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Impacts of Ecotourism on People's Livelihoods in Protected Areas in Kachin State

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1. Introduction

Ecotourism can generate a variety of income and employment opportunities to reduce the dependency of local communities on the natural resources of Protected Areas and is associated with environmental, social and economic benefits for these groups. According to the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030), ecotourism in Myanmar focuses on the biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, economic and social benefits it can offer local communities.

1.1 Terminology: This briefing note will apply the following definitions relating to ecotourism and Protected Areas. **Ecotourism** refers to tourism-related activity in and around Protected Areas that focuses on management tools, systems and processes to deliver three elements:

- biodiversity and ecosystems conservation;
- education and learning to enable hosts and visitors to understand and engage with management approaches to protect and conserve the natural and cultural assets of these areas; and
- economic and social benefits for communities in and around Protected Areas to: (a) reduce and eliminate unsustainable practices; and (b) engage them in collaborative approaches to Protected Areas management.

Protected Areas (PAs) are geographically defined areas that are designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives.

1.2 Research problem: The impacts of ecotourism on people living in Protected Areas still needs to be assessed. During previous missions to ecotourism Protected Areas in the country, the client received reports from local people complaining about their living conditions. In order to organize the next mission to their constituency in Kachin State, which has the largest number of ecotourism Protected Areas in the country[1], the client has requested research focusing on the impacts of ecotourism on people's livelihoods in Protected Areas in this State, as well as on policy options and lessons learned from other countries that could be used in Myanmar and particularly in Kachin State.

1.3 Research objective: This briefing note aims to inform the client about the impacts of ecotourism on people's livelihoods in Protected Areas in Kachin State, to identify the different policy options and to gather lessons learned from Indonesia, where the tourism sector is highly developed, with a view to nurturing the effective management of ecotourism Protected Areas for the sustainable development of livelihoods in local communities of Kachin State and across the country.

1.4 Research question: Four specific research questions to achieve these objectives were defined with the client's agreement:

- What are the changes in the livelihoods of local people caused by ecotourism in Protected Areas in Kachin State and how does this impact their living conditions?
- What is the current government policy, if any, to support the local people in Protected Areas in adapting to the challenges of ecotourism?
- What are the policy options put forward by experts in the field?
- What are the ecotourism practices in Indonesia?

1.5 Research methodology: This note reviews secondary data from official reports from government, Parliament, international organizations, expert reports, NGOs and newspapers.

2. Background

The tourism sector has been identified as a national priority because, in 2017, it contributed 6.6 percent of the total GDP - USD 4,918.2 million – to the Myanmar economy, and also accounted for 5.7 percent of the total workforce [3].

Myanmar has 42 PAs covering 52,946 km², which is 8.1 percent of the total land area (676,577 km²). The natural assets of Protected Areas are, therefore, important for Myanmar [1] [2]. The government has designated 21 PAs as ecotourism sites out of the 42 PAs. The 21 PAs cover 29,931 km², which represents 4.42 percent of the country's total land area. Of those, 10 PAs are classified as priority sites by government for the development of ecotourism[2]. Myanmar is a State Party to international and regional environmental conventions relevant to the protection of biodiversity and to the integration of conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1994[3];
- The Convention for the Protection of the World Culture and Natural Heritage (WHC), 1994[4];
- The ASEAN Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1997[5].

3. The current situation of people’s livelihoods relating to ecotourism in Protected Areas in Kachin State

The total area of Kachin State is 89,041 km², and its total population is 1.7 million, comprising 52 percent males and 48 percent females. Around 64 percent of the population live in rural areas and 36 percent in urban areas. The literacy rate in Kachin State is 91.7 percent [6]. Livelihoods depend on livestock, fishing, agriculture, hunting, commercial trading and casual labor [7]. In the 2017-2018 financial year, 5,392 tourists arrived in Kachin State [8]. The total area covered by ecotourism in the four Protected Areas in Kachin State is 25,277 km² [9].

These PAs are:

- Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuaryⁱ;
- Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary;
- Hkakaborazi National Parkⁱⁱ;
- Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

Three of these ecotourism sites are among the 10 priority sites indicated above, and they are the largest ecotourism Protected Areas in the country [9] [see Appendix 3]. The main livelihoods of around 101,343 people who live in the PAs are based on the natural assets – including hunting, logging, firewood extraction, crop cultivation and farming [9]. Indawgyi Wild-

ⁱ **Wildlife Sanctuary** refers to an area which provides protection and favorable living conditions to the wild animals (<https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-wildlife-sanctuary-and-national-park.html>, accessed 7 August 2019).

ⁱⁱ **National Park** means large natural or near-natural areas protecting large-scale ecological processes with characteristic species and ecosystems, which also have environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities (<https://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/iucn-category-ii-national-park>, accessed 7 August 2019). In the different between wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, the national parks are more restricted for the people but earn money that could be managed to develop nature conservation measures. In both of these, people have access for inspirational, educational, research, and recreational purposes but, with certain limitations in national parks. However, both of these contribute significantly for the conservation of nature (<https://www.javatpoint.com/wildlife-sanctuary-vs-national-park>, accessed 7 August 2019).

life Sanctuary comprises a freshwater lake covering 815 km², which is also the largest lake in Southeast Asia [9]. Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary, covering 2,760 Km², and Hkakaborazi National Park, covering 3,812 km², comprise mountain forest [9, 10]. Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, covering 17,890 km², encompasses floodplains [11] [See Appendix 4].

3.1 Main livelihoods in Protected Areas: As mentioned above, the main livelihoods of people living in PAs are based on the natural assets, and include hunting, logging, firewood extraction, crop cultivation and farming [9]. Specifically, in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary, the livelihoods of 7,608 households and 47,953 people include fishing, farming, harvesting, hunting, fire-wood and bamboo collection, commercial trading and casual labor. In Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary and Hkakaborazi National Park, a total of 559 households and 3,390 people rely for their subsistence and main livelihoods on farming activities such as shifting cultivation and animal husbandry, as well as hunting wildlife, fishing, gathering medicinal plants, harvesting, commercial trading, casual labor, and gold and jade mining [9]. In Hukaung Valley, around 50,000 people depend for their living on paddy, beans and peas, tea, mustard, maize, oranges, mangoes, bananas, oil plants, and other seasonal vegetables [10, 12].

3.2 Changes in people's livelihoods and living conditions: The people's livelihood income is largely derived from small-scale farmsteads engaged in farming, logging, livestock, fishing, hunting, small retail operations, mining and casual labor. Some reports show that some government conservation regulations affect local livelihoods. In addition, some people abandon their homes to seek income elsewhere because their farming areas are limited and do not provide enough food. Other people are engaged in gradually expanding their crop cultivation areas, or become involved in illegal hunting and logging, firewood extraction and overfishing [1, 13].

4. Government Legal Framework and Policy

4.1 *The laws relating to tourism*

4.1.1 2018 Myanmar Tourism Law (No. 26/2018): Chapter II, Section 3 (g) of this law encompasses support for small and medium-sized enterprises, local economic opportunities and the development of community-based tourism relating to local businesses. This law also includes, as an objective, the promotion of responsible tourism activities that will contribute to ecotourism and the conservation of the natural environment [14].

4.1.2 Environmental Conservation Law (No. 9/2012): This law aims to promote the conservation of natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations, the reclamation of degraded ecosystems, the sustainable use of the natural resources, and cooperation between government and international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in environmental conservation [15]. In order to achieve this objective, this law has put in place an appropriate mechanism, including the regulation of the impact private sector activities have on biodiversity and ecosystems. It also provides a legally established framework to follow the authorization process [15].

4.1.3 The Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law (No. 12/2018): Chapter IV, Sections 9(c) of this law outlines requirements for the designation and management of Protected Areas including a requirement for provisions to be made for customary rights and privileges for people in an area where a Protected Area is being proposed. In Section 13 (e) the law also allows payments for ecosystem services to be made within a Protected Area and for co-management of PAs between local communities and other bodies. Section 13 (f-g) enables entrance fees or other tourism-related fees to be collected and for the establishment of buffer zones where community forests, community-based tourism and locally managed marine areas may be permitted. Section 13 (h) stipulates that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation may allow or reject businesses from operating ecotourism projects within Protected Areas. Chapter VI states that hunting licenses may be granted under certain conditions. Chapter VIII states that any possession, as a souvenir or relating to traditional custom, of any part of a fully protected wild species must be duly registered [16].

4.2 Current policy and strategy plan for ecotourism

4.2.1 Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020: This master plan aims to balance government objectives for economic growth with the well-being of local communities and to minimize negative impacts on the country's social and cultural practices, and on the environment [17].

4.2.2 Myanmar's Responsible Tourism Policy (2012): This policy includes nine aims to guide responsible tourism policy in Myanmar. These include broad-based social-economic development, preserving cultural diversity and authenticity, environmental conservation and building human resources in the tourism sector. There are 58 action points within the nine aims, each of which is assigned priorities ranging from high to low [18].

4.2.3 Myanmar's Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (2013): This policy aims to enhance community involvement in the tourism sector by creating opportunities for local communities and to improve tourism management with the objective of reducing its potentially negative impacts [19].

4.2.4 Myanmar's Ecotourism Policy and Management Strategy for Protected Areas (2015-2025): This policy focuses on developing and managing tourism activity in and around Myanmar's national Protected Areas. It also seeks to maximize the contribution of ecotourism to both PA management and to livelihoods to provide more opportunities for local communities. It highlights the government's commitment to ultimately develop 21 ecotourism sites across the country, starting with management plans for 10 priority PAs as a first step [2].

4.2.5 Guidelines for Developing Ecolodges in Myanmar (2017): These guidelines aim to promote sustainable tourism in and around Myanmar's Protected Areas, so that it has only a low impact on the environment, and involves the local community [20].

4.2.6 Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure (2015): The scope of this environmental impact procedure includes occupational, social, cultural, socio-economic, public and community health and safety issues. In addition, social consequences, such as involuntary resettlement and negative impacts on indigenous peoples[21] are also addressed.

4.2.7 National Environmental Quality (Emissions) Guidelines (2015): These guidelines provide the basis for the regulation and control of noise and vibration, air emissions, and effluent discharges from various sources in order to limit pollution and protect human and ecosystem health and to set parameters for a number of sectors[22].

4.2.8 Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030): In Pillar 3: Goal 5, Strategy 5.1 of this Plan, the government sets out to promote a clean environment together with healthy and functioning ecosystems. Strategy 5.2 aims to increase climate change resilience, reduce exposure to disasters and shocks while protecting livelihoods, and facilitating a shift to a pathway of low-carbon growth [23].

4.3 Current implementation of public policies, laws and regulations and current challenges examined particularly with regard to the difficulties observed in Kachin State

The policies mentioned above support ecotourism, sustainable land use, and biodiversity conservation [24]. The government ministries, the private sector and local communities, are the key stakeholders in managing ecotourism activities and in planning projects to be implemented in Protected Areas. In accordance with the Community Involvement in Tourism Policy, the government involves the community in the decision-making process of tourism planning and management, which directly affects their livelihoods. In practice, this community participation has not brought the expected results in the short- or medium-term because of a lack of experience among local people [24]. Moreover, some reports indicate that poor infrastructure, limited funding, a lack of promotion and marketing strategy and limited capacity as well as inadequate coordination throughout the public and private sectors do not enable these policies to be effectively implemented [25].

In accordance with Myanmar's Ecotourism Policy and Management Strategy for Protected Areas, the government works with all stakeholders to produce ecotourism management plans in Protected Areas. To carry out this policy and strategy for ecotourism in PAs, the government has faced challenges such as insufficient budget, lack of human resources (staff with limited skills, or an insufficient supply of staff), lack of cooperation and coordination throughout local communities and ministries, lack of transportation, and inadequate infrastructure. Moreover, the lack of security for resources resulting from the conflict that has been taking

place since 1962 between an armed ethnic group (called the Kachin Independence Army - KIA) and the official army, has also affected the ecotourism sector in Kachin State. The remoteness of these PAs in Kachin State also has a direct and indirect effect [9] (see Appendices 1 and 2).

5. The lessons learned from ecotourism practices in other countries and from expert opinions

5.1 *Expert recommendations*

Experts identify limited financial and human resources, and a lack of coordination and implementation of regulation for PAs as challenges for ecotourism in Myanmar. Moreover, the lack of resources to implement regulations is also cited as a critical issue [26].

Some civil society organizations consider that the government needs to commit additional financial resources to the existing sites and to ensure effective access to accommodation and good administration within them [26].

Others advocate for the government to enact further legislation to protect ecotourism sites and to ensure that regulations are enforced [26]. The first step recommended is the proper enforcement of prohibitions relating to logging and hunting, to the building of inappropriate infrastructure and to other environmentally damaging practices in designated sites. This could be supported by a reasonable balance between the demands of the commercial and environmental protection lobbies [26].

5.2 *Indonesia*

In 2018, Indonesia's tourist arrivals reached 15.8 million and contributed 6 percent to the country's GDP. They also generated USD 62.6 billion and 13 million jobs [27]. More specifically, ecotourism in Indonesia has played an important role in developing tourism to be sustainable through cultural and natural preservation as well as promoting community empowerment that has enhanced community benefits [28].

From 2010 to 2014 the Indonesian government initiated the development of rural or village tourism through its National Program for Community Empowerment, which places local

communities at the heart of community-based tourism. However, during the program's implementation the government came up against challenges in achieving sustainable tourism due to a lack of experience in tourism development and management among local community members [29].

As a result, the government changed its system by involving all the relevant stakeholders in the tourism sector to work together with a holistic approach that covers accommodation, attractions, transport, travel organizers, and local management [29]. Community empowerment through this program provides opportunities to build the capacity of the local community. For example, the measures implemented by the government in Indonesia's Yogyakarta region were particularly successful. Community empowerment efforts have made a positive impact on the economy and living standards of local communities, and have also opened up job opportunities. Now, rural communities in Yogyakarta themselves conduct ecotourism activities (focusing on natural attractions, culinary tours, home stays, farms, arts, spa package services and merchandise) following the community-based tourism (CBT) model [30]: consequently, as the main stakeholders in the implementation of tourism activities, local community members are the first to benefit from them, which is fully in line with the recommendations for responsible tourismⁱⁱⁱ [29].

The government, through its levels of administrative decentralization, provides administration, facilitators, regulators, and guides. It also benefits from profit-sharing systems undertaken by local community enterprises (30 percent of revenues earned from tourism activity go to the village and are then used to improve various public facilities there). Other non-profit organizations - as stakeholders related to tourism - are also involved as mentors, mediators, and advisors in the development and planning of tourism activities [29].

ⁱⁱⁱ The definition of "responsible tourism" was established in Cape Town in 2002, in conjunction with the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as follows: "Responsible Tourism is about making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit". It invites operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists to take responsibility by adopting measures to make tourism more sustainable" What is Responsible Tourism?, available from: (<https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/what-is-responsible-tourism/>(accessed 30 July 2019)

6. Conclusion

This briefing note has provided the client with information related to the impacts of ecotourism on people's livelihoods in Protected Areas in Kachin State.

In summary, it can be said that the largest priority ecotourism sites in Myanmar are located in the Protected Areas of Kachin State. Moreover, these sites are situated in a remote part of the country which makes access difficult and unsafe; the challenging conditions of people living in these Protected Areas have been identified. While the local population depends on natural resources (from hunting and fishing) and agriculture to ensure an adequate family income, these livelihoods also threaten natural conservation, and *vice-versa*. A number of policies and pieces of legislation support ecotourism, land use, and biodiversity conservation, but experts point out that there are still problems in respect of poor infrastructure, limited funding, a lack of promotion and marketing strategy, along with insufficient capacity and coordination throughout the public and private sectors [1, 31].

While civil society organizations call on the government to commit financial resources to these sites in order to overcome these difficulties, other experts advise the authorities to adopt measures to protect these ecotourism sites and enforce regulations [26].

This briefing note also outlines the Indonesian government's practices, which have a focus on involving all stakeholders involved in the tourism sector, at all levels, in working together with a holistic approach. This has enabled local communities to benefit more fully from tourism revenues. In addition, this Indonesian system has had a positive overall impact on the country's economy, and, in particular, on the living standards of local communities as well as on employment opportunities, reflecting the concern to enable the tourism sector to achieve sustainable development through responsible tourism practices [29].

APPENDIX 1

Figure 1: The map of ecotourism designated sites in Myanmar



Source: ICIMOD, Status Report on Myanmar's Designated Ecotourism Sites

APPENDIX 2

Table 1: The main challenges in three priority PAs for ecotourism sites in Kachin State

Hkakaborazi National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- lack of sufficient access, facilities (none in the park, but guesthouses and restaurants are available nearby)- no development of tourism products and activities, and- no supporting elements such as trained guides
Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- high costs and little experience / knowledge related to the tourism sector- only 25 staff and 2 tourist guesthouses that are able to provide accommodation, able to take only 11 and 5 persons, respectively
Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- lack of facilities, lack of sufficient infrastructure, difficult access- lack of industry-related knowledge and skills- conflicts among stakeholders- no staff, low visitor numbers[9]

Source: ICIMOD, Status Report on Myanmar's Designated Ecotourism Sites

APPENDIX 3

Table 2: The areas of Protected Areas and designated ecotourism Protected Areas in Myanmar

Particular	Surface area	
	km2	% of total land area
42 PAs	52,946	7.83
21 designated PAs	29,931	4.42
4 ecotourism sites in Kachin State	25,277	3.74

Source: ICIMOD, Status Report on Myanmar's Designated Ecotourism Sites

APPENDIX 4

Table: 3 The natural assets of ecotourism Protected Areas in Kachin State

Hkakaborazi National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alpine Meadow and Shrub (3,000-3,700m); Sub-alpine Conifer Forest (2,700-3,350m); Rhododendron Forest (2,400-3,000 m); Montane Wet Temperate Forest (1,800-2700m); and, Subtropical Lowland Forest (900-2400 m) - 4 new mammal species, including: Blue Sheep, Gonshan Muntjac, Stone Marten and Leaf Deer - Other notable biodiversity includes: 42 mammals, including Takin, Red Panda, Short ridge's Langur, Red Goral, Black Musk Deer, 370 bird species, including Snow Partridge, Long-tailed Rose finch, Red-fronted Rose finch, Brandt's Mountain-finch and Smoky Warbler - 365 species of butterflies, 74 orchids, 14 rhododendron, and 22 medicinal plants
Hponkanrazi Wildlife Sanctuary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tropical moist forest vegetation, bamboo, rattan and wild bananas - Mammals include Red Goral, Takin, Eastern Hoolock Gibbon, Clouded Leopard, Chinese Pangolin, Black Bear and Bengal Slow Loris. 310 bird species have been recorded including Blyth's Tragopan, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Ibisbill, Blyth Kingfisher, Beautiful Nuthatch, Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill, Alpine Accentor and Plain Mountain Finch
Indawgyi Wildlife Sancturay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evergreen forest (riverine), mixed deciduous forest (bamboo) and hill forest (pine forest) - 85 species of plants (56 are indigenous), 11 species of bamboo, 14 species of grass, 5 species of cane and 70 orchid species - 37 species of mammal, 350 forest birds, 99 water-birds (including the White-bellied Heron, Woolly-necked Stork, White-back Vulture, Red-neck Crane), 80 species of fish and 50 species of butterfly
Hukaung Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plants Agarwood tree - Asian Elephant (<i>Elephas maximus</i>), Dhole, Hog Deer, Indian Water Buffalo, Tiger (<i>Panthera tigris</i>), Hoolock Gibbon (<i>Hoolock spp.</i>), Shortridge's Langur (<i>Trachypithecus shortridgei</i>), Clouded Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, Gaur, Sambar - Reptiles include Burmese Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle, Burmese Peacock Softshell Turtle, Keeled Box Turtle, Burmese Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle, Burmese Peacock Softshell Turtle, Keeled Box Turtle - Birds include white-bellied Heron, Slender-billed Vulture, White-rumped Vulture, White-winged Duck, Masked Fin foot, Green Peafowl

Source: ICIMOD, Status Report on Myanmar's Designated Ecotourism Sites/ UNESCO

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