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INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREA CO-MANAGEMENT (IPAC)

Teknaf Peninsula Community-Based Ecotourism Strategy

on Co- Management of Protected Areas

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Executive Summary

This *Community-based Teknaf Ecotourism Strategy* proposes that the Integrated Protected Co-Management (IPAC) project facilitate an Ecotourism Management planning process that will create a bioregional ecotourism plan for the Himchari National Park, the proposed Inani National Park, the Teknaf Game Reserve, and Sonadia and St. Martin's Islands incorporating all relevant buffer zones. (See [Teknaf Peninsula Protected Areas Map](#)) The plan would be market-based, locally led and created through the cooperation of government, the private sector, and local communities.

The challenges are not insignificant. In recent years, the market for nature tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula has dropped, largely due to competition from St. Martin's Island package day trips. Hundreds of thousands of tourists are now flooding St. Martin's with unmanaged tourism rapidly damaging its landscape and unique coral reef. Illegal land use practices on the peninsula are continuing to threaten the few natural assets remaining upon which ecotourism depends. And overdevelopment of Cox's Bazar is leading to the potential of damaging development along the entire Teknaf coastline.

The Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan will foster landscape regeneration coupled with well managed tourism programs in buffer zones. A market-savvy program of innovative new ecotourism projects will attract the best and the brightest youths and entrepreneurs to assist, leverage responsible private sector investment, and develop a set of zoned areas for recreation alternatives according to environmental, social, and market criteria on public and private lands.

Communities in pivotal areas along the peninsula will take part in planning via their Community Conservation Groups and receive technical assistance to build market-based, well planned tourism to directly contribute to their livelihoods and crucially offset poor resource practices.

Zoning efforts will include Front-Country zones in Himchari National Park, adjacent to Cox's Bazar, with local communities enabled to meet the needs of domestic travelers interested in large group recreation. The Mid-Country zone at the Mochoni Entrance of the Teknaf Game Reserve was vetted for a cross-peninsula beach trek, elephant viewing areas, Naf River cruising and an ecolodge. Recommendations for the Back-Country zone, the proposed Inani National Park and adjacent beach, combine low-impact recreation, landscape regeneration and protection of its unique world heritage boating culture.

These recommendations will attract new markets to Teknaf Peninsula tourism – foreigners living in Bangladesh, youth groups, and international travelers looking for culture, adventure and volunteerism.

And the Adaptive Ecotourism Management planning process will be backed by a set of research based indicators, setting the stage for monitoring tourism impacts in future.

The need is urgent on the Teknaf Peninsula to replace a vicious cycle of negative development with a virtuous cycle. The proposed strategy to develop a **Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan** would build a vision and develop the capacity to implement a more sustainable form of tourism while fostering market-based alternative income generating activities in local

communities.

Part I: Background

Introduction

EplerWood International's principal, Megan Epler Wood, visited Bangladesh January 17-February 8, 2009 to review the potential of the Teknaf Peninsula for expansion of community-based nature tourism for the Integrated Protected Area Conservation (IPAC) project. She returned March 14-April 4, 2009 to review the draft recommendations with stakeholder groups in Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and the town of Teknaf.

[IPAC](#) seeks to strengthen the participation of local communities and increase support for sustainable livelihoods adjacent to key protected areas of Bangladesh. The strategic review of the development of ecotourism on the Teknaf Peninsula was presented in order to:

- expand support for alternative income generation
- review how to achieve value chain strengthening
- develop public-private partnerships
- leverage conservation financing and local level outreach to increase community interest in conservation and environmental stewardship
- contribute to improved welfare of rural communities.

EplerWood International's Terms of Reference for the assignment can be found in [Appendix A](#).

A strategy for the Teknaf Peninsula must look at pre-existing efforts to plan tourism in Bangladesh and the Teknaf region, its geography, existing development, ecological concerns, and existing land-use. The main administrative and management authorities in charge of development in the region will be

outlined, as well as the planning protocols for ecotourism that are recommended as best practice on an international basis.

To determine the potential for new ecotourism development, the strategy reviews existing tourism planning and development efforts, markets for tourism, market niches, investment climate, and the type of tourism development activity that would be recommended based on market niche segmentation.

The strategy reviews the opportunity for segmented and zoned tourism activity in each region of the targeted areas.

It assesses both community capacity and needs, and reviews the governmental capacity to manage visitors. A review of private sector activity in the region will be included, with a look at optimal private sector linkages.

A set of recommendations will be provided that includes stages for development of the various options, staffing and local capacity required, recommended strategic partners and alliances, investment, and necessary regulatory and planning issues to be resolved.

An Ecotourism Management Plan is a pivotal step, necessary to create a virtuous environment for development, while assisting local stakeholders to confront the vicious cycle that is presently threatening the peninsula.

IPAC's role in developing the Ecotourism Management Plan and the steps required to nurture and reinforce local community involvement in ecotourism development will be outlined in an [Action Plan Addendum](#).

IPAC

The Integrated Protected Area Co-management Project (IPAC) is a USAID-funded mechanism to

provide technical advisory services to the Government of Bangladesh and its environmental, forestry, and fisheries departments. The goal of these services is to support the conservation of biodiversity, to build technical capacity with national and local level institutions for protected area co-management, to expand the geographic area of Bangladesh under co-management, and to ensure the success of the co-management model by extending socio-economic benefits to surrounding communities.

The project duration is June 2008 to June 2013. IPAC is scaling up the successes of the preceding Nishorgo project (<http://www.nishorgo.org>), which focused on forest-protected areas, and the MACH project, which focused on the conservation of wetlands. Efforts to improve the welfare of rural communities living adjacent to protected areas took place with both Nishorgo and MACH and are now being expanded by IPAC. Community Management Committees (CMCs) were established to oversee the protection of the protected areas under co-management and these CMCs have an important role in decisions on the management of tourism in protected areas. Ecotourism is one of the important tools for improving local livelihoods. The IPAC project is initiating activity in this arena by developing the *Teknaf Community-based Ecotourism Strategy*, which seeks to improve local livelihood benefits and generate conservation outcomes from tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula.

Teknaf Peninsula Physical Environment

The peninsula forms a continuous line of sandy beaches along the Bay of Bengal, 120 km long, reportedly the longest beach in the world. This coastal border is backed by foothills, which are

forested in patches. Wetlands line the Naf River, which forms the eastern boundary of the peninsula and the western border of Myanmar (Burma).

The Teknaf Peninsula is flanked by one barrier island, several kilometers north, Sonadia Island, and one sedimentary continental island 10 km south, St. Martin's. St. Martin's is fringed by the only coral reef found in Bangladesh, one of the few coral-algal communities in the world.

The climate on the peninsula is moist; the rainy season falls during monsoon, between June and September. Cyclonic storms develop on the Bay of Bengal between April-May and October – November. Temperatures average between 25-30 degrees centigrade year round.

The tourism high season extends from December through March, the months of driest weather without severe storm threats.

Land-Use Threats

Cox's Bazar, which forms the northern boundary of the study area, is occupied by a rapidly growing number of hotels, restaurants, and tourism facilities. The Cox's Bazar Upazila includes 25% public land, 60% of which is illegally occupied.¹

Moving south, the Upazila land tenure picture for public land is as follows:

- Ramu Upazila, 70% public, 99% illegally occupied
- Ukhia Upazila, 10% public, 50% leased
- Teknaf Upazila, 40% public land, 75% illegally occupied²

¹ Mannan, A., (2006) Plant Biodiversity Management on the Teknaf Peninsula, CWBMP, Cox's Bazar office
² Ibid

Ecological Concerns

Deforestation has occurred on a large scale on the peninsula, with forest extraction an important occupation for many of the illegal settlers. Most residents are dependent on wood for fuel, which is obtained primarily without permit, creating an on-going and growing cycle of destruction that can only be abated if other sources of energy become available. The tourism industry may have greater access to propane for stoves, but as the industry grows, more workers will also need fuel, and this will aggravate an already serious situation.

Erosion is also an increasing concern due to hill cutting from higher ground areas to fill low marshland areas for farming or development. Reports from tour operators, guest houses, and hotels in Cox's Bazar indicate this problem is aggravated by the coastal building boom, where land fill is required for the construction of hotels and a new Marine Drive.

Population growth is part of the picture. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees migrated to the peninsula from Myanmar in the 1970s and 1990s, causing large-scale conversion of forest to agricultural land. Populations have grown by 3% per year, and settlements continue to have an adverse impact on flora and fauna.

In 1998, 30% of the land area was under crop cultivation, with rice paddies being the main crop. Clearing for agriculture is the primary impact on the landscape, but has abated to some extent since 2000.³

Conversion of mangrove for shrimp aquaculture in the tidal floodplains is extensive. These

³ Ibid

farms, together with deforestation, cause increased vulnerability to storm surges and heavy rains, both of which affect sea beaches and create increasing siltation along the coast line.

In Cox's Bazar, the hotel boom is transpiring without a city sewage system or adequate drainage areas for septic systems. Hoteliers, tour operators, and residents agree these deficiencies are threatening the sanitation of the sea beaches.

On St. Martin's Island, too, tourism is having an increasingly negative impact:

- Tourism is polluting the water and causing erosion on the island
- Shells and corals are being collected and coral habitat is decreasing
- Lights on beach from tourism development is hampering sea turtle nesting
- There is no solid waste management
- The rare coral reef is threatened by uncontrolled anchoring and large-scale waste dumping
- Tourism vessels are spilling oil
- Hotels are using up the island's limited groundwater, causing severe problems for the islanders

Wildlife Populations

Wildlife populations were once vibrant on the Teknaf, as described in the mid-1980s:

*Good populations of elephant, capped langur, pigtailed, assamese, and rhesus macaques, some hoolock gibbons, slow loris, flying squirrel, Malayan giant squirrel, fruit pigeons, hornbills, pythons, and the rare Malayan box turtle.*⁴

⁴ Reza Khan, M. (1985) Future Conservation Directions for Bangladesh in Conserving Asia's Natural Heritage, IUCN

Much of the habitat for these species has been eliminated.

Elephants are the most important megafauna remaining, living in the wild in the central foothills. Because the elephant are considered to be endangered both within Asia and in Bangladesh, they are of high conservation importance.

Tigers, which once roamed wild on the Teknaf, are now extirpated in the area due to lack of habitat. Experts say tigers might repopulate the area via existing wildlife corridors if the region were re-forested with native flora and wildlife species.

A transitional ground for the fauna of the Indo-Himalayan and Indo-Malayan ecological sub-regions, the peninsula provides breeding areas for four globally-threatened species of marine turtles. Its inshore water hosts globally-threatened marine mammals.

Because the area lies along international bird migration flyways, birds remain an important source of biodiversity, with 268 species found on the peninsula.

Fisheries

Discussions with Abdul Khaleque, Principal Science Officer, Department of Fisheries, reveal that there has never been a fisheries research project in the Bay of Bengal off the Teknaf Peninsula. Although the Department hopes a research vessel will be made available in 2010, at present, there is little or no information available on the fisheries populations on the Bay of Bengal.

Mr. Khaleque and other Fisheries Department personnel stated that there are not sufficient manpower and agency finances to consider establishing Marine Protected Areas.

However, a science department officer stated that there is commitment to improving environmental practices and to studying the effects of pollution on marine fisheries for the entire coastal region of Bangladesh, from the Sundarbans to St. Martin's Island.

Protected Areas on the Teknaf Peninsula

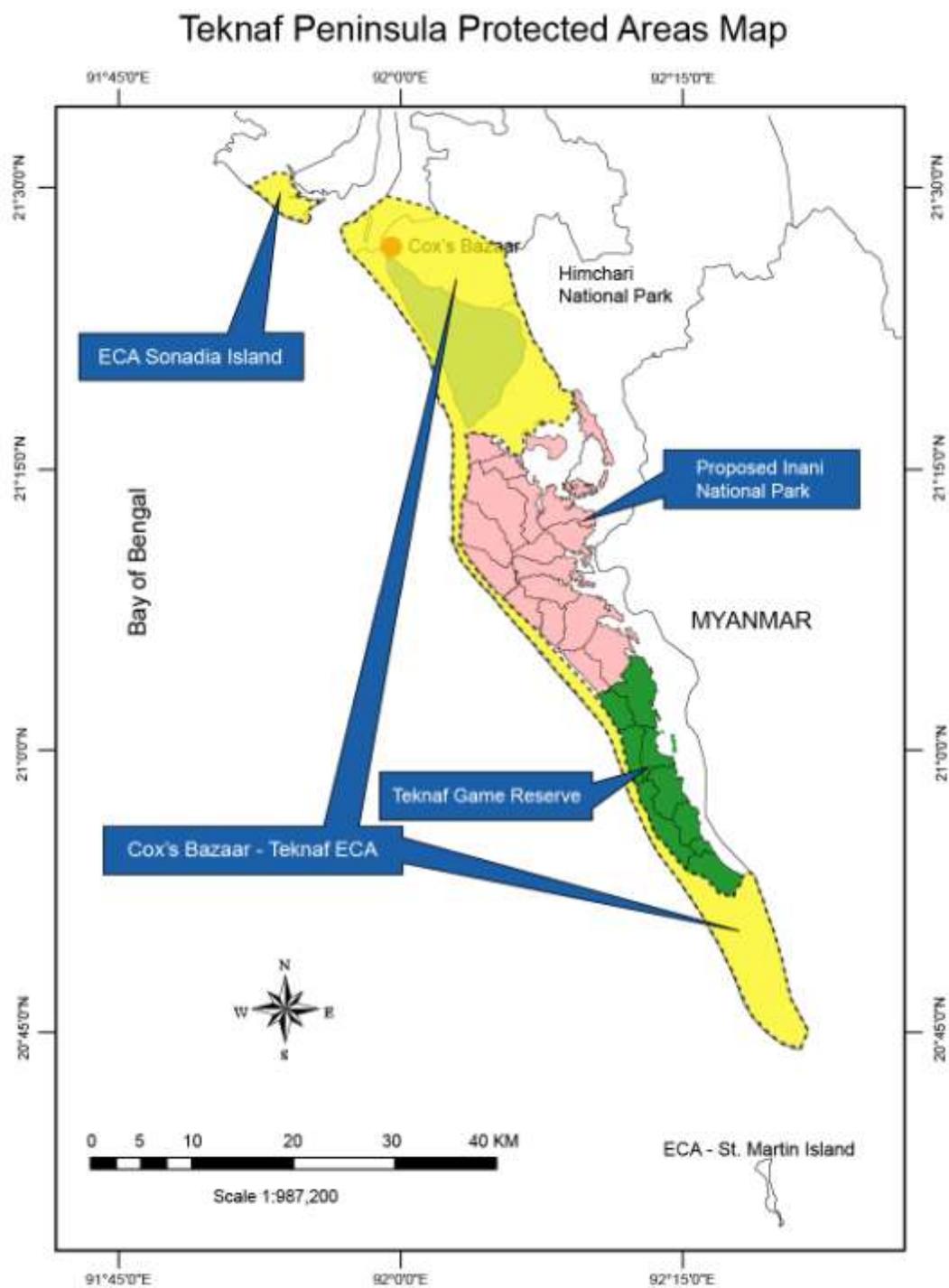
There are three protected areas and one Ecologically Critical Area found on the Teknaf Peninsula.

See [Teknaf Protected Areas Map](#)

Himchari National Park, found just 5 kilometers south of Cox's Bazar, is a 1729-hectare reserve bordering the Bay of Bengal, with some remaining hillside semi-evergreen tropical forest. It serves as an excellent retreat for tourists seeking to enjoy scenic natural landscapes and a well-known waterfall. It is an easily reached destination for a picnic, walk or hike on a day trip from Cox's Bazar. Several sites in Himchari National Park have been concessioned for management by the private sector, including the waterfall. Hundreds of thousands of tourists visit annually. It is managed by the Forest Department.

The Teknaf Game Reserve is found along 24 km of hilly ridges between the Teknaf sea beach and the Naf River watershed. This 11,615-hectare reserve conserves the natural migration of the endangered Asian elephant. It is the third

Teknaf Peninsula Protected Areas Map



largest protected forest area in Bangladesh and harbors three ethnic minority communities, the Rakhain, Marma and Chakma. The TGR includes evergreen and semi-evergreen hill forests, tidal mudflats, and mangrove. Much of the area has suffered severe deforestation, but nonetheless the reserve harbors important wildlife populations and could be successfully reforested over time. It is managed by the Forest Department.

The Teknaf Game Reserve was the focus of ecotourism development work undertaken by the Nishorgo Project. (See [Nishorgo Tourism Planning for TGR](#))

The Proposed Inani National Park is found between the Himchari and Teknaf Game Reserve, covering an estimated 7000 hectares of tropical forest. The area has been proposed as a National Park, with an additional 3,000 hectares of surrounding Reserve Forest for community livelihood activities. The Inani area is rich in biodiversity and under extreme threat due to cyclonic damage, illegal logging, and fuel wood collection. The park and reserve forest would be managed by the Forest Department as a Protected Forest Area (PFA).

The Forest Department has proposed that the Arannayk Foundation, a debt for nature swap fund, support a project that would oversee the development of co-management and conservation activity in the Inani Range – via the creation of the new Inani Protected Forest Area. This project is scheduled to begin in 2009. Included in the objectives will be alternative income generation for local stakeholders, the development of policies for improved management of the reserve, and the building or reinforcing of infrastructure that will enable better management and provision of visitor services at the site.

In addition to the protected areas, Bangladesh has declared Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs), areas in which the ecosystem is considered to be critically threatened. In April 1999, the Department of Environment declared 40,000 hectares as ECAs, including Sonadia Island, St Martin's Island, and the western coastal zone of the Teknaf Peninsula (10,465 ha in area).

See [Teknaf Protected Areas Map](#)

These areas are presently managed in cooperation with the CWBMP project (See [Department of Environment, Ecologically Critical Areas](#)) and comprise an important part of the planning for the Teknaf Community-based Ecotourism Strategy.

Antecedents

The National Tourism Policy (1992)

The **National Tourism Policy of Bangladesh** (1992) examines the importance of tourism as a means to attract foreign exchange; increase opportunity for budget tourism for Bangladeshis; preserving and maintaining the tourism resources of the country; alleviate poverty, create a more favorable image of the country; open opportunity for investment; more recreation, and fostering cultural heritage and traditions of the country.

The policy includes an emphasis on creating hospitality establishments for domestic tourism that are set out to be operated in a manner that will generate only enough revenue to keep them operational. This role has been played by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), established in 1973, which operates low-cost tourism establishments throughout the country. This emphasis on low cost accommodations has fostered the development of tourism infrastructure that is dependent on government

administration and management, rarely recommended worldwide.

Overall, the National Tourism Policy provides an important basic framework, but is in need of updating and thorough review. Changes in tourism development patterns are particularly rapid since 2003, as will be discussed in the upcoming sections on market, and the country is in urgent need of new policies that can be presented in context of is currently required.

Review of Tourism Policy (1996)

Mohammed Abdul Latif provided an update on the National Tourism Policy in 1996. Tourism Planning is outlined as a state-sector responsibility that must confirm to the annual development programs, which are part of a broader 5 year development plan process. This document also outlines that tourism master planning has been taken into consideration since 1988, when a Strategic Master Plan for Tourism was developed by the World Tourism Organization. But as of 1996, no further work had been undertaken on the following up on the Strategic Master Plan for Tourism. The new Minister of Tourism has now revived plans to undertake Master Planning (See [Ministry of Tourism Policies 2009](#))

Forestry Policy

The National Forestry Policy of 1994 states that 20% of the country's lands are targeted for reforestation by 2015. Priority protection areas are the habitats which encompass representative samples of flora and fauna in the core of National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Game Reserves. It is noted that ecotourism, related to forest and wildlife, is recognized as a forestry-related activity, which will be promoted taking into consideration the carrying capacity of nature.

The responsibility for community involvement on Forest Department (FD) lands led to the Alternative Income Generation program for Nishorgo – an FD project- which encouraged the development of community-based nature tourism. A 50%/50% split of entry fees to FD protected areas was agreed upon as part of Nishorgo's technical support work, with 50% destined to go to Community Management Committees (CMCs) to manage conservation and alternative income generation activities. This policy is in the process of final implementation.

Department of Environment, Ecologically Critical Areas

The Department of Environment (DOE) declared Sonadia Island, St. Martin's Island and the western coastal zone of the Teknaf Peninsula as Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs) in 1999. The Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project (CWBMP) at Cox's Bazar is administered under DOE and funded by UNDP-GEF. The project demonstrates systems for the management of the ECAs.

Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project on Teknaf Peninsula

CWBMP seeks to mobilize natural resource management in the Cox's Bazar ECA areas, conduct awareness programs, baseline surveys, regenerate mangroves, and create zoning regimens for critical habitats. As such the project undertook community related tourism development planning in the Himchari area of the Teknaf Peninsula. Technical assistance was provided to communities in the Bora Chora Village in an area where the private sector once held a concession for nature tourism activities, which was recently revoked by the Forest Department. CWBMP seeks to continue this work in cooperation with IPAC, due to the

importance of creating a legal environment for the project through the Forest Department, a key IPAC partner.

Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project on St. Martin's Island

A substantial public awareness program was supported to encourage visitors to protect natural resources on St. Martin's island, and a proposed Zoning Plan for St. Martin's Island ECA was published in December 2008 written by an Egyptian protected area specialist, Mohamed Shaker Hebara.

The Proposed Zoning Plan for St. Martin's Island lays out 3 main zones for general rules and regulations to be applied: a Managed Resource Zone, a Sustainable Use Zone, and a Restricted Access Zone. The system considers previous zoning drafts, existing land use, and seeks to generate a balance between conservation and development. It includes a buffer zone for alternative sources of income, such as ecotourism.

While there appear to be no present plans for implementation of the zoning protocol by the DOE, the zoning proposal was only recently published and further discussion and research would be required to fully understand its feasibility.

Management Plan for Teknaf Game Reserve

A five year management plan for the TGR was approved in 2006.

The plan's main objectives were to:

- Develop a co-management approach for long-term protection of biodiversity while permitting sustainable use in designated areas by local people

- Facilitate sharing benefits with local communities and key stakeholders
- Develop existing elephant movement corridors and conservation programs
- Strengthen PA management
- Conserve endangered, threatened, endemic and rare species of plants and animals

The Management Plan set out the plan for tourism and ecotourism development on the Teknaf Peninsula. It called for more trails, interpretation centers, and the use of Forest Rest Houses for ecotourists. Subsequent tourism development programs were undertaken by Nishorgo under these guidelines.

Nishorgo Tourism Development

The Nishorgo project undertook the following actions.

- Training of Youth Guides to become certified eco-guides
- Building of one eco-cottage at the Mochoni Entrance to the TGR
- Building of an Interpretation Center and marked hiking trails with rest shelters and annotated booklets at the Mochoni entrance to the reserve
- Building of a Student Dormitory at the Mochoni entrance to the reserve
- Trails with rest shelter to Kudum Cave

Nishorgo held tourism familiarity trips to these facilities in early 2008 used media communications to build interest in tourism and outings in the reserve. However, as of February 2009, when Epler Wood's field survey took place, these facilities were underutilized. Tourism traffic is dropping to the area. The eco-guides and eco-cottage lack business, and the Interpretation Center is only opened on request. The Dormitory is not open, due to

questions of management, and the trails to Kudum Cave receive some visitors, but the road to the cave is plagued by security problems. In general, the communities report they are not receiving many benefits from tourism to the reserve.

In a 2008 review, Md. Tarek Murshed and Philip J. DeCosse present a summary of the work undertaken by the Nishorgo Project on Nature Tourism Enterprises. Efforts to develop Eco-cottages, training youth eco-guides, developing elephant rides, and the sale of souvenirs, developing youth hostels, and student dormitories are all reviewed. Lessons learned that relate to this strategy are summarized in the report as follows.

1. *Increasing visitation in Bangladesh is relatively easy. What is recommended planners consider carefully in future is the type of tourist that is being attracted to protected area sites.*
2. *It is essential to undertake careful planning including private tour operators and senior Forest Department staff in order to develop appropriate protocols for both conservation and benefits sharing needs.*
3. *It would be of great assistance to conservation if complementary nature tourism development processes were led by private tour operators.*

It is noted that the need for leadership by the tourism sector is nowhere more evident than in the growth of the Nishorgo Eco-cottage network. *Progress on the construction and finalization of the cottages proceeded most effectively once advice was provided by individuals with practical experience in the tourism industry.*

Nishorgo Tourism Planning for TGR

A Micro-Planning Strategy was carried out for the TGR in September 2007 to zone the various nature tourism opportunities within the reserve. These plans were undertaken as part of a 10 day intensive Nature Tourism Micro-Planning course in 2007, supported by Nishorgo, designed for Assistant Conservators of Forests to help coordinate the Forest Department's understanding of how the TGR will be zoned for tourism use, with the goal of stimulating specific nature tourism enterprises in areas permitted by the Forest Department.

This initiative was undertaken in response to the need for a framework for Forest Department governance and buy-in to community-based nature based tourism management in the TGR.

EplerWood International Trip Report, February 2009

For this report, EplerWood was requested to look at questions of how to address the management of tourism in protected areas by observing the work done to develop tourism in Lawachara National Park and Satchuri Park, in addition to the Teknaf Peninsula.

Short-term Recommendations for Tourism Management in Protected Areas

Epler Wood developed a brief action plan presented in full in the Trip Report. The recommendations are summarized in brief here:

- **Resource Protection**

The new entry fee system to be instituted for Forest Department Protected areas which will allow for a 50/50 split of fees with 50% going to Community Management Committees

(CMCs) will need to be focused in part on the management of tourism in parks where the fees are being generated, or tourism will cause increasingly devastating impacts on Forest Department lands where tourism is increasing.

- **Community-Needs and Benefits**

Communities need further technical assistance to appropriately manage the impacts of tourism on their areas, and the opportunity to manage tourism by concession from the Forest Department where possible.

- **Visitor Management**

Recreational zoning according to density of visitors, with systems to monitor the impacts of tourism over time will be crucial to protecting protected areas from tourism impacts. Formalization of duties to manage tourism infrastructure on Forest Department lands is required.

- **Private Sector Linkages**

The private sector must be involved in every phase of development of ecotourism to ensure that projects developed associated with protected areas achieve appropriate market linkages. Communities must be carefully linked to the supply chain with private sector partners. All tourism marketing and sales should be consigned to private sector partners.

Planning Initiatives on Teknaf Peninsula

An interview with Fashir Ahmad, Joint Secretary of Planning for the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation revealed that a top priority is the development of the Cox's Bazar area for including Golf Courses and Sea Resorts, with a special zone for foreign tourism that is reported to be targeted for the Inani Beach region.⁵ There are no requirements for environmental planning or environmental impact statements for the building of these resorts according to the Mr. Ahmad.

The Trip report concluded that there are no active provisions for the environmental

planning or management of tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula according to local authorities. This vacuum of authority leaves the peninsula substantially at risk for uncontrolled development.

Ministry of Tourism Policies 2009

Megan Epler Wood attended the first public presentation by the new Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism of

Bangladesh, GM Quader, at the American Chamber of Commerce luncheon on April 1, 2009. The Minister spoke of the challenges Bangladesh faces with its poor international image and lack of competitiveness. The country is listed as 120th out of 124 countries by the World Economic Forum's competitiveness index for tourism. He called for pragmatic policies to overcome investment constraints and leverage the private sector.

The EplerWood International Trip report from February 2009 concluded that there are no active governmental provisions for the environmental planning or management of tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula.

⁵ Lonely Planet Bangladesh (2008)

A key recommendation for tourism planning was his call for reviving master planning for tourism, saying that tourism planning should transpire in a coordinated way without harming the environment.

At the same time, he called for “**Exclusive Tourism Zones**” to be created on **Sonadia Island and Inani Beach**. **Both of these sites are found within the Department of Environment’s Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs)**. This initiative represents an important challenge to those seeking to create a managed tourism program that conserves the environment on the Teknaf Peninsula.

Megan Epler Wood asked Minister Quader in the question session about the need to protect these areas from overdevelopment given the important natural resources and critical areas found there. **He recommended coordination with the Ministry on the initiative to develop Master Plans.**

Current Investment Trends

Although efforts to make Cox’s Bazar an international tourism destination have generally languished, local investment in hotels is booming. Currently, nearly a dozen hotels have recently been built or are under construction. Further investigation of the sources of domestic investment is needed.

The Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation seeks to attract foreign investment for the Inani area to develop an international beach destination as described in the section on [National Tourism Policy](#). Minister of Tourism Quader in his March 2009 speech to the American Chamber of Commerce (see above) invited foreign investors to take advantage of Bangladesh’s rich tourism resources, including the world’s longest sea beach on the Teknaf Peninsula. This

approach could lead to exploitation of the peninsula without appropriate environmental controls. There is great potential to work with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, leveraging a coordinated approach to development that incorporates investment, planning, and environmental conservation.

The opportunity to attract investment is viable, although not necessarily during the current recession. In 2006, the United Arab Emirates, during a visit by a UAE trade delegation hosted by the Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, expressed keen interest to develop Cox’s Bazar as a world-class tourist spot. The UAE team expressed eagerness to invest in tourism, hospitality, and infrastructure, but also sought removal of bureaucratic complications and assurance of a tax holiday.⁶

With the global economic downturn, most international destinations are expecting a significant decline in foreign investment in tourism.

According to the European Community Country Strategy Paper for 2007-2013, corruption and an inefficient, over-complex legal and regulatory system are seen as the major impediment to investment and growth.

Transparency International has repeatedly rated Bangladesh at the high end of its corruption perception index. The local business community regards corruption as the second most important impediment to growth, after poor electricity supply.

According to the same report, the country faces serious infrastructure bottlenecks in the delivery of power, gas, and

⁶ Daily Star, July 31, 2006

telecommunications, which will lessen interest in foreign investment in tourism.

It is therefore likely that all upcoming investment in Bangladeshi tourism will come from within the country. The current investment environment, however, is fostering a large hotel boom in in Cox’s Bazar, rather than other types of tourism development, such as ecotourism.

Market Information

Visitor Data

Cox’s Bazar

Current market information available to the author dates to the 2005-2006 period, with a total of 757,640 visitors. Peak period, recorded as November-March was 76% of total visitor numbers for the year. This is primarily a weekend tourism market, with travelers coming by overnight bus from Dhaka on Thursday night and returning to Dhaka on Saturday night.

Present estimates provided to the author suggest current visitation in 2008 reached 1.2 million visitors.

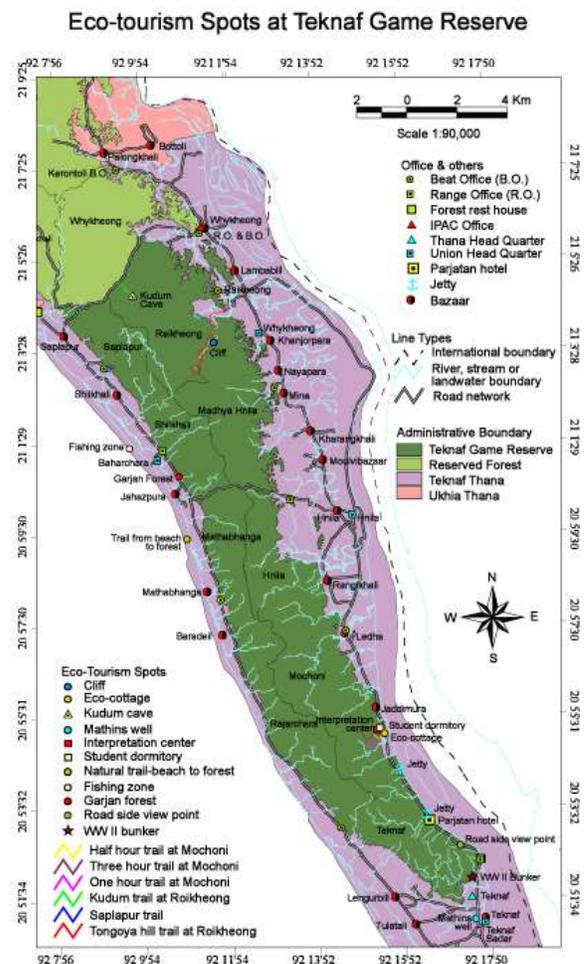
St. Martin’s Island

Present data available for St. Martin’s Island indicates that 83,000 travelers visited in 2007 and 123,390 in 2008. Local observers suggest the number of visitors is as high as 250,000, but the availability of boats suggests this may be unlikely.

This market travels by bus from Cox’s Bazar and then boards boats located north of the Mochoni Entrance to the Teknaf Game Reserve. A large percentage travel to the island for the day and return to Cox’s Bazar that night. This pattern of visitation leaves no time for other activities on the Teknaf Peninsula.

Teknaf Game Reserve

Market information gathered for the Teknaf Game Reserve (TGR) is collected at the Mochoni Entrance, located close to the town of Teknaf on the lower peninsula. See Map below for all current mapped ecotourism attractions and trails on the TGR.



Bengali nature lovers interested in these attractions represent roughly less than 1% of the visitors to Cox’s Bazar and 5% of the visitors traveling to St Martin’s Island in 2008.

Year	Month	Visitor Numbers
2007	January	2000
2007	February	2500
2007	March	346
2007	April	500

2007	May	300
2007	June	200
2007	July	100
2007	August	500
2007	September	1000
2007	October	1000
2007	November	1000
2007	December	2000
Total		11446

Year	Month	Visitor Numbers
2008	January	2000
2008	February	3000
2008	March	1000
2008	April	0
2008	May	350
2008	June	200
2008	July	200
2008	August	250
2008	September	300
2008	October	350
2008	November	350
2008	December	400
Total		8400

According to these figures there has been a 26% decline in visitors to the Mochoni entrance of the reserve in one year.

The rapid increase in visitors to Cox's Bazar for sea beach holidays has not provided a corresponding surge of visitors to the reserve. Due to the packaged day and overnight trips to St. Martin's Island, competition is now stiff.

A compelling selling proposition for the Teknaf Game Reserve is required if it is to compete with St. Martin's Island. Or, a market profile different from the domestic travelers that are flocking to Cox's Bazar and St. Martin's Island will have to be targeted.

Market Segments

The potentially interested market segments in community-based nature tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula can be broken down as follows:

- Domestic weekend travelers
- Expatriate travelers (foreign couples and small families living in Bangladesh)
- Youth travelers in large groups
- Foreign travelers in group package tours

The domestic traveler demographic profile to national parks is as follows⁷:

Top Percentile Ratings for Visitors to Parks

Top Professions	Business 41%	Services 43%	Farmer 7%
Education	Secondary 29%	Primary 20%	SSC 16%
Monthly Salary in Taka	5-10,000 24%	10-15000 21%	15-20000 17%

These figures indicate groups with modest education and means that are likely traveling for the first time in their lives. They are "neophyte" travelers, with little experience in managing their behavior or understanding the decorum expected from more sophisticated travelers. Stories abound in Bangladesh of the noisy groups visiting parks in large numbers, dropping waste who do not understand how to behave in natural areas.

The history of travel in all countries indicates that an interest in nature travel, where wildlife observation is the goal, is only developed over

⁷ IUCN, (2008) Nature Based Tourism in Bangladesh

time. The “neophyte” is a common profile that will be the largest and most abundant type of visitors to areas in Bangladesh for some years to come, and this must be understood in order to plan for their activities and presence.

Market Attitudes

The Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) Survey done for IPAC undertook a survey with potential tourists in 2008. Ninety percent of this group said that there is more scope for ecotourism development in Bangladesh suggesting more work on policies, management, law implementation, conservation, infrastructure development and security.

It was noted in this survey that the majority of people in Bangladesh lack knowledge of ecotourism, and the recommendation was for more awareness building on nature, culture and local traditions.

This survey indicates a growing potential for domestic tourism to protected areas in Bangladesh. However, it must be kept in mind that this potential is among the “neophyte” travelers, described above.

Activities of Interest to Teknaf Visitors

A 2008 IUCN report by Dr. Emanuel Haque provides the only previous study about tourism potential of the Teknaf Game Reserve. In particular, it notes that the area has long been known for wild elephants, an important potential selling point. The IUCN study indicated that the small number of domestic visitors to the TGR, who have been attracted to the park, put a priority on wildlife observation and photography. Another similarly sized group rates tourism with family and friends just as highly, with picnicking in the park as a priority.

Observations on the types of facilities visitors want on the ground in TGR are summarized here in order of priority.

Site Improvements	% of Visitors Seeking Improvement
Restaurants for food & beverage	58%
Playground for children	55%
Waste disposal system	50%
Maintained walking trails	40%
Toilet facilities	29%
Prayer facilities	27%
Overnight accommodations	22%
Special arrangements for elderly & physically challenged persons	15%
Souvenir shops	2%

Observations on the types of informational materials and facilities visitors want in TGR are here in order of priority.

Interpretation Improvements	% of Visitors Seeking Improvement
Pictorial guides for tourists	66%
Small museum and information center	60%
Informational pictures and exhibits	54%
Information about animals and birds	50%
Map of the park	50%
Informational billboards and signs	45%
Tour guides	15%
Guide books	14%

These survey results provide important guidance on the type of facilities existing visitors are seeking on the Teknaf Game Peninsula.

The Willingness to Pay Entry fee survey indicated that for the TGR the average entry fee travelers are presently willing to pay is 17 taka (or about 25 cents USD)

Group Size

The IUCN study demonstrates there are two types of groups within the domestic traveler group.

- 70% are traveling with group sizes less than 10
- 30% are traveling with group sizes of 30 and above

Niche Markets

The information on market segments suggests that the domestic market for ecotourism has tremendous scale for growth with further communications. All key niches are reviewed below.

Domestic Niches

It is clear that within the domestic market interested in nature tourism, there are two niches that need to be considered.

- Larger groups of 30 or more interested in picnicking and family visiting
- Smaller groups of 10 or less interested in nature observation

Most of these travelers travel independently and take weekend trips to Cox's Bazar. Hasan Mansur, Managing Director of Guide Tours and former chairman of the Tour Operators Association, indicates that while Cox's Bazar is now Bangladesh's # 1 tourism destination, Teknaf Game Reserve lacks unique selling

points to draw standard domestic travelers. His suggestion is to target two important markets:

- The expatriate market, which is showing increasing demand for domestic destinations
- National student groups, in order to build future demand in mainstream customers

Discussions with Motiur Rahman, Managing Director, and Masud Hossain, Executive Director, of Bengal Tours had a more positive vision of the potential for Teknaf. Mr. Hossain, a younger man, suggested that Adventure Tourism will be the key to creating a market for Teknaf Game Reserve. He suggested targeting this younger market as a means to build demand.

Expat Niche

More market data is required, but private sector sources, and observations of the high traffic of expatriates in the Bonani and Gulshan districts of Dhaka suggest that this market has excellent potential.

It is very reasonable to project that these long-term stay visitors would want to take weekend trips away from the busy city of Dhaka and have the opportunity to visit the beach. However, they will want to be protected from the unruly development in Cox's Bazar. Thailand is not that far away after all, and Cox's Bazar already has a very bad reputation in Dhaka among expatriates.

This market is highly likely to be interested in nature tourism and soft adventure.

Youth Niche

Informed sources suggest there is a growing interest for youth groups to travel to nature parks. This requires well-managed sites for

larger groups. A visit with the Bangladesh Tourism Expansion Forum indicated this market segment is thriving and very interested in adventure tourism. (See [Back-Country Zone – Inani, Ukhia & Whykheong](#))

Foreign Traveler Niches

International data demonstrate there are many sub-niches within the foreign markets for tourism to protected areas.

- Culture
- Adventure (soft and hard)
- Eco/nature
- Volunteers

There are two categories of travel in these niches, the group tour market and the independent traveler market.

The most important development in the independent travel market is the recent naming of Bangladesh as one of the Top 10 countries to visit in 2009 by Lonely Planet.⁸ Some quotations from the book will certainly help to build foreign demand.

Bangladesh is a revelation that actually leaves India looking a little worse for wear.

Bangladesh deserves to leave its “basket case” stereotypes far behind and be welcomed by the wider world as the trendsetting, breathtaking and hard-working country it really is.

The two-page write-up includes mention of Bangladesh’s unbroken beaches stretching south of Cox’s Bazar for some 120Km.

The new *Lonely Planet* 2008 edition on Bangladesh recommends two main itineraries for independent travelers, one of a fortnight and the other for a month.

⁸ Lonely Planet’s Best In Travel 2009

The **fortnight journey** leaves from Dhaka on the “Rocket” boat to Khulna to explore markets, on to the Sundarbans, back to Dhaka, and onward to the Chittagong Hill Trek area.

The **month-long** journey includes the above, plus Madhupur National Park, the Srimongal areas, including Lawachara National Park and the tea estates, and a stop at Cox’s Bazar.

The group tour market in Bangladesh is surprisingly vibrant, largely due to the Sundarbans, a World Heritage park with (rarely seen) Bengal tigers and an international reputation as the largest wetland in the world. With foreign demand strong enough to support several highly professional tour operators, it is reasonable to project that destinations for foreign tour travel can be designed for eco/adventure, cultural, and volunteer markets.

Market Summary

Records indicate visitation to the Teknaf Game Reserve is declining, while all other indicators for the Teknaf Peninsula indicate rapid growth rates.

Due to existing problems with attracting travelers to the TGR, caused by higher interest in visitation to St. Martin’s by weekend domestic travelers, it will be important to design tourism experiences with competitive selling propositions.

For the Domestic Niche, competitive tourism experiences will allow picnicking for large groups and wildlife observation or nature experiences for family-sized groups.

For the Expat niche, traveling independently, as couples, or small families, it will be important to provide experiences and accommodations that can compete with neighboring foreign countries.

For the Youth niche, exciting and adventurous opportunities that can be led safely and without harming the natural environment will need to be designed.

For Foreign Tourists, the Teknaf needs a world-class, outdoor experience that will attract travelers after they visit other Bengal attractions, such as the Sundarbans or the Chittagong Hill Tribe region.

Part II: Teknaf Peninsula Strategy: An Ecotourism Management Plan

It is proposed that IPAC facilitate a planning process, the end result of which would be an Ecotourism Management Plan. The plan would include the Himchari National Park, the proposed Inani National Park, the Teknaf Game Reserve, and Sonadia and St. Martin's Islands -- incorporating all relevant buffer zones in the process.

Guiding Principles

The Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan will take on the following characteristics:

- It will be bioregional in order to enable planning around three protected areas and include highly important buffer zones
- It will be public and private in order to ensure planning includes all parties that will have responsibility for the management and protection of this region
- It will be inter-governmental in order to coordinate government agency actions
- It will be designed to benefit local communities as a primary objective and include consultation of community representatives from all areas to be affected by tourism development
- It will be zoned according to front-country, back-country zone, and mid-country for management by
 - Community co-managed, village based nature tourism on PA land where concessioned
 - Community-based nature tourism on community land

- Private sector managed nature tourism on private land
- Designated uses will be decided upon via consultative processes that will target specific market niches
- It will incorporate the views of the private sector at every stage of development and partner private sector with community enterprises to achieve more marketable results
- It will use professional environmental impact analysis, and architectural and site planning approaches
- It will incorporate baseline data on environmental and social conditions for monitoring every 4 years
- It will seek to meet international sustainable tourism criteria for private sector development
- It will create a long-term vision of development that protects ecosystems and communities on the Teknaf Peninsula.

This bioregional approach would require cooperation from the following key stakeholder groups:

- Tourism professionals interested in and/or involved in tourism in this bioregional area
- Representatives of communities who are involved in co-management of protected areas and the development of nature tourism
- Representatives of local governments which will require representation in the planning process
- Protected area staff who will be responsible for implementation and co-management with the communities of the plan's outcomes

- Representatives of the management bodies in charge of Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs)

There is no current planning protocol for the Teknaf Peninsula that creates order or sets a standard for the development of social or environmentally responsible tourism. A vicious cycle is quickly being created which allows unregulated tourism development to undermine the cultural and natural assets that make this region attractive.

The Teknaf Strategy seeks to create a positive virtuous cycle of development via an interactive planning process. A virtuous cycle will allow all those who seek to invest in development of the peninsula to participate in a natural resource management program that will help protect the natural and cultural capital upon which tourism depends.

The planning process leverages strategic alliances among the best and the brightest – bringing together communities, entrepreneurs and government officials who seek to take charge of their own destiny and do not depend on the opinions of outside consultants for their “walking orders.”

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Geographic Focus

The strategy to be presented for the Teknaf Peninsula will primarily focus on the Himchari National Park(HNP), the Proposed Inani National Park(INP), and the Teknaf Game Reserve(TGR). The three areas need to be studied as a unit, in order to present a strategy that meets the needs of the different tourism groups that are visiting the area.

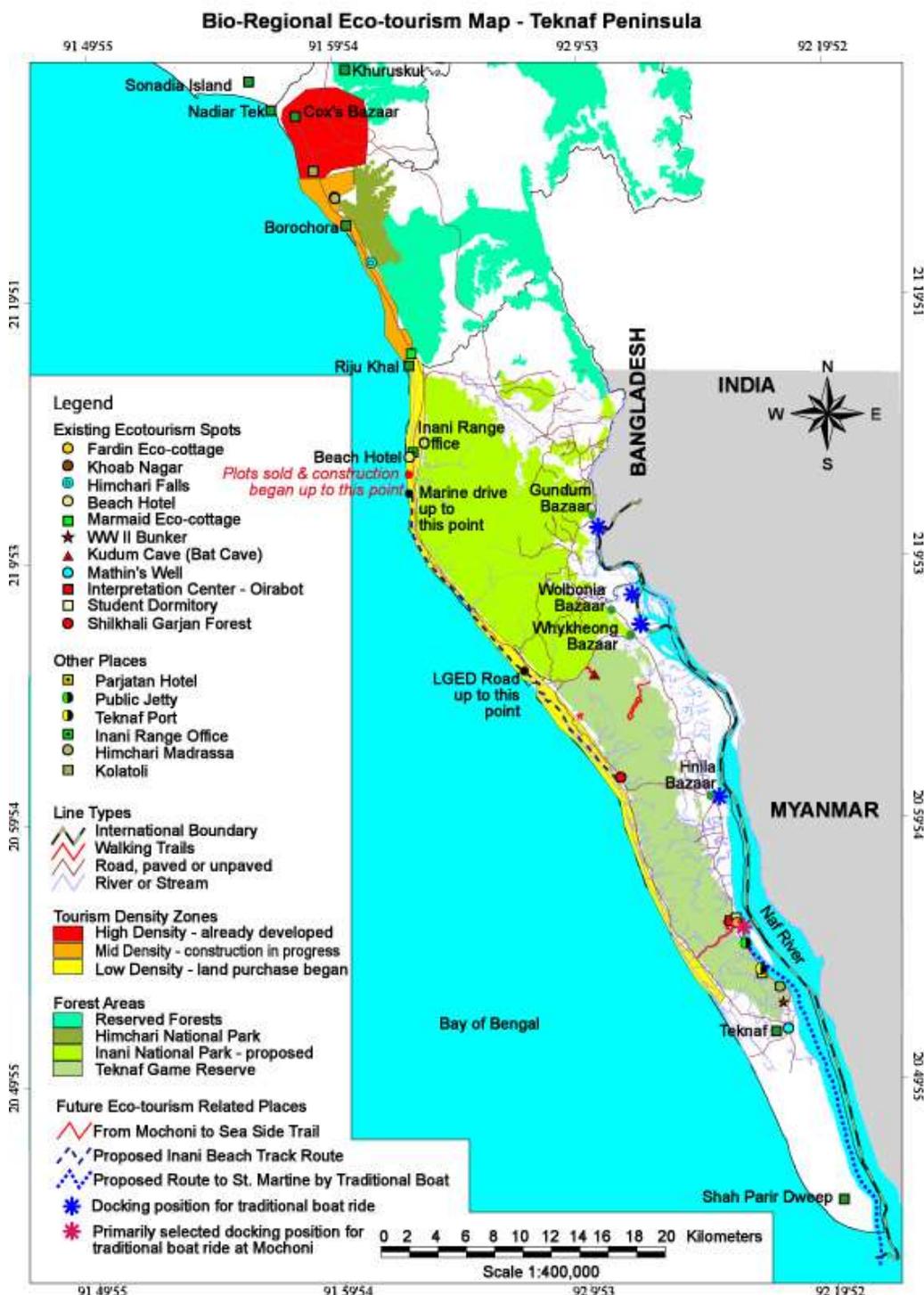
See [Bioregional Ecotourism Development Map](#)

Based on the market data available, it is clear that HNP is receiving the most tourists, the INR is presently seeing a new increase in tourism visitation and the beginnings of hotel development, and the TGR is presently under-visited, with the Mochoni Entrance adjacent to Teknaf reporting a 26% decrease in visitor numbers in 2008.

St. Martin’s and Sonadia Island will also be discussed as part of the strategy, looking at the

existing tourism growth patterns with a clear eye at what will be possible to achieve working via strategic alliances, keeping in mind the lack of regulatory or tourism planning capacity presently available.

Bioregional Ecotourism Development Map



This map includes all areas presently scouted for ecotourism development by the IPAC team. Future Ecotourism Related Places marked here were visited by the team in March 2009 and are points of reference for future discussion with the private sector, local communities, and resource managers. See [Market Positioning](#) for a discussion of the future potential of these sites. St. Martins and Sonadia Islands would be added in future positioning exercises.

Prerequisites to Planning

The Nature Conservancy recommends the preparation of an Ecotourism Management Plan which takes a bioregional approach to nature tourism development, because planning for individual protected areas limits the potential for success with sustainable development goals on a regional basis.⁹

An Ecotourism Management Plan is written in the context of a Protected Area System Plan and Individual Protected Area Management Plans, which are considered pre-requisites by TNC. Planning already undertaken in this regard has been discussed in the Antecedents section.

There other pre-requisites to success of an Ecotourism Management Planning process according to TNC (ibid) are as follows:

1. Acceptance of and commitment to the principles of ecotourism by the protected area's staff. This includes the PA's commitment to diligently manage tourism impacts.
2. Reasonable expectations for required funding and the technical and logistical support for the process, and involvement of stakeholders during each phase.
3. Appropriateness of applying ecotourism to the area. Will existing legislation allow or facilitate tourism? Have existing threats to the area been analyzed and can nature tourism play an appropriate role in addressing these threats?

⁹ Drumm, A. and A. Moore, 2002, An Introduction to Ecotourism and Conservation Planning, The Nature Conservancy, Arlington, VA

Market Positioning

An Ecotourism Management Plan will need to have a strong market orientation. Efforts to date have not referenced the market, or involved the private sector during the planning process.

A new phase of planning is now required. The first obligation of this planning group will to be create a set of goals that are realistic (or brutally honest) about the values of the site and what will genuinely attract markets. This is called Market Positioning.

The following example of how market positioning works is provided as an example – not the final determination. It represents the views of the author, who has studied nature destinations in over 30 countries. The feedback of the IPAC team, as well as that of policy makers, private sector and community members, contributed to the shaping of this analysis. (See First Phase Feedback below)

What the Teknaf Peninsula presently is not:

- A world class leisure beach destination
- A world class nature destination
- A well preserved natural area
- A site where beautiful hikes in natural forest can be experienced
- An area where wildlife can regularly be viewed

What the Teknaf Peninsula is:

- An overdeveloped, unpleasant beach destination at Cox's Bazar that inspires an immediate need for escape to a nicer location
- Some rustic but pleasant accommodations in the Himchari park

area that need improvement but provide good hospitality

- An area where picnicking, short nature hikes, and other family pleasures can be enjoyed by Bengalis in Himchari & Inani with some modest improvements
- A wild and underdeveloped coastal area south of Inani with extraordinary local fishing cultures that provides a great day or more of adventure for expatriates and foreigners
- A nature park at Mochoni with a beautiful interpretive center and trails but lacking a specific draw for visitors
- A reforested area at Gurgan with a modestly interesting hike, if visitors are already nearby
- A short hike to the bat cave at Kudum Cave, which could be exciting but with an access road that is plagued by security problems.
- Undistinguished accommodations in Teknaf with some modest cultural attractions
- Beautiful views of the Naf River

What the Teknaf Peninsula could be:

- A destination landscape with a full suite of ecotourism attractions for a range of market niches.
- A region with an impressive network of well protected areas, including parks, wildlife sanctuaries, game reserves, ecologically critical areas, marine parks, a world heritage coastal/beach landscape, and community conservation heritage areas, all a harmonious part of a bioregionally conserved landscape.

- A region that showcases the contribution of local communities in conserving the landscape
- An area where Bengali youth and international volunteers work with local communities to regenerate the natural landscape by planting trees and restoring wildlife habitat
- An area where traditionally designed cruise boats travel from Cox's Bazar to St. Martin's Island to Sonadia, stopping at sites managed by local communities for fish, fruits, and an exploration of local culture
- A multi-day beach trek, complete with rest stops made from local materials, and managed by local communities, allowing adventure and international travelers to experience this world-class beach on foot.
- A series of cross-peninsula treks from the Bay of Bengal to eco-cottages or ecolodges in the periphery of the peninsula's protected areas – with opportunities to safely view wild elephant.
- An area where small groups of local visitors interested in short hikes and day trips can visit local communities, have picnics, and enjoy the scenery in clean, well-managed circumstances.
- An area where large family groups can enjoy picnics and family recreation without disturbing wildlife.

The vision of what Teknaf can be must then be translated into market positions according to the niches already identified.

Domestic Small Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short trails to enjoy nature • Locally-run rest stops along trail • Bat cave & elephant viewing
Domestic Large Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic Areas • Family Recreation Parks
Expatriates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small hotels in protected parts of Teknaf Beach • Forest hikes & elephant viewing
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth hostels and dormitories • Adventure managed by trained leaders
Foreign Eco/Adventure Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach trek with sustainable rest stops • Forest hikes & elephant viewing
Foreign Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with reforestation • Work with communities

These market-oriented activities are then developed into a market position for the Teknaf – which is communicated in a wide variety of forums, tested, and refined before it is finalized.

Regional Development Zones

The strategy seeks to focus the different market segments and niches according to three identified zones – Front-Country, Back-Country and Mid-Country -- located across the three main geographic target areas, the HNP, INP, and TGR.

Zoning is a recreational planning strategy applied by protected areas worldwide. Zoning is best carried out as part of a larger planning process for tourism in the protected area(s).

Environmental, social, and market criteria determine the zones.

The following is a set of recommendations for how zoning should be undertaken on the Teknaf Peninsula:

Front-Country - Himchari

A Front-Country set of recreational opportunities should be identified that are easily accessible in areas that can withstand steady, high-impact tourism.

Front-Country zones can be broken down into subzones. Normally these zones are all found within protected areas – but it is recommended that the Teknaf Nature Tourism Management Plan create tourism zones for the HNP, INP, and TGR and relevant buffer zones. While governmental mandate may not presently exist for areas outside PAs, this planning process can create a vision that will form the basis for future work on master plans with local municipalities.

For Front-Country planning, zoned areas will be needed for :

- Community co-managed, village based nature tourism on PA land
- Community-based nature tourism on community land
- Private sector-managed nature tourism on private land

with designated uses zoned within these areas for:

- picnicking
- family recreation - playgrounds
- safari parks
- restaurants or food stands
- trails
- scenic sites – waterfalls and caves
- cultural monuments

- accommodations

Front-Country uses should be considered for Himchari National Park in particular, as it already contains heavily-visited areas, which are easily accessible to Cox's Bazar.

Front-Country Community-Based Nature Tourism Site

The Bora Chora Village Conservation Group was assisted in ecotourism development by the CWBMP project under DOE –as the village is found within an ECA. But the village tourism program was transpiring within the Himchari National Park, which is under Forest Department jurisdiction. The program was then discontinued due to a lack of licensing to operate on Forest Department land. This is an excellent example where collaboration between agencies would be ideal as part of a bioregional Eco-Tourism Management Plan.¹⁰

The Himchari site would be zoned as: *Front-Country, community co-managed, village-based nature tourism on PA land.*

Designated uses would be agreed upon by the management planning group. They would look at the entire bioregion and seek to create a set of zones that would be distinct and complementary.

The flow of decision making for this Front-Country demonstration site would be as follows:



For Bora Chora, likely options for designated uses would include picnic areas, scenic viewpoints, trails, food stands, and a shop with local goods.

Once the area is zoned for various uses, a Site Development Plan is the next step. The Site Development Plan includes a landscape study and recommends appropriate siting for all the designated uses recommended by the Teknaf Eco-Tourism Management Plan on the property.

For example, the author would recommend that the Site Development Plan include siting for picnic areas with facilities for large family groups up to 30. These picnic areas should have easy access, in a location that will not disturb other small group visitors or the villagers themselves.

All Site Development Plans would include sanitary facilities at suitable locations and waste bin areas built for regular maintenance and cleaning.

¹⁰ The CWBMP has formally offered to collaborate with IPAC on this project in their comments on the Ecotourism Development Strategy for the Teknaf Peninsula delivered on March 25, 2009.

The plan would review the existing buildings and decide if the existing food stands are in appropriate locations.

A site for a store would be considered, but this store would need to be separated from the central core of the village to prevent tourism from intruding on local people's privacy and livelihoods.

Siting for possible viewpoints and rest areas would also be developed, as well as trails with drawings that present a good flow of experiences for the tourist.

Architectural drawings would then be developed to present the types of structures appropriate to the site, ones that evoke local cultural styles and sustainable development values.

Phasing is another issue that site planners and the Nature Tourism Management Planners will have to consider.

While community members frequently seek to develop accommodations immediately, it should be considered if they are prepared for and qualified to undertake this task. The time it takes to train community members to run and manage local cottages may not be justified, particularly as they do not have the capacity to market their own facilities.

Accommodations are competitive and best run by the private sector on private land. Private hoteliers are best qualified to deliver high-quality hospitality that will meet the needs of a broad range of tourists.

However, the private sector can work closely with the community-based nature tourism program at Bora Chora and through the

planning process, an interactive synergy between the key parties would be achieved.

In the next phase, various management protocols would be developed for the site including Management Plans for Facilities and Waste; Human Resources, including capacity building for hospitality and guides; and Visitor Management, including the monitoring of group numbers, noise, enforcement, and monitoring.

All of this would be developed via the community with strategic partners.

Front-Country Private Sector Nature Tourism on Private Land

To date, most tourism planning related to protected areas has focused on the land within the protected area and community in-holdings. This has frequently led to problems in protected area buffer zones where development can quickly become uncontrolled. Rapid development underway in the buffer zones outside of Lawachara National Park is one excellent example of this problem.

This document proposes an innovation from the usual procedures by suggesting that **private lands** be included in the Teknaf bioregional Nature Tourism Strategy.

At present, there are no other planning mechanisms underway. Creating a fully bioregional plan, which sets out a vision for Himchari, Inani and Teknaf, together with buffer zone lands suitable for nature tourism development, is a "smart" and strategic move.

For Himchari, there is already a strategic private sector developer working in the coastal buffer zones to develop a community-based nature tourism lodge, the Mermaid Eco-Resort. These developers are successful restaurant owners who seek to develop a new restaurant in

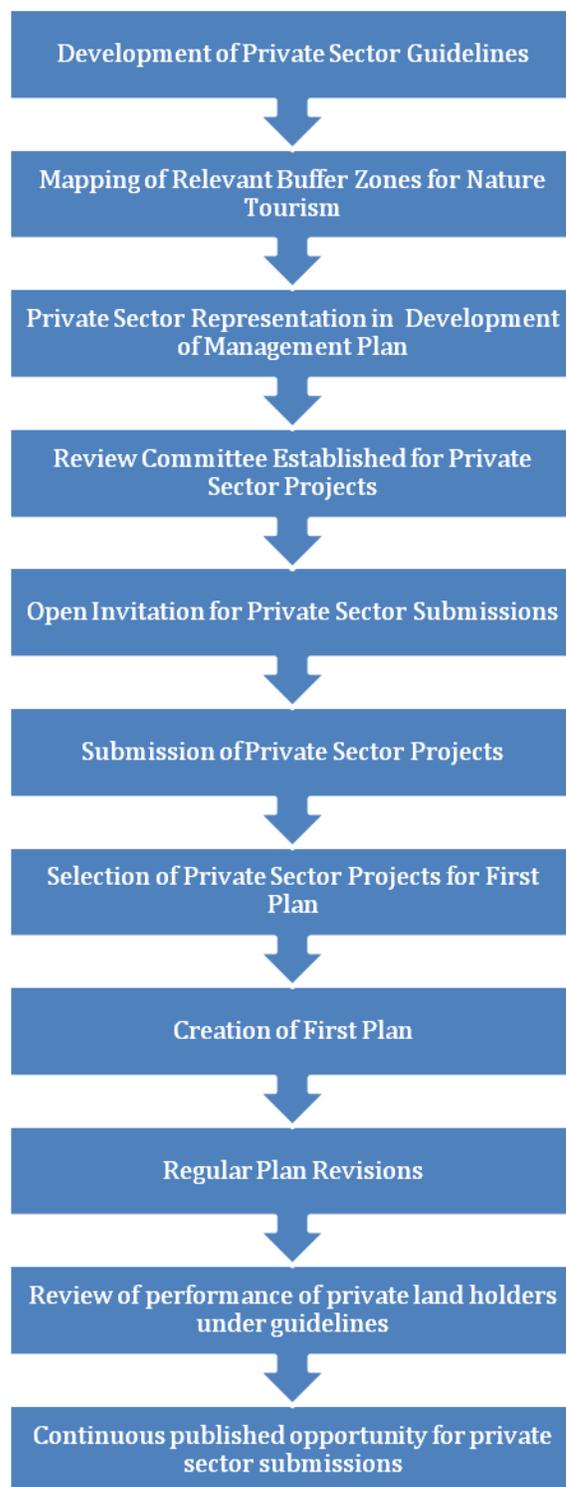
Himchari, are presently building an eco-resort, and are already working to train the neighboring villagers in every aspect of servicing their resort. They are also providing their neighboring village with the opportunity to manage their own eco-cottages, which will be booked as part of the Mermaid's existing reservation system. They are classic eco-entrepreneurs and received the highest ratings for their work in the 2008 edition of the *Lonely Planet* guide to Bangladesh.

Their ability to work with the existing bioregional planning program, and help local communities to develop could easily be expanded, and should become part of the larger effort to develop a bio-regional plan for Himchari.

Because private owners are in charge of planning for their own site, the Teknaf Nature Tourism Management Plan is not responsible for site or management planning of private land sites. However, the Plan must provide guidelines for private developers in order for them to become part of the bioregional design.

Guidelines for private developers are readily available; as of 2008, there is now one internationally accepted core set of criteria. The international [Sustainable Tourism Criteria](#) provide sound standards for Sustainable management, Social/Economic Benefits, Protection of Cultural Heritage, and Environmental Management.

The process for vetting private sector projects to become part of the bioregional Teknaf Nature Tourism plan could go as follows:



Front-Country Market Segments

With the two model projects projected here:

- Bora Chora Nature Tourism
 - Picnic areas
 - Short Trails
 - Shops
 - Food Stalls
- Mermaid Eco-Resort & Eco-cottages
 - Accommodations
 - Restaurant

The Himchari Front-Country Zone would be targeted at the following market segments:



Back-Country Zone – Inani, Ukhia & Whykheong

The next zone proceeding geographically down the peninsula is the Proposed Inani National Park. At this point, the road along the coastline is discontinued at Inani where the Forest Department Rest House is located. (See [Bioregional Ecotourism Development Map](#))

While a Marine Coastal Drive is projected for the length of the peninsula (see [Marine Drive](#)), the project is not moving quickly. There is a small enclave of new hotels being built on a coastal dead-end road, south of the Forest

Department Guest House, (see map), and a concessioned picnic area adjacent to the Guest House for domestic travelers. The new Marine Drive is under construction south of this area, with hill cutting areas to the east.

According to *Lonely Planet Bangladesh*, Inani Beach is the country’s “real claim to fame.”

Driving south on the hard sand of Inani Beach, one discovers a world where fishing villagers live a life untouched by the rapid development transpiring just miles north. Their unique wooden fishing boats and traditional livelihood make a case for this area to be named a World Heritage site.



Above this extraordinary beach, remnant patches of original forest are found in the foothills. This forest, according to the Forest Department, is being managed for conservation. The re-afforested Gargan Forest along this corridor offers pleasant hikes.

With these cultural and natural qualities, it is highly recommended that the Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan declare this a Back-Country zone for tourism development, limiting construction to ecologically sound forms of commerce and low-impact tourism.

Low-Impact Tourism Development

On a preliminary survey of the Inani Beach and Gargan Forest, the author concluded that the best way to manage tourism on this area would be to restrict car traffic. The government clearly has other plans. But for the purposes of developing a bioregional Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan, it is recommended that a low or no vehicle plan is considered.

Experience around the world indicates that once a major thoroughfare is installed on a coastal landscape, inevitably, steady development of hotel infrastructure will follow. One can observe this from Mexico to Thailand. This type of tourism development will heavily impact efforts to protect the proposed Inani National Park, its forest, its resident communities, and the existing fishing villages along the shore line. If a Marine Drive is completed, followed by rapid development without controls, all of these areas will likely be strongly affected. The IPAC team has now confirmed that land speculation is underway. (See above box from section on [Marine Drive](#))

The IPAC team sought to learn if potential hotel development would proceed quickly once the Marine Drive is built.

Interviews with villagers in three communities on March 21, 2009, found that land speculation was well underway.

- *25% of land in the Teknaf area had been sold to speculators*
- *10-15% of the land in the Saplapur area sold*
- *80% in the Inani area sold.*

Low-impact nature tourism is an important strategy for this area. Low-volume tourism will potentially yield high returns.

The author recommends the development of a Beach Trekking zone, with beach rest stops and overnight accommodations designed by

architects with experience in sustainable design, using solar and wind power, and materials that have stood the test of time.

Because this area is a Cyclone vulnerable zone, it is not recommended for high-cost infrastructure. This fits with a more rustic, community-based approach, managed by a private sector business, or potentially a non-profit that could be tasked with maintaining the beach shelters and working with the communities.

A meeting with the Bangladesh Tourism Expansion Forum on April 1, 2009 focused on how the adventure and youth market would respond to the concept of developing the Teknaf Peninsula

for trekking. The forum has 200 members, two off-track guide books in print, and sponsors 12-14 trips per year. The group normally camps with tents. This organization would be happy to cooperate on the design and development of a beach trek and other trails on the Teknaf, using their members to test new trekking opportunities.

The Tourism Expansion Forum members, 90% male, are young professionals working with universities, hospitals, corporations, governments, and NGOs. They would be willing

to organize an event in November 2009 to highlight the potential to attract the “Youth of Bangladesh” to be involved in peninsula conservation and restoration. This concept will be further addressed in the Action Plan.

Trekking inland from the Gargan Forest area leads to good forest walking and good views, according to the Forest Department. A cross-peninsula trek to a Forest Department Beat Office could be mapped, with a side trail to a high point with views. Inland trekking for elephant viewing could also be managed, from the beach side if possible. In general, the beach provides a beautiful and extraordinary launch point for inland hiking, and visitors are more likely to have an outstanding experience if traveling along the beach rather than along the overcrowded road to Teknaf.

Management of trekking could be handled by the Forest Department and its co-management committees, permitting entry only with guides or creating a system of reservations through a private concessionaire that would provide trained guides from the community. (See Action Plan) Either way, tourism would be exclusive and closely controlled to ensure this area is not heavily impacted.

It has been mentioned that reforestation is also a major goal for this area. Volunteer foreign travelers could be recruited to help with environmental restoration and with other local community needs in this zone. A telephone meeting in April 2009 with the head of the [Planeterra Foundation](#) – an international NGO based in Canada leading voluntours worldwide,

confirmed immediate interest in developing a tree planting voluntour to the Teknaf Peninsula.

Meetings with the Secretary of Forest and Environment on April 1¹¹ and with the Forest Department on April 2, 2009 indicated that there are serious discussions taking place that would permit the creation of zones for reforestation, via the creation of buffer zones where communities might take more responsibilities for management of their forest resources. An Executive Order might make this possible in the short term. (See Action Plan) Decision-making on developing this Back-Country zone for low-impact tourism should

follow the steps in the following graph. This process could take an estimated three years.

If development along the beach corridor takes an uncontrolled course, this Back-Country Zone of the Teknaf Peninsula is likely to suffer. A thorough and intensive planning process may be the only means to create a responsible tourism

development corridor in the coastal region from Inani to Sikhali and points south.

Back-Country Market Segments

Target Markets for the Inani Beach Trek in the Teknaf Back-Country zone would be as follows:

A telephone conference in April 2009 with the head of the Planeterra Foundation, an international foundation based in Canada, confirmed immediate interest in developing a tree planting voluntour to the Teknaf Peninsula

¹¹ The Secretary of Forest and Environment stated in a meeting on April 1, 2009 that the boundaries of the Teknaf Game Reserve should be redesigned to create a buffer zones where local people can benefit.



Focus on these markets would achieve the following goals:

- Introducing youth to the importance of preserving their natural and cultural assets
- Developing a world class ecotourism destination that can complement existing efforts to develop the Chittagong Hill Tribes area and will attract a trekking market that will be interested in a complementary beach adventure
- Developing a zone for the “hot” and growing voluntourism market, helping to break in the destination while using travelers to improve the area

Mid-Country Zone - Mochoni

This area presents an important mid-level development zone for tourism that needs further attractions to make it successful – particularly due to the St. Martin’s Island market competition.

The Mochoni Entrance of the Teknaf Game Reserve currently has outstanding facilities, including the Interpretation Center, Youth

Dormitory, and trails with rest stops. (See Map below) The Fardeen Eco-cottage is already developed, with eco-guides prepared to guide, but who require more training. (See [Results of Contic Company visit](#)) The IPAC-arranged Contic Company visit to the area generated the potential of a partnership between the private sector and the existing eco-cottage owners to develop several new attractions, including a Naf River refreshment stand, a new ecolodge, elephant viewing areas, and cooperation on a cross-peninsula trek. Guide training would be part of this agreement. These options need to be leveraged in the next phase of the IPAC project. (See [Action Plan](#))



Mochoni Alternative Nature Attractions

In addition, a variety of alternative exciting attractions for Domestic, Youth, Expat, and International travelers have been suggested:

- A Safari park
- A Cable car
- Canopy walkway
- Zip lines
- Adventure rope courses

These types of attractions would be suitable for the nature-loving domestic market and could be sufficient to attract travelers for longer stays in Teknaf.

Cable cars – or sky rails – can be found operating successfully in [Costa Rica](#), [St. Lucia](#), and [Queensland Australia](#), all mature destinations. Overall investment and expertise to build this type of attraction would be well over \$500K USD.



Canopy walkways have been built in more remote locations around the world. The first (shown below) was built in Danum Valley in Malaysia, with others in a growing number of locations, including Brazil and Peru. These require specialized design expertise possessed by only a few architects and designers, and require an investment of \$200-300K USD.



Zip lines require a less significant investment for a small site or small business concession. They demand expert management for safety and full-time staffing with customer service and guides. Investment would be closer to \$20K or less for start-up of a zip line project.



Adventure Rope Courses are the least investment intensive option, but also require well-trained staff. They have proven to be popular around the world, attracting the Youth and Adventure Travel segments, with additional marketability for Corporate Team Building. Extensive information on adventure rope course options can be easily found if required.



All of these options should be considered for private sector investment, as they are not suitable for community management. The difficulty will be to attract private investment for these sites for the time being. A chart comparing investment options follows:

Concept	Location	Rough Cost	Investor
Cross-Peninsula Trek	Teknaf Game Reserve	\$500	Local Community with Forest Department
Ecolodge	Teknaf	\$15K	Private Sector
Elephant Viewing Areas	Teknaf	\$2K	Community /FD/private sector
Naf Refreshment Stand	Teknaf	\$1K	Community investors
Cable Cars	Teknaf	\$500K	Private Sector
Canopy Walkway	Teknaf	\$200K	Private Sector
Zip Line	Teknaf Game Reserve	20K	Private Sector
Adventure Ropes	Teknaf	\$1K	Private Sector

These costs need further vetting. Projections should be considered as part of the next phase.

Mid-Country Market Segments

Domestic Small Groups

- Short Trails to enjoy nature
- Locally run rest stops for food
- Cable cars
- Elephant viewing areas
- Boating on Naf

Youth

- Zip line
- Adventure ropes
- Elephant viewing areas

Expatriates

- Cross peninsula trek to secluded beaches
- Cable cars
- Canopy tour
- Zip line
- Adventure ropes
- Ecolodge
- Elephant viewing

Foreign Visitors

- Cross peninsula trek to secluded beaches
- Ecolodge
- Cable cars
- Canopy tours
- Zip line
- Elephant viewing

St. Martin's & Sonadia Islands

Rapid growth of domestic tourism to St. Martin's Island is undermining the market for the Mochoni Entrance of the Teknaf Game Reserve. Visitors travel from Cox's Bazar to catch the boat north of Mochoni, proceeding to St. Martin's and then returning to Cox's Bazar. Only the most compelling attractions in Mochoni could break this cycle.

St. Martin's Island is a particularly unfortunate case of unregulated mainstream tourism

development. The potential harm to the island's ecosystem appears to be growing daily. Efforts to obtain policy action would need to reach the highest levels of government. Donors will need to review the issues with leading government decision-makers as part of a larger sustainable tourism strategy. CWBMP has worked on this matter intensively.

A community meeting with the CWBMP Village Community Group produced the following comments.

- 250,000 tourists are presently visiting annually
- Professional mafia-style shell and mollusk collectors "exploit" the poor on the island, paying them to collect illegally
- There is indiscriminate boating and walking on coral
- CWBMP nightpatrolling activities have stopped 70-80% of turtle egg-laying
- CWBMP environmental signs and other communications send a strong message to enjoy the island but not destroy it
- Local people urgently need more income generation; in the lean season they need food and rice
- An immediate solution is needed for fresh water and sanitation problems
- Hospitality and food preparation training is needed

The case of Yuyun Ismawati of Indonesia, who won the Goldman Prize in April 2009, represents a potential model approach for St. Martin's Island.

Workers now separate waste into recyclables, compostable, and residuals to transport to the dumpsite. Income from the sale of recyclable materials and compost benefits local farmers. The plant now employs 40 local residents and received carbon credits from the voluntary market to support the sustainability scheme of the project.

- Resident seek the adoption and enforcement of zoning proposed by CWBMP¹²

Because waste management does not presently exist on the island, and all waste is thrown into the sea, a severe and growing threat to the island's unique and fragile coral reefs has emerged. (See [Ecological Concerns](#) and report

in Megan Epler Wood's blog on St. Martin's Island scuba community efforts to combat the waste problem.)¹³

In other countries, against all odds, grass roots environmental NGOs have made effective headway on government policies related to tourism impacts. The case of Yuyun Ismawati of Indonesia, who won the Goldman Prize in April 2009 represents a potential model for St. Martin's Island.

In 2003, Ismawati and Bali Fokus, in cooperation with a local Rotary Club, initiated a solid waste management program with Temesi Village in Gianyar, Bali, consisting of a waste management facility

owned and operated by the village itself. Drawing on her experience with a tourism waste recovery facility in Jimbaran, Bali, Ismawati and

¹² EplerWood International Trip Report, IPAC February 2009
¹³

<http://meganeplerwood.blogspot.com/2009/02/waste.html>

the organizations recruited and trained local residents to operate the facility at the landfill site. Workers now separate waste into recyclables, compostable, and residuals to transport to the dumpsite. Income from the sale of recyclable materials and compost benefits local farmers. The plant now employs 40 local residents and received carbon credits from the voluntary market to support the sustainability scheme of the project.¹⁴

It will be incumbent upon the Teknaf Ecotourism Management Planning program to provide outreach to initiatives for developing sustainable tourism on St. Martin's Island, working in partnership with the CWBMP. Waste management would be an excellent starting point.

St. Martin's Boating Corridor

Ideas for developing a new boating corridor for cruising from Cox's Bazar to St. Martin's Island, with stops along the Teknaf Beach and Sonadia Island began rapidly developing during the March visit to the TGR (See [Results of Contic Company visit.](#))

Traditional boats, during high season, could once again make crossings to St. Martin's Island. The possibility for a more educational visitor excursion should be explored – one that follows ancient trade routes and explores undeveloped parts of the island and the Peninsula, offering the opportunity to dive or snorkel on lesser-used, more protected parts of the coral reef. All of this could be designed with stops at community-managed sites where local foods, fruits, and drinks could be enjoyed. Local boats could be outfitted to meet the cruising boats, and community-managed learning opportunities organized.

This type of boat-based exploration is extremely popular in island nations around the world, from the Galapagos to Indonesia.

Before further planning takes place, fragile coastal zones will need to be protected from further development on the Teknaf, Sonadia, and St. Martin's Island. Zoning for St. Martin's island has already been released, and the CWBMP met with the IPAC team on March 25, 2009 to inform the team that zoning for the beach from Inani to Teknaf will be released within weeks. The Bioregional Map will be updated with zoning from CWBMP as soon as it becomes available in GIS form. Notes on critical areas were provided to Nasim Aziz of IPAC in rough form in April 2009 without GIS coordinates.

Final zoning for ECA areas will be regulated by the DOE with recommended core zones for no further development. IPAC has offered to work with the CWBMP and the DOE to ensure all planning will incorporate ECA zoning.

¹⁴ <http://www.goldmanprize.org/2009/islands>

Part III: Communities and Partnerships

Community Capacity & Needs

Meetings with community members during the February EplerWood International field visit provided an illuminating overview of what the communities seek from the Teknaf Strategy.

Teknaf Community Meeting Input

The community seeks to create an environment that attracts greater tourism. The routing of boat traffic to St. Martin's Island, north of Teknaf, has left Teknaf with few visitors. A good deal of discussion centered on how to reroute the boating traffic to south of Teknaf, in order to provide a steady flow of tourism into the Teknaf area.

Community members had a variety of suggestions on ways to improve the tourism attractions in Teknaf.

- Develop Naf River cruises
- Improve hotel facilities
- Create a safari park with more animals for tourists to view
- Develop a jetty south of Teknaf or at the Mochoni entrance for journeys to St. Martins
- Create a picnic area at Mochoni
- Develop a trail to the Bay of Bengal – the most attractive of the trail possibilities
- Develop a cable car
- Provide more hospitality and guide training
- Develop more activities in the park

It was agreed that a bioregional planning program focusing on the peninsula could potentially bring order, help government to develop appropriate policies, and allow communities access to the development process in a way that will allow for more sustainable livelihoods in future.

- Develop a restaurant in the park

These suggestions have been built into the strategy as it is now presented.

Himchari Community Input

The meeting with the Borochora villagers during the EplerWood International field visit indicated that under private sector management tourists used rickshaws owned by the villagers and purchased handicrafts and local foods. Villagers also provided maintenance to the simple facilities with 20-25 people working in the high season and 2-3 in the monsoon season. The villagers recounted no particular problems and enjoyed learning from the tourists. If tourism was started again, they suggested training for women in sewing and guide training for men. They agreed they would need management skills, and an understanding of accounting.

They believed up to 50 villagers could be employed by the project.

These suggestions have been incorporated into the proposed strategy.

Feedback on Teknaf Draft Strategy and Market Positioning

The draft Teknaf strategy was distributed for comment in March 2009 to the private sector in both Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, the CMC in Teknaf, and to government policy makers. Meetings to validate the results and discuss refinements went smoothly. While all

stakeholders were well aware of the challenges they face with developing an ecotourism plan, all agreed on its urgency, bioregional focus, and the importance of cooperation both on the

Peninsula and between government policy makers.

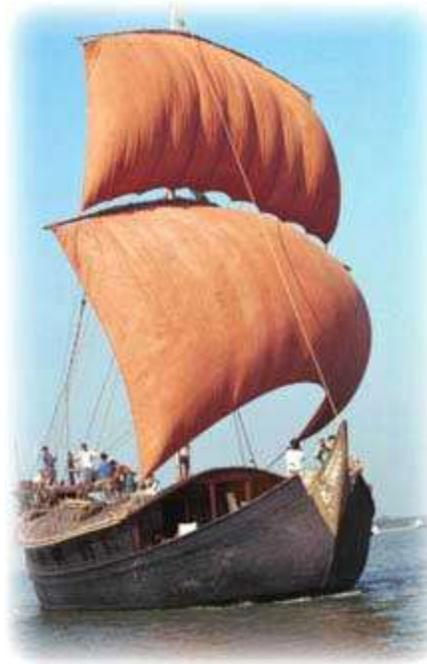
Hope and a sense of urgency quickly began to emerge once a rational program to manage tourism development was proposed. All stakeholders acknowledged that the Teknaf Peninsula has become the most important destination for tourism in the country. It was agreed that a bioregional planning program focusing on the peninsula could potentially bring order, help government to develop appropriate policies, and allow communities access to the development process in a way that will allow for more sustainable livelihoods in future.

There was a surprising amount of momentum gained on market positioning via working directly with the private sector and involving them for the first time in a planning process. The Secretary of Forest & Environment proposed developing a buffer zone for community reforestation programs and improving wildlife and elephant habitat. IPAC Chief of Party Bob Winterbottom proposed an immediate review of the impacts of hill cutting caused by the Marine Drive. With all of these potential pivotal outcomes, the Ecotourism Management Plan concept gained approval and momentum during the validation process as is documented below.

Validation Meetings & Market Positioning

Megan Epler Wood and team members Nasim Aziz and Zahangir Islam traveled to the Teknaf Peninsula on March 18-22, 2009 to review all market positioning concepts and the proposed Ecotourism Management Planning process with a multsectoral group in Cox's Bazar and a Community Management Committee in Teknaf.

To test some of the market ideas and review how they were perceived by the private sector, the team invited Wasama Doja of the Contic Company (www.contic.com). Contic is a boat company in Dhaka specializing in the development of traditional river and sea craft for tourism and the operation of commercial cruises on their specially-designed boats.



Doja spent 3 days with the IPAC team in the Teknaf area reviewing the potential of cruising on the Naf River, the lodging and cottage options in Teknaf, and the development of sea-going cruises along the peninsula to St. Martin's Island.

In addition, the team mapped a cross-peninsula trek from the Fardeen Eco-cottage on the Naf River to a beach community on the Bay of Bengal, traveling on a two-to-three km trail that takes the traveler through wild elephant habitat, across highly scenic terrain, to a traditional fishing community featuring boats that represent an important cultural heritage for the nation.



This trek was documented on-line with photos and broadcast via the blog of Megan Epler Wood.

<http://meganeplerwood.blogspot.com/2009/03/ecotourism-team-maps-trek-in-bangladesh.html>

Cox's Bazar Strategy Meeting Results

The Cox's Bazar feedback session was held on March 18, 2009. Key responses were as follows:

- The Ecotourism Specialist of CWBMP, Mr. Shaker confirmed that Sonadia Island is very sensitive and recommended that it not be included in an Ecotourism Management Plan. He strongly supports the idea of bio-geographic zonation and supports the proposed areas for planning. However, he suggested that Cox's Bazar receive some attention in the form of a long, medium and short term implementation plan for the area.
- Abul Kashem Sikder reported that there is a master plan with the District Commission and the BPC that needs to

be consulted. He also discussed his concern with regard to three roads under construction (beach drive, marine drive and LGED road) from Cox's Bazaar to Teknaf

- All the participants agreed to an Ecotourism Management Plan that would include Himchari National Park, Inani National Park – proposed -- and the Teknaf Game Reserve.
- It was agreed that the objective of the Ecotourism Management Plan should be: **Development of tourism with proper attention being given to environment.**
- Participants agreed that a strong coordination mechanism is needed involving government representatives, private sector, and local community representatives.
- They also supported the idea of recreational zoning based on ecosystem fragility.

Acknowledgements of attendees can be found in Appendix B.

Teknaf CMC Meeting

The Community Management Committee for Teknaf, which is responsible for Co-management of the Teknaf Game Reserve, supports the idea of zoning the reserve for recreational uses. The committee's primary concern is to ensure the Mochoni Entrance to the Teknaf Game Reserve is properly used. Attendees can be found in Appendix B.

The Introduction to the meeting is quoted here:

Assistant Conservator of Forests, Teknaf, Mr. Quazi Nurul Karim opened up the meeting. He opined that we want to keep a segment of Cox's Bazar bound tourists at Teknaf. But, he added that as the tourists come, so rise the buildings in the natural areas and consequently we become landless in our own homeland. He informed the participants that there is the possibility of developing a strategy for

community-based eco-tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula so bring more tourists as well as conserve our natural features.

Comments included:

- Mr. Younus Bangali, Vice Chairman, Teknaf Upazila set the objective as *Preserve hills and environment and assist local people in development of their socio-economic profile through nature based tourism*
- Mr. Momtaz Ahmed Chowdhury, Member of Shilkhali CMC opined to develop the trail of Shilkhali Garjan (Dipterocarpus) forests and Noakhali (Bagh Ghona) hilly stream for ecotourism.
- Mr. Iqbal Chowdhury, President, Teknaf Press Club, Teknaf informed that in Teknaf area Environment Department is not active and it reflects in St. Martin.

Marine Drive

There is particular concern in Teknaf about road construction. The Marine Drive to be built from Inani to Teknaf represents an important development that will change the lives of the communities residing in beach front areas on the Bay of Bengal. This drive passes through an area that is designated as an Environmentally Critical Area, yet no discussion has taken place regarding its environmental impacts. The CMC noted that hill cutting for sand and stone for the Marine Drive is already affecting the Inani and Shikali area and that road construction may cause great damage to the reserve.

A subsequent visit to potentially affected beach communities was undertaken by the IPAC team on March 21, traveling north from Shikali to Inani. Hill cutting was found to be underway in the Inani area where Marine Drive construction is taking place, validating the concerns raised by the CMC regarding the environmental impacts of the Marine Drive construction.

In addition, the team sought to learn if hotel development would proceed quickly at the completion of Marine Drive. Interviews with villagers in three communities confirmed that land speculation was well underway.

- 25% of land in the Teknaf area had been sold to speculators
- 10-15% in the Saplapur area sold
- 80% in the Inani area sold

The CMC agreed there should be consensus on the road before it is built; local communities on the Bay of Bengal need additional information. There was a request for more land regulation.

Results of Contic Company visit

Wasama Doja undertook a survey with the assistance of Nasim Aziz of the potential for Naf River cruising. They reviewed the types of boats presently used in the region and potential boat landing sites. They concluded that for Contic's market, which comprises a high-paying international and expatriate clientele, the Naf River is not sufficiently interesting to attract tourists to Teknaf. The lower river, according to Doja, is too wide and not "jaw-dropping." In his view, seaside boating has significantly more potential, but would also require more investment. He stated that a suitable boat would have to be able to carry eight passengers in four cabins, totaling at least 80 feet. The design could be adapted from local traditional boats. The market positioning and packaging could relate to clientele in the medium range of the international and expatriate market. Voyages could extend from Cox's Bazar to St. Martins Island or farther. With coordination with local communities on the Teknaf Peninsula and St. Martin's Island, smaller local boats could be designed to convene with the large boat. Financial projections on the feasibility of this concept are required, but it should be noted

that, since the idea was raised, Guide Tours Ltd has also mentioned interest in sea cruising from Cox's Bazar to St. Martins Island. Sonadia Island must also be considered in the planning process for these cruises.

Mr. Doja stayed with Megan Epler Wood at the Fardeen Eco-cottage for two nights and reviewed other local ecotourism development opportunities. He recommended "further efforts to conserve the area and a good place to stay." In his opinion, the Fardeen Eco-cottage is only fair. He finds the building's design not environmentally conscious and the ambience "bland." In his opinion, there are no selling points.

However, Mr. Doja was greatly impressed by the owner of the cottage Salahuddin, who demonstrated a similar feeling of good will towards Wasama Doja. Salahuddin stated that at last he had "found the person I want to work with to do it right." The two men began talking seriously of a joint venture, which would include the development of another more environmentally designed cottage, a small rest/stop area providing cold refreshments for small boats on the Naf River, and elephant viewing in the Mochoni area. Contic discussed sending their own experts to train the local people to begin the process of packaging the cross-peninsula trek as well (see above). Ideas quickly evolved. Further work to leverage this brainstorming will be discussed in the action plan.

National Multisectoral Oversight

On March 23, 2009, a meeting of national leaders and policy makers convened at the IPAC offices in Dhaka to give input on the first draft of the Teknaf Community-based Ecotourism Strategy. Participants in this meeting can be found in Appendix B.

The concept of creating a national oversight board for the Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan process was discussed. The group convened felt that such national input and guidance would be of great use. The value of having the private sector and governmental officials discussing tourism planning in the same room, almost for the first time, was noted.

Certain inherent contradictions in national policy continue to plague Bangladesh. The intention to create an Exclusive Tourism Zone and the building of the Marine Drive on the Teknaf coastal zone contradict other stated national policies. One policy seeks to leverage investment and development and the other seeks to protect this Ecologically Critical Area. The two approaches do not coincide.

Only more dialogue among the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), the Department of Environment, and the Forest Department can bring enlightened, sustainable tourism policy.

At this first multisectoral meeting on community-based ecotourism on the Teknaf Peninsula, participants agreed that more coordination is required, that an **Ecotourism Management Plan must be developed**, that representatives of the DOE, BPC, Forest Department and Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation must take part, and that representation from the private sector is imperative.

Part IV: Implementation

The Planning Process

Consensus has been achieved among key stakeholders that a bioregional Ecotourism Management Plan is needed to solve the challenges associated with planning sustainable tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula. Key stakeholders on the local level that must be involved are:

- Forest Department
- Department of Environment
- CWBMP project
- District Commission and Upazila leadership
- CMC representatives
- Private Sector

Two to three representatives would be delegated as the planning team, a sub-set of a larger planning group. This team should be supported by a variety of technical experts providing short-term technical assistance in the fields of:

- Architectural and landscape planning
- Waste management
- Feasibility studies
- Tourism management planning
- Environmental impact analysis

A short-term Ecotourism Management Plan facilitator working together with the IPAC Cluster Enterprise Support Facilitator backed by the Performance Monitoring & Applied Research team and a National Enterprise Coordinator could manage the process while jump starting a number of Alternative Income Generating programs working hand in glove with the SE Cluster Enterprise Support Facilitator. An action plan that lays out the

responsibilities of the team working with all strategic partners is found in the [Addendum](#).

Commitment to Visitor Management

All activities to transpire on public land will need a management protocol that will protect the natural resources and create and maintain suitable infrastructure. Forest Department and DOE policies on this matter would need to be resolved as part of the planning process.

The entire bioregion will require Visitor Management systems to ensure that travelers do not damage the resources intended for protection.

Community Involvement in the Strategy

This Teknaf Community-based Ecotourism Strategy makes specific provisions for the involvement of community representatives in all stages of development.

The strategy seeks to provide a bioregional structure for decision-making, which allows community members to work with representatives of the protected area agencies, the private sector, and municipal officials to create an approach that is integrated and avoids redundancy in attractions. Representation from the Community Management Committees established by the Nishorgo Project and the Village Conservation Groups established by CWBMP will provide a well-organized group of representatives to immediately draw upon.

Private Sector Capacity & Needs

The strategy seeks to incorporate the counsel and best practices of the private sector into all stages of the planning process.

The strategy strongly recommends that the private sector be used for the development of

accommodations. Global experience has shown that the private sector has the capacity to work with villagers to develop their hospitality skills and the ability to create reservations systems for village-based accommodations as the program expands.

The strategy seeks to use the technical assistance of trained architects and lawyers, and the input of environmental and cultural planners. Landscape, building, and trail development will all benefit from professional expertise.

The strategy establishes the importance of collaboration with tour operators, whose ability to create a vibrant supply chain and to develop marketable attractions exceeds any governmental or non-governmental organization's capacity.

The strategy seeks to avoid community-based ecotourism projects that "re-create the wheel" by seeking to develop marketing materials that are not competitive and do not reach the market as effectively as those created by the private sector.

Conclusion

A Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan will offer a bioregional vision for the development of sustainable tourism on the Teknaf Peninsula. Meetings held in Cox's Bazar, Teknaf and Dhaka led by the IPAC team have created an important opening and consensus from key stakeholders that this process "must happen."

The Ecotourism Management Planning process will help to protect the Teknaf from irresponsible development, and attract more investment and interest to the development of sustainable tourism. A vicious cycle of inappropriate development could be partially

arrested, important natural resources protected, and communities given the opportunity to help determine their own fate as part of a regional process.

The stakes are high for the Teknaf Peninsula. Without a plan, rapid inappropriate and unsustainable tourism development will proceed without governmental interference.

There are enough stakeholders concerned about preserving and creating a better and more sustainable future for the peninsula to make the Teknaf Ecotourism Management Plan a genuine option for influencing the future of this location.

Once a strategy is completed, a more realistic and positive vision of what can be achieved will have taken shape. There is every reason to believe the strategy could be leveraged to build more involvement and investment from both the private sector and a variety of donors in the next 3 years.

Appendix A EplerWood International Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for EplerWood International

January – April 2009

Task 3B Alternative Income Generation & Financing

Goals: Expanded support for alternative income generation activities, value chain strengthening, public-private partnerships, leveraged conservation financing and local level outreach to increase community interest in conservation and environmental stewardship, while contributing to improved welfare of rural communities.

Subcomponent Goal: **Community-based Nature Tourism Development Strategy for Teknaf Peninsula & SWOT Analysis for the Sunderbans**

Firm Intervention: **EplerWood International**

Travel Dates:

January 16, 2009- February 7, 2009	Trip One	18 days
March 15, 2009- April 4, 2009	Trip Two	18 days

Write-Up Day Periods:

February 9-20 & March 9-13	Draft Teknaf Strategy	7 days
April 13-17, 2009	Sunderban SWOT	5 days
April 13-24, 2009	Final Teknaf Strategy	7 days

Total Days Proposed: 55 days including travel

Deliverables: Phase I Draft Teknaf Strategy	March 13, 2009
SWOT Analysis Sunderbans	April 17, 2009
Phase II Final Teknaf Strategy	April 24, 2009

Activities:

January/February 2009 Field Visit

- Week One: January 18-23, 2009
 - Discussions with IPAC staff on needs for strategy and general orientation
 - Meet with DOE to discuss ECA in Teknaf area
 - Meetings with USAID as required
 - Field Visit to existing project sites in Lawachara & Satchuri to perform informal SWOT analysis with local participants, managers, guides

- Begin Field Visit to Teknaf Peninsula
- Week Two: January 25-30, 2009
 - Field Visit to Teknaf Peninsula
 - Meetings in Cox's Bazaar with Hotel Owners Association
 - 4 day site review of most important potential assets for community-based nature tourism on Peninsula via site visits to most important areas together with local tourism expert to be selected, forestry officials, and others to be designated
 - Review how assets can be combined to create short, medium and longer visits based on potential market demand
 - Review beach, islands, marine environment, forest areas, wildlife observation options, possible hiking routes
 - Review sites for overnight lodging – community-based and options for commercial ownership with community outposts
 - Review sites for visitor information and monitoring
 - Review options for zoning; backcountry & front country, and areas that need total protection
 - Meeting with guides and transport owners in region to assess capacity
 - Meeting with Elephant owners
 - Collection of GIS data for base maps during site review working with local stakeholders.
 - Visioning of site placement for trails, wildlife observation posts, hospitality units, and visitor information, and signage.
 - Selected community meetings during 4 day site review program – with relevant stakeholders for discussion of opportunities for wildlife viewing and other opportunities for nature tourism development
 - Special review of ethnic minorities and refugees
 - Seek out natural experts in wildlife and culture
- Week Three – Feb 1-6, 2009
 - Preliminary compilation of results from field visit
 - Preparation of draft maps with proposed tourism products laid out together with GIS expert with a variety of options to consider¹⁵
 - Meetings with Ministry of Tourism and National Tourism Organization
 - Research materials review on markets and supply chain for Teknaf via meetings with Asiatic Communications and Oasis meetings
 - Meetings with relevant tour operators (Guide Tours Ltd), Tour Operator Association, and hoteliers working in nature tourism and/or Teknaf region
 - Meetings with any relevant NGOs involved with tourism
 - Preliminary results presentation for feedback to IPAC, FD and Nashorgo stakeholders
 - Preliminary results presentation to select group of tour operators and hoteliers and if possible ministry or national tour organization representatives

Delivery of Draft Strategy by email

February 20, 2009

Gathering of Final Comments & Submission of Redraft

March 13, 2009

Second Field Visit

March 15-April 4, 2009

- Week One March 17-21, 2009
 - Presentation of Draft Strategy for Comment with Stakeholders
 - Review with IPAC and USAID
 - Meetings with staff, Forest Department, Tour Operators, Hoteliers for debriefing
 - Discussions with Ministry of Tourism, National Tourism Office
- Week Two March 22-27, 2009
 - Presentation of draft strategy to all relevant stakeholders throughout the Peninsula for comment
 - Review of new situations arising & review of strategy fit based on changing situation
 - Review and gather new GIS data for final design
 - Review of required management structure and local expertise available with gap analysis
 - Review of CMCs and capacity to carry out proposed strategy with gap analysis
 - Meetings with targeted group of interested private sector to review needs to carry out strategy, including additional costs, required investment, collaboration from CMCs and Nashorgo and other public private means by which to leverage cooperation.
- Week Three March 29- April 3, 2009
 - Final meetings to gather information, and data to finalize Teknaf strategy
 - Visit to the Sunderbans to perform SWOT analysis on ecotourism strategy with Forest Department and local stakeholders

SWOT Analysis for Sunderbans

April 17, 2009

Final Phase Teknaf Strategy

April 24, 2009

Chart of Results and Deliverables

Component:	Task / Cluster: 3B Alternative Income Generation & Financing				
Expected Result*	Planned Activity	Intervention Area	Timeframe (monthly)	Persons responsible	Deliverable
Teknaf Peninsula Community-Based Nature Tourism Strategy	Field Visit	Teknaf Peninsula	November/December 08	Megan Epler Wood	Draft Strategy 3/13/2009
Teknaf Peninsula Community-Based Nature Tourism Strategy	Field Visit	Teknaf Peninsula	January 09	Megan Epler Wood	Final Strategy 4/24/2009
Nature Based Tourism Strategy	Field Visit	Sunderbans	January 09	Megan Epler Wood	SWOT Analysis 4/17/2009

Appendix B Validation Meeting Attendees

Presentation and validation of

Teknaf Peninsula Community-based Ecotourism Strategy

18 March, 2009

Venue: Conference Room, Hotel Sayeman, Cox's Bazar

List of Participants

1. Mr. M. M. Sadeq, Labo, President, TOAC (Tour Operator Association, Cox's Bazar), Bangladesh
2. Mr. Mohamed Shaker Hebara, Protected Area Specialist, CWBMP (Coastal Wetland Biodiversity Management Project), Cox's Bazar.
3. Mr. Mohammed Awlad Hossain, Horticulture Extension Officer, CWBMP-DoE Project, Cox's Bazar.
4. Mr. S. M. Kibria Khan, Ex-President and Sea Hilltop Tours, Cox's Bazar.
5. Professor Azizur Rahman, Secretary, Cox's Bazar Residential Hotel and Restaurant Owners' Group, Cox's Bazar.
6. Mr. Md. Mazharul Islam Zahangir, Cluster Implementation Facilitator, IPAC, Dhaka.

7. Mr. Md. Kamrul Amin, ADM (Additional District Magistrate), District Commissioner's Office, Cox's Bazar.
8. Mr. M. Rezaul Karim, Secretary, TOAC, Bangladesh, Hotel Sea Crown, Cox's Bazar.
9. Mr. A. Kausik, President, Restaurant Owners Association, Daud Palace, Cox's Bazar.
10. Al-Hajj Omar Sikder, Zia Guest House , Cox's Bazar.
11. Mr. Mohd. Hossain, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Cox's Bazar South Forest Division, Cox's Bazar.
12. Mr. Shah Alam Chowdhury, Managing Director, Hotel Media International, Cox's Bazar.
13. Mr. Quazi Md. Nurul Karim, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Teknaf Range, Cox's Bazar South Forest Division
14. Mr. Abul Mansoor, Divisional Forest Officer, Cox's Bazar North Forest Division, Cox's Bazar.
15. Mr. Ruhul Mohaiman Chowdhury, Performance Monitoring and Applied Research Associate, Southeastern Cluster, IPAC, Cox's Bazar.
16. Mr. Akhil Kumar Biswas, Enterprise Service Facilitator, IPAC, Cox's Bazar
17. Mr. Nasim Aziz, Performance Monitoring and Applied Research Specialist, IPAC, Dhaka.
18. Ms. Megan Eplerwood, Ecotourism Specialist, IPAC-EWI
19. Mr. Md. Hanif Khan, CSPC, IPAC, SE Cluster, Cox's Bazar.

Presentation and validation of

Teknaf Peninsula Community-based Ecotourism Strategy

19 March, 2009

Venue: CMC Office, Teknaf

List of Participants

1. Mr. Quazi Md. Nurul Karim, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Teknaf Range, Cox's Bazar South Forest Division
2. Mr. Md. Younus Bangali, Vice Chairman, Teknaf Upazila, Hnila-Teknaf, Cox's Bazar.
3. Mr. Shafique Ahmed, Treasurer, Teknaf CMC, Pankulg, Hnila, Cox's Bazar
4. Mr. Azizur Rahman, Vice-President, Teknaf CMC, Teknaf
5. Mr. Nurul Hossain Siddique, Treasurer, Whykheong CMC, Whykheong, Teknaf
6. Mr. Abdul Quader, Forest Ranger, Range Officer, Teknaf Range, Teknaf
7. Mr. Momtaz Ahmed Chowdhury, Member, Shilkhali CMC, South Shilkhali, Borochara, Teknaf.
8. Mr. Ruhul Mohaiman Chowdhury, Performance Monitoring and Applied Research Associate, Southeastern Cluster, IPAC, Cox's Bazar
9. Mr. Hossain Ahmed, Deed Writer, Member, Nishorgo, Hnila, Teknaf
10. Mr. Iqbal Chowdhury, President, Teknaf Press Club, Teknaf.
11. Mr. Shawkat, Ex-Chairman, Borochara, Teknaf

**Presentation and Validation of
Teknaf Peninsula Community-Based Ecotourism Strategy**

23 March, 2009

Venue: IPAC Office, Dhaka

1. Mr. Motiur Rahman, Managing Director, Bengal Tours, Ltd
2. Mr. Fashir Ahmad, Director of Planning, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation
3. Mr. Istiaq Uddin Ahmad, Conservator of Forests, Project Director, IPAC
4. Mr. Hasan Mansur, Founder & Managing Director, The Guide Tours
5. Mr. Farid Uddin Ahmed, Executive Director, Arannayk Foundation
6. Mr. Abdul Quddus, Senior Program Officer, Arannayk Foundation
7. Mr. Bob Winterbotton, Chief of Party, IPAC
8. Mr. Ram Sharma, Deputy Chief of Party, IPAC
9. Mr. Syed Ali Shazar, Assistant Director, Department of Fisheries

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