critically.

Discussions:

Question directed to Keith: ‘Can you give us an idea on the timeline of the project. What is the time taken between establishing a centre and getting the first guest?’

The timeline varies – in the first instance in Binsar it was about to 2.0-2.5 years, reducing to 6 months in the nearby Saryu valley, largely due to interaction between villagers.

Question directed to all presenters: ‘All three ventures seem to cater to the high end customers. Can there be a model that would cater to other segments who are much interested but cannot afford it?’

Nirmal told the participants about a new research centre at Wildernest that attracts students. He also mentioned that it is a successful business, because it is priced at the higher end and not accessible for everybody. Keith spoke about the competition and comparative prices in the market that makes it unviable for Village Ways to reduce prices beyond a certain extent.

Vishwas explained that, the reason for high cost for his enterprise was because of
the short tourist season. The coastal belt has four months rainy season, and two months summer, keeping business very low, thereby increasing cost. Also, to avoid the mass numbers he has kept the price as at higher end.

Question to all the 3 presenters: ‘How did you decide on the size for the enterprises?’

Keith explained that what they tried to ensure a decent salary to the people working; at each place the factors were different. However the concept of small was central.

Vishwas said that it depended on the costs he was incurring and to ensure a profitable margin.

Nirmal explained that all resorts with less than 25 cottages, are known as boutique resorts. For these resorts, subsidies are not given. That is the reason why they decided to build more cottages.

Question directed to Keith: ‘What are the architectural policies of Village Ways?’

Keith spoke about use of low cost environmentally-friendly materials while constructing and even in regular use: some of them include the bokkhari stoves for heating in Himalayas, wood for cooking, solar panels and use of firewood to heat water etc. When asked about nature of involvement of different strata of community in Village Ways, he mentioned that all strata of people are involved in different capacities. Usually, it is seen that the rich people are willing to take more risks while the poor are willing to provide services.

Question directed to Keith: ‘Who from the community came forward, who did you approach to be a part of this initiative. Also with the success of the initiative if more people from the community wished to join, was the scope for it there?’

He mentioned that as the villages were very small the decision was made democratically and not by one particular person. For them it was a unique experience and opportunity to build, and manage a guest house. In Kerala it started with 20 persons, though some have now left, so at times it is also working the other way round. However this could be a question that can be posed to the Hulgol community that we would visit during one of the field visits.

Session 3: Perspectives on Tourism

Speakers: Carmen Miranda, Senthil Prasad
Chairperson: Subramanya Hegde

With much passion, Carmen Miranda spoke on how Goa has transformed from a clean and peaceful city into a hub of various mafias. She mentioned the example of Spain where tourism has totally ruined the beauty of its beaches. According to her, the same is happening to Goa. Some of the major issues plaguing Goa are the Russian and Israeli mafia, urbanization, overcrowding, noise, pollution, unplanned buildings, water shortages, drug dealings and prostitution. This is all leading to irreversible damage and a break down of the society. Goa is one of the best examples for understanding the ill effects of mass tourism.

She also spoke on the economic aspects and shared that most traders and businessmen are not from the local community. Mass tourism should bring jobs to the local people, but people in Goa are hardly employed. Tourists pay abroad for an all inclusive package and will not spend much at the destination itself. While it is very cheap for tourists to stay, everything is getting expensive for the local people. This is affecting the local communities. There is also out-migration of the local people.

In conclusion she spoke about the tragic situation in Goa which should be a lesson for other potential tourist destinations and
that we need to think about the kind of tourism we want for the region.

Senthil Prasad spoke on recent developments of tourism in Ooty and surrounding areas. The Nilgiris are a hotspot for diverse flora and fauna. According to him, Ooty and Coonoor are saturated, like many other hill stations across the country. There is a floating population of 2 million in the Nilgiris district, leading to problems such as congestion, poor enforcement of legislation (with buildings coming up anywhere), pollution by vehicles, crime, murders, water scarcity (in spite of this area being a catchment of four rivers), and breaking down of sanitation facilities (problems of sewage and waste disposal) creating unhygienic conditions. These all pose a huge ecological footprint. And they are creating hardships for local residents.

Besides this, most of owners of hotels are from other parts of the country, with the local people getting only the lower end jobs: the high end jobs go to outsiders. Reasons given are that people from the local community take many days off to celebrate the various festivals. In Kotagiri, within a three year span, close to 90 guesthouses and hotels have been built, bringing in people from outside. There is a 15 year perspective plan that was brought out by the Hill Area Development Programme but it does not recommend solutions for an end to end management and is extremely piecemeal in its approach. Senthil concluded by raising concerns about livelihood options especially for the six primitive tribal groups, who are from poor economic backgrounds.

Discussion: Participants and speakers had further discussions on aspects such as how to avoid outsiders to start business in tourist places and how to encourage local entrepreneurs.

Carmen mentioned that it is not possible to prohibit people coming: people will always be drawn from outside to seek economic opportunities. This is bound to happen. The problem is that it is uncontrolled and something should be done about this.

Sara mentioned that each local community has a different culture and behaviour. This should be kept in mind and the owners should respect the cultures of the region. The owners can have a backup of staff.

The group from SwaSwara explained how they operate their resort ensuring that they have minimum impacts on the resources of the region. They realised that it was easy to dig a borehole but have chosen not to because this taps the source of water for the local community as well and therefore decided on harvesting rainwater. They do not take a single drop of water from the ground. The waste is segregated – the organic waste is used in the gardens and the inorganic waste is sent for recycling. If a staff member or guest uses a plastic bag higher than a certain prescribed micron value, they are fined Rs 50.
small and medium enterprises, shack owners, beach vendors and with community groups. They work on advocacy issues with an aim of influencing government policies.

Figure 6 Banavasi temples

Subramanya Hegde summarized the session and mentioned that it is very important to have our own brand that suits the Uttara Kannada district. He concluded the session speaking briefly on the Spice Route initiative – where stakeholders were selected and given decision making powers. He also mentioned that local people can be trained in tourism activities with minimum investment. Spice Route being an example for this, he shared how the local youth have been trained, through Village Ways, to speak in English and are now able to communicate with foreign tourists.

Aditi Chanchani summarized the whole day sessions as well as gave an introduction to the following day’s field trips.

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Day 2: 5th November 2011
Field visits to Banavasi, Yana and Spiceroute Hulgol

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Day 3: 6th November 2011
Session 1: 'Feedback and Road Ahead

Day 3 was designed to discuss on the field visits. S.G Hegde, Pandurang Hegde and Bhaskar Rao were invited as panellists to reflect on Spiceroute, Yana and Banavasi respectively.

Group 1: Banavasi

Usha Subramaniam and Senthil Prasad presented collectively the feedback of the team that visited Banavasi. They mentioned that Banavasi is a historical and religious place and gave a brief introduction to its culture and history. They shared their experience of meeting with the Panchayat president and ward members, where they realised that there was no link established between the local administration and the state tourism department. Due to this gap, efforts made as a part of the rural tourism project are in vain. They know what needs to be implemented, but lack the knowledge of how to actually implement. For instance, as a part of the rural tourism project, a guesthouse for tourists was constructed, after investing Rs 54 lakh. But due to poor management, the building is not being used.

Banavasi gets only day tourists, because there is no guesthouse or home stay facility. They also shared the experience of visiting a village in Himachal Pradesh that is known across the world for its pottery training institute. A similar concept could also be thought about for Banavasi. Besides that, the Gudavi Bird sanctuary has huge potential as it is one of the better bird sanctuaries with over 126 different species of birds.

They concluded by sharing the idea of a 4-day package, because Banavasi has the potential of attracting tourists. Very little infrastructure is needed, though capacities need to be built.

Figure 7 Unchalli (Lushington Falls)

Bhaskar started his reflection by stating the poet Pampa’s words- "I want to born
in Banavasi again and again”. He appreciated the group for making a detailed study of the place. According to him, the main reason for Government’s failure to establish Banavasi as a major tourist attraction is the lack of involvement of local community in the tourism activities. He expressed his concern that due to Sirsi’s development Banavasi had been ignored. He also spoke about Banavasi’s annual event Kadambotsava, which is also not being done properly. He cited a few other places around Sirsi, which have been ignored. A place called Gaddugemath, near Sonda, has amazing arts similar to those in Khajuraho of Madhya Pradesh but due to ignorance it is in a dilapidated condition and home to bats. He concluded by saying that basic infrastructure has to be created for any tourist attraction. Many tourist destinations are in the Western Ghats and they should all be given importance.

**Group 2: Yana**

Prem and Keith presented the collective feedback of the group that went to Yana and Devanalli. They described the situation prevailing at Yana as one that cannot be recommended in its current state. There is a non-existence of public toilets, garbage is overflowing, which is then tipped over the nearest slope and lack of reliable food outlets. It was mentioned that a similar situation existed as was seen in Banavasi:- a lack of connection between tourists and the local community. This has resulted in poor management of the place. The panchayat is not involved with tourism in Yana because, according to them, their village is only a 'passing through' route for tourists.

A 3.0 km concrete road for trekking has been built, which seriously reduces the beauty of the area and is contrary to the principles of trekking in natural surroundings.

They raised the possibility of starting a nature trail from Gamlegode, with nature guides. They stressed that there is a need to create an alternative trajectory to promote Yana but that this is possible only if there is local ownership of the initiative. The villagers were not averse to the idea of creating livelihoods through tourism. They concluded by saying “*What is ordinary to local people is extra ordinary to the tourists*”. This was something that could be built on for attracting tourists.

They then shared their experience of visiting Karuoor village, which has 30 households. It is isolated in the forest but a delight, with green grass and paddy fields. Prakruti has been working with the communities from the lower castes in trying to increase their livelihoods by training them in bee-keeping, basket weaving and handicrafts. These are made by the people during the nights as a part-time jobs to generate additional income. There is a high level of community involvement. It was suggested that linkages with corporates can be thought about to promote these products.

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*Figure 9 Approach to Yana*

*Figure 8 Full litter bins, Yana*
Pandurang Hegde responded to the presentation and said that Yana is in a bad condition. He posed questions to the audience as to who is responsible for this situation? Is it the villagers, district administration, forest department, tourism department or the Panchayat? He mentioned that Yana has become an orphan due to lack of ownership. His group has had four meetings with people from the region – but nobody seemed interested. He shared his experience where he and his team fought and objected to stop the construction of cement factory in that region. Today the plan is to link Yana to Kumta by road, which would prove to be disastrous but this is something the local communities want. He concluded by saying that mainstream development has become the biggest problem for places like Yana and that an exchange is needed.

**Group 3: Spiceroute**

Kiran and Vishwas presented the collective feedback of the 3rd group that visited Village Ways/ Spiceroute Souharda venture in Hulgol. An introduction was given to Spiceroute and how the model is working. They cited aspects such as guides given training and interacting with tourists in English, people taking up this job as an additional income generation activity rather than the main source of income, preservation of environment and active communication that is taking place between local community and tourists. Additional sources of livelihood have also been gained by the local guesthouse team.

This region is going to be a major tourist attraction in a few years and so people should be careful and have proper planning and guidelines to protect nature and themselves. It was suggested that information centres and proper regulations and guidelines be set in place. They concluded the presentation with a note that local people have understood the fact that, what they have is very special to the outsiders and therefore worth protecting.

Gopi Krishna also shared his thoughts. He mentioned about the lack of clarity of ownership at the Spiceroute venture. He also queried the architecture of the guesthouse (such as painted walls, plastic doors), which was not on a par with the local culture of the place. He expressed his idea of having infrastructure that depicts the local culture and tradition and tourists cherish that the most.

S.G Hegde reflected on the presentation made. He said that the tourists are going to start coming to this region and therefore it is important for the local people to come together and work in harmony. A few ways by which we can improve tourism activities in this region is by:

- Developing small tourism models that improve level of ownerships
- Employing local people in the project and thereby creating an alternate income.
- Having our own brand for tourism in Uttara Kannada.
- Preventing people from outside from investing in tourism in this area because when they invest the focus will be on making profits and real tourism will be spoiled.

**Concluding Session**

Sudhirendar concluded session. Uttara Kannada has enormous potential to develop into a major tourist attraction.
However it is important to question whose interest is being served and by whom? There is a need to assess the threshold or carrying capacity of the region. He also expressed his idea of establishing not only forward linkages but backward linkages as well. A forum should be set up that allows local communities to decide on the type of tourism they want to have. He also mentioned the misuse of word ‘sustainability’ in the recent years. Everyone thinks of their own sustainability rather than thinking about the sustainability of the place and its environment. He concluded by saying that, local people should be involved in decision making.

Nishita Vasanth from Shola Trust shared her experience of tourism in the Gudalur and Sigur valley where her organization is working for conservation and education of young adivasi children. She mentioned that the inflow of tourists is one of the major problems in that region and is harming wildlife. This area has been identified as an elephant corridor. Over the years nearly 85 resorts and guesthouses have been built on this stretch. These resorts have electric fences that obstruct free movement of wildlife. Some organizations and NGOs have been protesting strongly on this. There is currently a case ongoing in the Supreme Court.

Shridhar Baligar stated that, there is a need to redefine three words; ‘Development’, ‘Ecology’ and ‘Tourism’, because these words are highly misused or abused these days. He mentioned a couple of cases, such as the Global Investors Meet in Bangalore that exposes small towns to businessmen, and demand for the establishment of 5-star beach resort in Honnavar. To prevent such blunders from taking place in Uttara Kannada, he recommended that the whole district be declared as an ecologically sensitive zone: only then could the place be protected. He then distributed a questionnaire to participants on local and global models for tourism.

Jeganathan from the Nature Conservation Foundation expressed his ideas of sustainable tourism. According to him, if tourism has components such as conservation of water, culture, flora, fauna and the participation of local community, only then can it be called ‘Sustainable Tourism’. Having studied wildlife and worked in forest areas, he threw light on the impacts of tourism in the forest areas and on wildlife. He gave examples such as why monkeys in tourist spots beg for food, the impact of road widening in Ooty, etc.

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The Sirsi Declaration

A first draft of the ‘Sirsi Declaration’ was presented. It was decided to share the draft with all participants via email to seek responses and suggestions.

Responses were later collated and a final draft was prepared by an editorial committee. Appendix B contains the final version of the:

‘Sirsi Declaration on Sustainable Tourism in the Western Ghats’
List of Participants and the Organisations they represented.

1. Aditi Chanchani, EQUATIONS
2. Ashok Hedge, Individual
3. B.C. Kiran, Ecologin
4. C. R. Ramesh, FKCCI
5. Carmen Miranda, Save the Western Ghats Movement
6. Devadatta Naik, CGH Earth
7. Gopi Krishna, Mitan Hawdicsrafts
8. Jobi Thomas, Shola Trust
9. K. Senthil Prasad, Keystone Foundation
10. Keith Virgo, Village Ways
11. Linda Boschma, EQUATIONS
12. M.K. Bhaskara Rao, Jounalist
13. Mahabaleshwar Hedge, Aweku Valley Homestay
14. Mahabaleshwar Hedge, Prakruti
15. Marc Raventos Pages, Artist
16. Mini Chadran, CGH Earth
17. Nagaraj Joshi, Shabara
19. Nishita Vasanth, Shola Trust
21. Pallavi Hedge, Aweku valley Homestay
22. Panduranga Hedge, Prakruti
23. Prem Subramaniam, Individual
24. R N Hedge, Co-operative movement
25. Ragavendra, Agriculturist
26. Ramnath Hedge, Kookanmane
27. S. Vidya, EQUATIONS
28. Sarasasmeetha, Keystone Foundation
29. Sivananda Hedge, Environmental Journalist
30. Sripal Bhat, Journalist
31. Subramanya Hedge, Chartered Accountant
32. Sudhirendar Sharma, The Ecological Foundation
33. Tallam R Dwarkanath, Tourism Committee FKCCI
34. TizianaRipepi (Triveni), PhD student
35. Usha Subramaniam, Retd. Scientist, MoEF-GoI
36. V P Hedge, Individual
37. Vasant V Hegde, Individual
38. Viswas Soans, Soans Island Resort
Appendix B.

**SIRSI DECLARATION: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE WESTERN GHATS**

The Western Ghats are country’s unique natural and cultural heritage, offering a perfect site of tourism in natural areas and areas with fragile ecosystems like mountains, hills, coasts, forests and wetlands. With improved access, different tourism products like pilgrim tourism, ecotourism and wildlife tourism are growing rapidly in pristine and formerly less accessible forest areas. The character of many destinations has changed, from a tranquil place for relaxing and appreciating nature, to becoming decimated on account of accelerated pleasure. As mass tourism creeps in, with little effort made towards community involvement, even sustainable and responsible forms of tourism cannot reverse the damage that follows.

A workshop on Sustainable Tourism held at Sirsi, Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka from Nov 4-6, 2011 reflected a broad range of experiences and expertise from diverse cultures, environments and backgrounds from local communities, people's movements, tourism practitioners, civil society and the media. The Workshop .....  

**Recognised** the urgent need to shift priorities in the vision of tourism from mere economics to addressing issues of sustainability in tourism*

**Observed** that bereft of ecological values, tourism brings with it serious negative impacts such as over-crowding, waste accumulation, insecure employment, cultural erosion and women/child abuse, in addition to increased pressure on land, diversion of land and reduction of access to natural and common property resources.

**Acknowledged** that well planned tourism can be in consonance with the environment and its people, and that tourism planning and development can be guided by the principles of sustainable tourism.

**Agreed** that tourism cannot be the only option for a local economy and that existing livelihoods must be strengthened and expanded. Community led tourism as well as alternative tourism models at small scale need to be pursued.

Driven by such understanding the workshop proposed a list of actions involving diverse stakeholders:

- Ensure multiplier effect on local economy by encouraging tourism initiative/projects to be owned and managed by local communities, interact and contribute to the local economy.
- Develop a guide licensing system for local people; consult local people for establishing trekking routes using local knowledge with specific reference to flora, fauna and ecology.
- Train local people to share cultural sensitivity towards local deities, sacred groves and local festivals with the visitors.
- Tourism infrastructure should be eco-friendly; a strategies for energy consumption, water management and waste disposal strategies for tourism intensive areas need to be worked out.
- Promote native vegetation supported by an indigenously evolved advisory tool kit as well as certification protocol.
- Build capacity, assess and facilitate monitoring of tourism impact by community based institutions and establish community based strategies for policy influencing.
- Community should monitor and regulate the impact; local institutions like panchayats to be given more power and responsibilities to educate tourists and regulate tourism.
- A need for a serious re-look at legislation and developing stringent regulations and mechanisms before more areas are opened up.
We endorse the following as the principles of sustainable tourism that:

- Conserve nature and biodiversity, and socio-cultural heritage.
- Respect the rights of communities, especially women, indigenous people and other marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- Adopt democratic and participatory methods that are non-exploitative, transparent, accountable and people-centred.
- Encourage coordination between different responsible departments.
- Strengthen the role of local self-governing bodies and build capacities of people to participate, engage and regulate tourism, with the right to say ‘no’.

January 11, 2012